

SOTHIS ASCENDS



World of Darkness

a sourcebook for

MUMMIFY
the
CURSE

SOTHIS ASCENDS



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All the Universe In a Drop of Ink

Shall I write of Irem, I wonder? Shall I tell of its wonders and its splendors, and of its excesses and its graven horrors? What purpose such letters could possibly serve, I also wonder....

Irem is long since vanished from the Earth, and great Azar remains silent upon his blackened seat, contemplating mysteries unknown even to the wisest of the Arisen. I scarcely remember those glorious and terrible days, even when my memories are clearest; they are as subtle as a whisper in a sandstorm, and just as easily forgotten.

This, I know: I am called Antu-Herap, once a scribe to the Shan'iatu, those holy Priests of Duat. I am a keeper of the sacred word, and I have walked this world for six thousand years. Since my mortal death and my immortal rebirth, I have witnessed four cycles of Sothis on high. I have seen such things as a mortal mind could scarcely imagine. I have been a hero and a monster, by turns. I have, at need, defied the will of kings and served the lowliest of beggarmen.

I recall going under that ritual knife. I remember the pain of death. The chanting of the priests resounds in my dreams and in my nightmares, even to this day, though their words are lost to my waking mind. Of Duat, however, I recall nothing. The dance of the stars tells me that I slept in death for a millennium and more, waking into a world utterly alien to the one in which I lived. Oh, to be certain, the shapes and shadows of my age remained — like bleached bones strewn amongst the dunes — but they were long

dead, mere suggestions of the world that was.

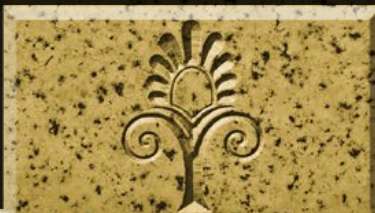
A weak mortal emperor — a man who dared claim himself a god — slouched atop a crumbling throne, and many of my brethren fell upon his dwindling authority like vultures to carrion. Perhaps it was hubris that motivated them, some desire to be as the priest-kings who made us what we were, even if only for a day, a year, a lifetime. Perhaps it was allegiance to fallen Irem, an act of spite against this pretender nation which presumed, in its barbarous arrogance, to ape our customs. But, then, perhaps it is merely that we are, even with all eternity stretched forth before us, not so different from those whose lives are but the flickering of a candle-flame; for what man does not desire gold and jewels, and statues raised in his honor, and slaves to attend his every whim?

In those long-ago centuries, I was Neb-heka, and Mekhu, and Shepseskaf. I donned names and lives like garments, and shed them just as readily. I died and I arose. My faithful charges instructed me as they would a child, for such was my commandment each time I returned to the long slumber, a commandment they passed down to the descendants who welcomed me back among the living. I learned the world anew each time, and inscribed my observations on papyri. Mortal scholars would kill or die, I

think, to hold in their hands the fruits of even my most banal scribblings from those years, in which I told myself simple tales of what commoners ate, and what games nobles played, and how people of all sorts loved and hated and dreamed.

With great sadness, I beheld the maps drawn by my hand in Irem's waning hours, and saw that they were no longer true. Perhaps it was, as I suspect even today, that we were over-proud and our pens wrote the magnificence of our homeland atop the scroll of truth, scratching out rivers and mountains and shores to suit our vainglory. But then, it may also be as some of my fellow Sessa-Hebsu believe: that the shape of the world itself changed during Sothis' long descent, while our spirits wandered the infinite expanses of Duat. The theory has some merit, for in that age, we first learned of people from beyond the far edge of the Earth; savages whose many tongues were as the chattering of apes, and whose eyes were as pale as those of the blind.

From life to life, I wandered the length and breadth of the lands known to modern academes as the Old Kingdom of Egypt. With a heavy heart, I recorded the plagues and the droughts, and the lamentations of those who desired something more and greater than the fallen age in which they had been condemned to live and to die. Foreigners came to the banks of the thirsty Nile, for the first time as guests rather than as slaves (though many more of them still came to us in chains). Their philosophers and scientists and mystics sought out the supposed wisdom of





the land of the pharaohs. Some of these proved to be people of erudition, and I invited such of them as warranted the

honor to drink wine and eat honeyed cakes at my table. In time, a handful joined my cult and I profited by the seeds of

worthiness that the gods, in their ineffable sagacity, had sown into the strange, stony soil of far-off lands.



Nations sprouted up, where once all had been Irem. The sons and daughters of these pretty kingdoms invented gods for themselves, and told and retold their foolish myths until they believed them to be truth. Every so often, however, I would hear the name or the works of some heathen deity and know it to be a distorted reflection of one of the Judges of Duat. As the majority of my immortal kinsmen did, I encouraged these latter sorts of practices wherever and whenever I found them, so that my deeds and my soul should be pleasing to those whose inscrutable whims shepherded the fate of the Arisen.

The horror, that writing had been lost to humanity for a time while we immortals lay in repose, was soon redeemed. So wondrous a thing, once it has come to be, cannot long be suppressed by even the furthest of falls. It contains a magic of its own and it will not long be silenced, whether by the dying of civilizations or by the will of any potentate. Even now, thousands of years later, mortals understand this axiom. The world was greatly diminished, but still I was able to content myself in the knowledge that perhaps the greatest part of Irem survived and was beginning once more to thrive. The world that was would never again be (that much was clear), though some faint promise existed that the

world to come could, in its own way, be *worthy*.

I slept again, and woke once again to the rise of all-seeing Sothis, to see that Khem, blind and ignorant inheritor of Irem, lay in shambles, the power of its self-proclaimed god-kings frayed unto breaking. So much lost. Such waste. I named myself Tjanefer, Ma'anheter, and Djedmutsef. With great trepidation, I walked in the footsteps of other, more adventurous Arisen, striking out beyond the boundaries of the world and into lands peopled by creatures who were more than beast, but less than men. They had their own gods and their own stories, and I learned of them and put those fanciful tales to the page, and wandered ever onward, with my charges keeping these chronicles in trust through the waxing and waning of my many lives.

I followed silk and spices and jade into the east, across barrens and plains and deserts. I passed over mountains and through woodlands. I walked among people who knew something, perhaps, of my country of old, for they spoke of their rulers as men chosen by the heavens, and of a great

order in and to the cosmos. And, by some kindness of the gods, they had writing of their own. I became a trader. I gathered their scrolls and their legends. I even took wives, and made friends. I laughed and sang songs and drank strange spirits. So far away from everything that was real to me, it seemed a small indulgence, then, to play at being mortal for even a little while.

I lived. I died. I returned from death.

My cult bore me on its back (literally, at times) to the ancient lands of my birth. I slumbered for centuries in Duat, tired beyond the telling of words, and the world shifted, once more, in ways that I believe none of the Arisen could have conceived. We were the first conquerors, but time and the ingenuity of humankind would prove that we were neither the last nor the most skilled.

The cycle turned again, Sothis rising anew. Shepherds became soldiers, and their sons became generals and kings. An empire rose in the west, across the sea, naming itself after a boy who suckled at a she-wolf's teat. They had long since put Khem's last dynasty to the sword and, embracing the power of name-giver, had dubbed their conquest Ægypt, the moniker by which my homeland has ever after been called. A familiar tale circulated





among the people: the tale of a god who suffers and dies, only to be reborn in glory and power. I knew this tale, no matter how the names in it might have changed with the march of years.

Such terrible wickedness was done across that age. Many of the last remaining shreds of Iremite lore were destroyed by Christian monarchs, who feared the wisdom that was old before their faith was born. Scrolls burned by the thousands, and temples were defaced and hammered into dust. Seemingly in the blinking of an eye, the histories we had inscribed were gone, leaving only our memories to speak of all that had come before this epoch of madness.

I wept over the cold ashes of Iremite knowledge; I awoke a century too late to pay any greater respects than that. My heart filled to bursting with sadness, I departed for other lands. Here and there, remnants of faiths crushed under the shadow of the cross remained, some few of them resonating with ancient truths. I picked apart the fables that their sages and wise women spun for me, watchful for any shreds of true understanding. What little they told me that was worth hearing, I recorded upon parchments. I might have listened better, I think. Looking back on those times with a clearer mind, it seems to me that I heard ignorance where I expected it, and wisdom where I wanted it to be.

A warlord spoke of a vision and kindled a burning crescent under which he hoped to unify the world. I became Tariq ibn-Saleh al-Asad, scholar and historian. The name always

made me to laugh, for I was — and am — nothing like a lion. I have ever been the serpent, so low in the grass. I composed poetry and treatises on the movements of the heavens. I broke bread with warriors and mathematicians and eunuchs.

But this new world seemed old before its time, and much of the magic was gone from it, even from the moment of its birth. All that which once was had been forgotten completely. One god ruled over everything in those days, and still men butchered one another in disagreement as to his name. I cast aside old lives and took on new ones: Hassan, Yazid, Abdullah, and Ishaq. I was cartographer, transcriptionist, and librarian. I went north, into Al-Andalus. I wandered into the east, to golden Constantinople. I listened to stories and set them down upon the page. I gathered up precious Sekhem whenever it was to be found and carried it back with me to Duat, shepherded by the Judge under whose ever-watchful stare I make my way among the living.

Traveling by secret ways, I crossed the western ocean, into the lands where the sun goes each night to die. I discovered that I had not been the first of my kind to undertake this journey; great carved heads in the southern continent, old even then, showed faces familiar to me, visages of men who came from the distant southern reaches of

empire, and I felt some small comfort in knowing that even here, I was not truly alone. I beheld pyramids. Pyramids! I witnessed rites to the sun, and the ritual sacrifices of slaves and prisoners of war in mighty magics. And so I knew that my brethren had whispered secrets of Iremite civilization into the ears of these priests and kings, draped in the furs of strange spotted cats and wearing resplendent capes of jewel-like feathers. I went among them and gave ear to their myths and their stories, which I carried with me back across the sea.

The crescent and the cross traded sharp blades and bad blood, back and forth, across lands that were never theirs to begin with. What remained of Irem was now only to be found in images and traditions, in the shapes of things beneath their outward seeming. We had been erased from all memory, save our own, and even we had forgotten so much. By then, only the Judges knew the truth of our history. Many of the Arisen despaired, for it was in this age that the vastness of eternity — the sheer enormity of the time that lay before us — set in, for good and all. Only when everything that we knew was so completely vanished from the Earth could we appreciate the burden that we had accepted at the behest of our masters, those hoary Priests of Duat.

The city of Romulus had fallen to savages, and the north returned to the darkness that birthed it. In cities reeking of human waste and pestilence, any man who owned more than two books was reckoned a scholar, and any who could actually *read* them, a





figure of singular brilliance. Indeed, so much of the world diminished in those days. A golden-skinned horde rode out of the east, slaughtering with brutal abandon. I wailed and

tore at my breast to hear of the devastation they wrought, of the knowledge they had destroyed. I was wakeful for their coming, though far to the west; and my rage was terrible

when I heard of the ruination of Baghdad, the Tigris stained black with ink. I am ashamed, even to this day, that those who did me no wrong suffered my wrath at the news.



Do my thoughts amble? I watch the glyphs form beneath my hand, each one a flawless character, encapsulating perfectly the essence of these recollections...but are they true? Did they occur just as I say? Did I console the orphaned son of Qusay, the spice merchant, before or after I shared a skin of wine with Michel the landless crusader knight? So many memories now jostle one another in my head. A mortal man forgets the face of his first love in a mere five years, or ten; am I to believe that my deathless mind is somehow clearer for all of the endless seasons that wheel behind my eyes in a ceaseless blur of events and emotions?

An Italian crossed the ocean, as the men of the uttermost north did five centuries before him, and the Arisen millennia before them, and he carried with him the same gifts that all mortals bear when first they set foot in strange lands: sickness, subjugation, and death. The world exploded outward in all directions. Explorers crossed water and desert; traversed mountains and plains. Most only walked where Iremites once trod, but some went to places that we never dreamed could be real. For the first time in history, we followed in the footsteps of humanity. It was humbling, and I think we were all better for it.

By galleon and by caravan, and then by locomotive and steamship, I traversed the globe again. Nations fell and rose. The sovereignty of what were once Irem's territories was torn asunder, lands divided amongst the primitives we had all scorned in ages past. Humanity invented new kinds of death, and new ways of making slaves of mortal souls. I vanished into my writings. I became a creature of no name — a memory, ensconced within lost and forgotten tombs in the furthest and most inhospitable reaches of the Earth. When the dark sleep of henet called out to me, it was a welcome release from what my waking eyes beheld.

The world turned, and the living changed and remained the same, as they do from life to life, and age to age. Sothis ascended and I rose up from death. I looked with ancient eyes upon marvels the likes of which my native tongue could scarcely describe. As I have ever done...as I am called by the gods and by my own nature to do...I took up my pen and my papyri, and I embarked anew upon my endless quest to know all the universe in a drop of ink.

This, I know: I am called Dr. Yusuf Mustafa.

I am a dealer in antiquarian texts. It is known that I am the man to whom one must speak to find what pages no other can uncover. I have identification that shows me for who I am, the face this world is meant to see. (It is magic, yes.) A small card bears my name, written in the familiar letters of Rome, and the script unlocks all that which is mine, across all the trackless miles of the globe. At long last, can it be that mortal men have rediscovered some of the great power that descended into slumber with the fading of Irem? That would be wondrous, indeed, and a fine omen under the light of Sothis' fourth rising since the dawn of the Deathless. Perhaps a worthy heir to the vision of old may yet emerge, even against all the cynicism and skepticism of my fellow Arisen, which understands that sorcery and science are one: Indivisible.

Perhaps my memories, the memories of all my kind, are not simply shadows of the fading past, but also premonitions of an age yet to come.

May it be the will of the gods...or however much the world might bear of such phenomena.

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INTRODUCTION

ARISING STARS

*I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend...*
— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

The great star Sirius, called Sothis by the Deathless remnants of lost Irem, rises once more, and it rises according to its ancient cycle: Once every 1,461 solar years (give or take a few months), it completes its Fate-bound circuit of the tapestry of night, winding its way through the darkness between the stars, across the long centuries, until time brings it once more into high convergence.

Every time this happens, and it's happened four times since the guildmasters of Irem bound the souls of their servants to its eternal cycle, all those mummies arise — unsummoned by their cults, and bound to nothing more than their own goals, final purposes, and the whims of obdurate Fate. These unique life-cycles, called Sothic Descents, are times of great potential (and occasionally even greater upheaval) in the long unlives of the Arisen.

When a mummy first rises into a new Sothic Descent, he might not know what exactly Fate has in store for him; but unlike that feeling in summoned Descents, he feels more *possibility*. Whatever plans he may set in motion prior to the rising of Sothis, everything still feels new when the time comes for him to actually arise *into* the Sothic Turn. Sometimes, mummies will choose to abandon all their well-laid plans, finding themselves struck by other inspiration upon arising. Other times, everything they worked for leading up to the Turn plays out as intended, coming to fruition in the fullness of time in a fashion so complete, it seems to them foregone in hindsight.

In the default setting of the game, the world is currently in the midst of one of these rare cosmic convergences — a time the Scribes will come to know as something else, no doubt, but which for now is called what it is: the Fourth Turn. Life on this planet has changed considerably since the prior Sothic Turn (during the latter half of the 6th century and beyond), but have you?

So much depends upon the rising of a star.

Where will you be when it happens? And *when*?

THEME

When you're talking about historical roleplaying within a given setting, of course the possible themes are as varied as they might be in any other given exploration of the game. Having said that, insofar as the material in this book is concerned, it's all about time. Time, and the critical intersection of time and memory, are central to everything that makes roleplaying in and around the Sothic Turns such an intriguing part of **Mummy: The Curse**. We explore storytelling in eras like the 6th century and the first millennium BCE so that we can view those periods through the lens of time; so that we can interpret what we see and hear from the perspective of the future.

In addition to this central theme, players and Storytellers will also find that each individual Sothic Turn also bears a sub-theme, or at least a strong thematic motif, that they can zero in on when looking for handles for roleplaying and story. The theme of the Second Turn, for example, is reflection — contextualized within the broader theme, but also highlighted independent of it.

MOOD

Consider an old Arisen expression: “With Sothis on the rise, so too rises uncertainty.”

Barring relatively unusual circumstances, the Arisen don't generally have the time or opportunity to even feel much uncertainty, let alone contemplate it in ways that serve no one but themselves. But that's exactly what a Sothic Descent begets in the average mummy, especially if that mummy has done anything other than carelessly shed the Memory he's spent centuries building. This applies to his lack of first purpose during such a Descent, but for a mummy this uncertainty comes also in the form of its cousin, hope.

As painfully old and as occult-natured as they are, the Deathless don't often find it in themselves to reckon one historical time as all too terribly different from another, and the longer they endure, the more set and even calcified that

Now That's a Wrap

As mentioned here and in the table of contents, this sourcebook contains the third and final act in the in-house storyline for **Mummy: The Curse**. Called *The Avarice Chronicle*, it focuses on the part of Deathless existence on which most mummies refuse to dwell — the soft heresy that is the fabled state of Apotheosis. In the course of the story's events, the characters get caught up in what turns out to be a collision course between the Heretic and his relentless nemesis, the Roller.

If you've been playing along thus far, we thank you and hope the ending satisfies. Those who might have been waiting until all three acts were concluded can now jump on in.

For those who enjoyed the Deceived and the role they played in the story, or who might be looking for more grave goods on those most enigmatic of Deathless, not only do they have their own sourcebook (**Book of the Deceived**), but look also for a bonus product — **Lore of the Deceived** — that expands on the material in the sourcebook, including new Nomenclature and powerful seba (Deceived relics).

Those interested in learning more about the Heretic, the pursuit of Apotheosis, and related matters can look forward to **Dreams of Avarice**. Penned in-voice by the Heretic himself, this bristling full-color chapbook represents nothing less than the testimonial of the first mummy ever to find Apotheosis, and if rumor holds true, the first relic ever created by one of the Arisen. It's coming hot on the heels of **Sothis Ascends**, so you won't have to wait very long.

Just don't let a Priest catch you reading it.

impression tends to become in them. And yet these periods of cosmic and mystical convergence are not just rare and meaningful to the Arisen, but also anxious, dynamic, and energetic. The Arisen *feel* the coming of the Turn, and for many of them the simple ability to even reckon time that way, anymore — to look *forward* to something — reflects the very uncertainty of the thing, and that in turn is a reflection of the possibility of hope.

SPOKES ON THE WHEEL

As a sourcebook, **Sothis Ascends** aims to serve double duty as both primer on the Sothic Wheel and guide to historical roleplaying in the game, so just about all of the content of this supplement is player-friendly. The exception is the sample **Storytelling Adventure System (SAS)** story that is the last chapter; the players are going to have to navigate the same strange historical and narrative waters as their Storyteller, after all. The Sothic goodies herein are divided up and presented as follows:

Chapter One: The Cannibal Hymn (2371 BCE) is a discussion of that pivotal time in history when mummies first arose to new life and purpose — the First Sothic Turn. The events of this time and of the years to follow comprise that which the Scribes call the Diaspora, and its tumult is what gave the Arisen their Diasporic Code. Ever wonder what life was like for a young mummy?

Chapter Two: The Mighty Despair (910 BCE) covers the Second Turn, a dark age in Arisen history. The greatness of Egypt is faded, with many and varied pretenders to the throne arising. Here you'll find everything you need to roleplay mummies in the time of the upstart kingdoms of Babylonia and Judah, of Assyria and Phoenicia and Crete.

Chapter Three: Return to Dusk (551 CE) explores the most recent Turn prior to present day. The Third Turn kicks off with a period of supernatural darkness and a rising plague from the mysterious lands to the east. Ride with cavalry and kings as you witness the decline of the Byzantine Empire and the rise of the global sea change that was Islam.

Chapter Four: Reinventing the Wheel provides a host of tools and tips for the nature of the Sothic Wheel, the current Turn, and running historical chronicles using Sothis as flashpoint. This section introduces two new chronicle frameworks — the parallel chronicle and the interwoven chronicle — and reveals a new secret society among the Deathless: the Disciples of the Wheel.

Chapter Five: Pearl of Ascent — The Avarice Chronicle (Part III) offers a complete SAS story that can be run stand-alone or as sequel to the first two acts of *The Avarice Chronicle* (in **Guildhalls of the Deathless** and **Book of the Deceived**). In the finale, the meret finally faces down both the Arisen known as the Heretic and the Shuankhsen driven to consume him utterly.





CHAPTER VII THE CANNIBAL HYMN (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏)

*A god who lives on his fathers, who feeds on his mothers,
Unas is the bull of heaven, who rages in his heart,
Who lives on the being of every god, who eats their entrails,
When they come, their bodies full of magic.*

From the Isle of Flame.

— *The Cannibal Hymn* (carved inside the pyramid of Unas, c. 2345 BCE)

Irem disappeared beneath the sands, nameless and forgotten for over a thousand years. Her rulers now sit enthroned in Duat, enjoying the rewards of their great sacrifice. Beneath Neter-Khertet, the Devourer feasts on the slaves the Shan'iatu fed to her. In the land of the living, cults of worshippers versed in Irem's ways dwindle, overtaken by newer, more immediate faiths of sun and sky. They call the king *bau* of Heru, son of Re, father and protector of Kemet. Lesser gods have gone from being nameless to named, from the sole province of the Shan'iatu to the basis of popular, powerful religion. Re eclipses Azar, and new temples point to the sun rather than to pillars.

For 1,461 years Arisen slumber in henet, awaiting the start of their long service. Then Sothis rises, calling the Deathless back for the very first time.

The civilization on the Nile will never be the same again.


TURN ONE

Every story has a beginning, even one as ancient as that of the Arisen. The Cannibal Hymn depicts the start of the Deathless' long journey through time, when the Arisen first emerge from henet into a world unprepared for their arrival. In later Turns the Arisen can plan ahead, lay strategies, prepare their cults, and make arrangements for their Sothic awakenings. In the First Turn, mummies return from death with no planning, no cults, and almost no Memory at all; not even the scraps of identity they piece together in later years. As they encounter Kemet and its strangely familiar people, enough Memory returns for the Arisen to begin recruiting cults and enacting their Judges' will. Unfortunately, by then it's too late. The enemy is already among them.

Compared to Arisen the Shuankhsen are underpowered, and in this earliest of eras only a bare handful have clawed their way back to life. Ammut's children have three great advantages, though: First, the Shuankhsen were created before the Arisen, sacrificed ahead of the final rites to placate the Devourer, so they often return months ahead of their foes. Second, they remember *everything*, while their foes remain ignorant. Third, the Shuankhsen *feast*. Arisen tombs and their disoriented inhabitants represent an unmatched opportunity to seize Sekhem. The servants of Duat will never again be so vulnerable.

For the Arisen's part, they are cast into a world as alien to them as they are to it. They barely remember Irem. They barely remember the guilds. Some don't remember their *names*. The vast burial complexes of Kemet conceal many Arisen's initial tombs, keeping them away from most of the population and helping to suppress their Sybaris, but as the Turn goes on more and more Arisen awaken, overwhelming first the priests in proximity to their lairs and then the common peasantry. One by one, the Arisen regain enough sense of self to realize their purpose and communicate it to one another. The Sybaris-wracked priesthood forms the first cults, and Arisen move from unmarked graves into proper, geomantically pleasing tombs. Most importantly, they begin to struggle against one another, grasping relics, and discovering the hard way that even the Deathless can die, at least for a time.

The conflicts of mummies, both Arisen and Shuankhsen, play out in the shadows of an ancient apocalypse. Kemet grew powerful out of Irem's leftovers and its early kings built great monuments and honored the gods, but Kemet's royal Great House slides into decline. The pyramids of Khufu and Khafre are collecting sand and the Sphinx is



already half-buried. The Great House is still revered for its ceremonial role, but the cult of Re at Iunu has shone so brightly it casts all other gods into shadow. Azar — the lord of the Underworld and chief deity of Irem — is almost entirely unknown, replaced by a rival death god and the all-conquering might of Re. King Unas is the son of Re, a *bau* (spiritual embodiment) of Heru, but his temporal power is divided among regional governors and Re’s priesthood.

The Arisen change everything. By the end of the Turn, as they settle into the cycle of death and rebirth, the burgeoning solar religion declines into one part of the nation’s faith, and Kemet returns to all the gods. Under Arisen guidance people learn the mysteries of Azar, building a great temple at the Deathless’ powerbase. Aided by Deathless cults and rebellious priests of Re, the regional nobles’ powers increase. Unas dies without a male heir but the man who replaces him — from a rival branch of the Great House — makes a show of marrying his daughter for continuity’s sake. Unas goes to his resting place in a pyramid not bare-walled, but filled with inscriptions and magical writing, which by the next Turn will form the basis of the Book of the Dead. Arisen discover their purpose and guilds and after a nation-shattering war, exile themselves into their great diaspora.

THEME

Within the rubric of memory and time, the principal sub-theme at work during the first Sothic Turn is discovery. The Arisen have returned, but they’ve done so bearing nothing (see sidebar) and this necessarily colors those first couple of Descents during this period. Mummies need to discover not only themselves, but each other, their cults, the truth about their natures and existences, and even fundamental elements they will later come to take for granted, such as the ability to call upon Utterances.

During the First Turn the Arisen are tested like they will be during no other Turn, at least until the Fourth Turn brings them roaring into the 21st century.

MEMORIES OF LONG AGO

The Cannibal Hymn presents a challenge to troupes — it’s the furthest point from the present that’s still part of “real” history, and one where **Mummy’s** setting hasn’t quite finished forming. The Arisen haven’t fallen into the patterns they’ll follow for millennia to come, and don’t possess all the resources they’ll have in later years.

Whether you use this chapter for a brief flashback or play the dawn of a character’s long service to the Judges, the unique characteristics of this era can highlight several ideas that are undercurrents in later times, or contrast against future events. Consider these factors:

First Turn Characters

When they arise for the very first time, the Arisen are not the souls they will be after millennia on the job. Characters begin the First Turn with Memory 1, no Utterances, no official guild membership, and no cults. Only a few have functioning tombs, and even fewer, a centering relic. Anything they want, they have to build or take for themselves — including the Memory to realize *what* all they require. The events of the Turn can be run as **Mummy** on “hard mode” for players used to the game, or as contrasting flashbacks if a character in a modern-day chronicle experiences loss and has to claw her way back. No matter how bad things get in future Turns, the Arisen faced hardships compounded on disadvantages in the Old Kingdom... and they overcame them all.

- **The Diaspora:** The First Turn is the only time in history when all the Arisen awaken without any baggage from prior Descents. This period, the First Turn, is the time when most Arisen either venture beyond the confines of North Africa or else return there seeking answers, having awakened far from anything they recall during life. Flashbacks from this Turn can establish them as members of the Arisen community. No matter who another mummy is, it’s possible he interacted with the characters during the First Turn.
- **Irem and Kemet:** Most inhabitants of the World of Darkness think of mummies as Egyptian if they know about the Deathless at all. Many mummies, who haven’t yet recovered memories of their lives in the Nameless Empire, think the same. Kemet, even the fictionalized version presented here, is *not* Irem. Kemet’s society and religion are as alien to the Arisen’s former culture as the post-Roman Dark Ages are to us, separated by a gulf of time. Kemetic gods are corrupted versions of Irem’s deities, humanized and named. Arisen who develop Memory become shocked by priests claiming the supremacy of the sun over other deities, or the idea of the king as a *bau* of the falcon god. The events of the Turn can be used to emphasize the difference between the horror of Irem and the loosely historical Kemet, as flashbacks for characters who have forgotten that difference.
- **Utterances:** One element of the Arisen’s magic did not spring from henet along with the Deathless. Affinities come naturally as a sahu forms, but Utterances

must be *learned*, and at the start of the Turn no Arisen has learned the magic of words. The common Utterances are discovered during this Turn, inscribed on sacred architecture by unknown hands or in the spontaneous visions of mortals tortured by Sybaris. Midway through the era, the mysterious *sha* — beasts of Sutek, allegedly — guide Arisen to these secrets. Once the first few Utterances become public knowledge among the guilds, a great rush to find as many spells as possible begins. A flashback to these events is ample justification for learning a new Utterance in a later period, or hinting at the source of Utterances' magic.

- **The First Sparks of Heresy:** Just as this Turn marks when the Arisen first comprehend their duty to the Judges, it marks the first cases of Deathless doubting or rejecting that duty. As the Arisen discover their purpose in returning to the lands of the living, and begin to comprehend the unending nature of their service, some rebel. As in later Turns, the Arisen don't have first purposes when Sothis calls them to awaken. Only after the first few Arisen die, and are summoned back by their new cults or the disturbance of their corpses, do the Arisen realize how tight the leashes on their souls are; and once realized, some chafe at the pressure. Most return to the fold after the Judges express their displeasure. Some are judged by their peers. A handful find the embrace of the Devourer, or begin the long road to heresy and Apotheosis (though the Heretic doesn't discover Apotheosis at this time). A flashback to the Turn can establish an antagonist mummy before she became a traitor, or set the stage for player characters' own later heresy.

THE TURN GONE BY

Kemet has risen and already begun its decline while the Arisen have slept. No mummy witnessed the Great Pyramid's construction, or knows who created the Sphinx and why — or at least, no *Arisen* does. Imhotep lived, died, and was deified in their absence. The twin kingdoms of Upper and Lower Kemet warred and were united by conquest without guidance from the guilds.

Arisen who seek answers in history, looking to understand the culture they find themselves in by understanding its past, might piece together some of the following events:

~3832 BCE: The Shan'iatu perform the Rite of Return. Irem vanishes into history.

The surviving peoples of the river valley and delta return to a clan-based society, grouping together for protection from raiders.

A Guide to Ancient Egyptian

Most "Egyptian" names are actually Greek, translations applied centuries after the events depicted in this chapter. Following **Mummy: The Curse's** use of the Egyptian rather than Greek names for the gods, we've used the names people, places, and supernatural entities were known by at the time of the Turn whenever possible. One exception is the Great House, the ruling dynasty and its immediate servants, as the native name for it — *Pharaoh* — will eventually become the king's personal title in later dynasties. To avoid confusion, "Great House" is rendered in English within this chapter, and Unas is a king. Some of the names used here, and their more familiar later versions, are as follows:

Places


Inbu-Hedj	Memphis
Abdju	Abydos
lunu	Heliopolis
Nubet	Naqada
Nekhen	Hieraconpolis
Nekheb	El-Kab
Per-Wadjet	Buto
Waset	Thebes
Yebu	Elephantine
Swenett	Aswan
Sena	Pelusium

Gods

Heru	Horus
Azar	Osiris
Re	Ra
Esit	Isis
Ptah	Ptah
Sutek	Set
Djehuti	Thoth

~3550–3200 BCE: The fertile valley of the upper river sees the first post-Irem towns, and a small nation centered on Nubet, Nekheb, and Nekhen flourishes. It will eventually form the nucleus of Upper Kemet.

~3300 BCE: Abdju, the hill of relics, is now the site of a small town. The inhabitants discover several strange



artifacts buried in the landscape of the hill, including the mummified remains of dozens of Arisen.

~3100 BCE: Upper Kemet is unified behind a king for the first time — the monarch takes the name “Scorpion” after the symbol of lost Irem.

The population of the upper river valley and the lower delta marshlands clusters into villages as its numbers grow. Nekheb now contains the first large-scale temple built since the Shan'iatu, to the goddess Nekhbet. Across the river in Nekhen, another local deity named Heru is the patron of the royal family.

3055 BCE: Scorpion's successor Narmer leads raids into the delta marshlands and enslaves vast numbers of rural villagers.

3050 BCE: Upper and Lower Kemet are united under Narmer's conquest. He becomes the first king of all Kemet, ruling from Nekhen. Construction of a new city at the meeting-point of valley and delta begins, to control river traffic and cement a new nation.

3000 BCE: Fifty years into the First Dynasty, the new white-walled city of Inbu-Hedj is now occupied by the Great House and their administration. Nekhen and Nubet fall from prominence as the cult centers at Abdu rise, while in the delta the villages of Pe and Dep unite around a temple to their patron goddess to become Per-Wadjet. The priests at Abdu have uncovered engravings describing the god of death, although without knowing Azar's name they build their own mythology around it, calling their god Khenti-Amentiu, “Foremost of the Westerners.” Aping the legends, kings are entombed around Abdu.

2813 BCE: King Qaa, the last king of the First Dynasty, dies. The Second Dynasty begins. These kings turn away from Abdu's priesthood and bury their dead in Inbu-Hedj's necropolis, instead.

2700 BCE: The cult of Re is established at Iunu and rapidly dominates Kemet's religion. The royal deity Heru is cast as the son of Re to preserve the Great House's religious role as divine leaders.

2680 BCE: Imhotep, famed high priest of Re at Iunu, revives the Iremite tradition of building in stone rather than mud brick and designs the first pyramid for then-king Netjerikhet, replacing the chthonic symbolism of traditional tombs with the solar symbols of Re's priesthood. Iunu becomes the intellectual center of the country while Abdu slides into obscurity.

2654 BCE: The first pyramid is completed. Artisans carve Imhotep's names alongside those of the king.

2547 BCE: Imhotep is deified. Re's astronomer-priests grow stronger; temples are now exempt from taxation. Royal tombs grow more elaborate. The traditional tomb field outside Inbu-Hedj falls into disuse, in favor of a site a few miles further, on a great desert plateau overlooking the


The One Who Comes In Peace

Who was Imhotep? Polymath. Genius. Doctor. Carpenter. Architect. Chancellor to king Netjerikhet. High Priest of Re. Imhotep is a legendary figure to the people of the First Turn, ascribed magical powers in life even before his apotheosis as a god of healing in death.

Arisen who regain their memories of Irem's religion, and go seeking the reason why Kemet's is so very different and perverted from Irem's ways, look at Imhotep's life as the turning point, when Re's priests pushed the old ways aside and Kemet looked to the sun and stars, not the underworld, for answers. Pyramids built under the priesthood's influence reverberate with power; Tef-Aabhi can tell that someone involved with their design knew the secrets of heka, and the Sphinx has a palpable draining effect on Sekhem in its vicinity. More importantly, the Solar temples and relief inscriptions on Kemet's necropoleis contain the secret formulae of Utterances — magic unknown to the Arisen until they see it, when it awakens in their souls.

The fact remains that Imhotep *can't* have been Arisen — he lived 300 years before the First Turn, and no tale evinces him causing Sybaris. Was he simply an inspired mortal? A freak of nature? A Shan'iatu born millennia too late? A harbinger of an unknown enemy? Arisen whose memories deepen far enough ponder the extermination of the Lost Guild, whose purview was magic and the heavens, and wonder. And as the Arisen return, they inspire the cult of Re to develop real magical aptitude among certain members, most of whom lay claim to secrets Imhotep taught their order.

Ultimately, the Arisen don't know. Imhotep's tomb was built in a secret location. Unless a mummy stumbles across it, the mystery of *why* Kemet turned from the Underworld to the sun will remain forever unsolved.



river. This new necropolis begins construction with the Great Pyramid of King Khufu.

~2500 BCE: During construction of the pyramid of Khafre, Khufu's successor, unknown persons carve the Sphinx out of a boulder in the plateau necropolis. The reason for its Amkhat-like design, and the nature of its occult power, remains enigmatic.

2470 BCE: The Great House is now almost an adjunct to the priesthood. They bury Shepseskaf, last king of the



Fourth Dynasty, in a simple tomb outside Inbu-Hedj rather than in a pyramid. His successor Userkaf, first king of the Fifth Dynasty, instead directs Kemet's resources to building solar temples in honor of Re. The kings who follow him add "son of Re" to their official names, and the power of the king must now be ritually renewed once per generation, keeping him further under the priesthood's control.

2470–2400 BCE: The Fifth Dynasty's kings rule from Inbu-Hedj and construct small pyramids for themselves in the surrounding necropoleis. The priesthood builds sunshrines all over Kemet.

2375 BCE: King Djedkare dies, but all his sons preceded him to the afterlife. His nephew Unas takes the throne amid financial difficulties and the growing demands of regional nobles, who are themselves funding the cult of Re in hope of finding favor with the gods. Unas is fierce but undisciplined. Kemet falls in line out of fear, but Unas' vizier Kagemni, a holdover from Djedkare's regime, handles practical matters of state.

2373 BCE: Djedkare's pyramid is completed. The construction of Unas' future tomb begins.

2371 BCE: Exactly 1,461 years after they were interred, the first Arisen rise with the Sothic Turn. The largest single group is at Abdu, where their remains had been discovered and venerated as relics by the death-priests. Other centers of early Arisen activity include Nubet and Nekheb, where intact tombs from the Nameless Empire rest among the necropoleis.

2345 BCE: Death of Unas. His son died before him. His successor Teti belongs to another branch of the Great House. He keeps Kagemni as his chief administrator and marries Unas' daughter Iput, securing the broad support of the people.

KEMET: THE BLACK LAND

The Greeks will call it the Nile, but to the people of Kemet it is only "the river"; it doesn't need any other name. Surrounded by desert, the river's waters nourish and irrigate the fertile black soils that give Kemet its name. Natural features mark the nation's boundaries — the desert wastelands away from the river on either side, the marshes and sea to the north, and the first cataract, the sections of white-water rapids that prevent ships from traveling further, to the south. Kemet isn't a nation that happens to include a river; it's chained to the watercourse, defined by it. It's the artery of trade, and transport. Kemet has virtually no roads except for causeways leading directly to the nearest branch of the river, and at certain points the nation is only 10 miles wide when the valley grows exceptionally deep.

Upper and Lower

The people of the river *understand* the shape of the world; their astrologers and mathematicians have calculated the size of its globe, and they're aware that it curves. They understand north and south, but don't have the same concept of north being "up" as we do. East and west are associated with life and death and the passage of the sun — necropoleis are almost exclusively built on the west bank of the river. As for north and south, the river's current defines such things. The Hieroglyph for "southward" is a sail, and that for "northward" is an oar. "Upper" Kemet is the southern river valley, and "Lower" Kemet the northern marshland and river delta.

TA-SHEEMA: UPPER KEMET

"The Land of Reeds" in the people's language, Ta-Sheema was the first part of the nation to unify following Irem's fall; its king conquered Lower Kemet to unify the two lands, not the other way around.

Ta-Sheema stretches from first cataract north to the flowering of the delta and the start of Lower Kemet, or Ta-Mehu. At the southernmost point, on the shores of the cataract, a monument marks the end of Kemet and the beginning of the foreign lands the people of the river call Ta-Seti, the northernmost part of Kush.

A few miles downstream of the cataract, the river divides around the **island of Yebu**, studded with wharves facilitating trade with Kemet's neighbor. Yebu is only used as a cargo transfer-point, though. It has only a few dozen people living on it permanently, as the people of the river believe it is the magical home of several gods, including the deities who control the river's annual flood. Upstream on the east bank, **Swenett** hosts the troops protecting Kemet's border, counting houses for trade, and the taxation offices taking the nomarch's due. The countryside around the city is carved up by great quarries, mining the stone needed for the ever-increasing number of monuments built by the priesthood and Great House.

The southern stretches of the river, where the valley walls grow too deep for agriculture, are sparsely inhabited. Most civilization clusters around the bend in the river where it flows counter-clockwise around a plateau, halfway along its length from delta to cataract. The slower, wider waters at that point make for easier navigation, and the available farmland stretches miles wide. North of that, minor tributaries break off from the river before lazily





rejoining, creating the widest area of fertile land in Kemet. This region is almost entirely given over to fields, not cities.

Where the people live, the banks of the river are almost completely dominated by agriculture. The river's banks are difficult to make out, breaking up into thousands of irrigation channels and paddies, designed to absorb the seasonal floods and allow access to the river proper from further inland. Beyond the flood region come the fields, and then the settlements built on higher ground or, where that isn't possible, on stilts. Most construction is of mud brick — wood is too rare, and stone too expensive for anything except official monuments. Most settlements are tiny hamlets, consisting of a few extended families that live and work on their land. Larger villages house other trades, and the few proper towns serve as hubs for necropoleis and temples.

Governmentally, Ta-Sheema is divided into 22 nomes running from the first nome at Swenett to the 22nd at the small town of Tepihu. A nome is an administrative area run by an assigned nobleman from the largest town in the area. At the start of the Turn, nomarchs are technically appointed by the Great House, but several nomes have virtually hereditary nomarchs where the family in charge is too powerful to dislodge.

Before the unification of Kemet, Ta-Sheema's capital was at **Nekhen**, a small city in the third nome. The city

has now declined since the First Dynasty conquered Lower Kemet and moved the overall capital to Inbu-Hedj. Nekhen is almost overshadowed by its larger twin **Nekheb**, whose patron vulture-goddess Nekhbet is still the symbol of the upper lands. The largest population center in Ta-Sheema is now **Waset**, home to a particularly powerful nomarch, Ramose.

To the west of the river, as the water turns north for its course into Lower Kemet, lies the ancient funerary city of **Abdju**. The hill of relics hosts a temple to the local god of death, and was the royal necropolis in the First Dynasty. More importantly, several Arisen were uncovered by mortals in the area before the First Turn. These remained still, incorruptible corpses, revered as magical relics of the death-god and kept safe by Abdju's priests.

TA-MEHU: LOWER KEMET

As the narrow strip of fertile land widens and the river divides into its delta, the landscape becomes dominated by undeveloped scrubland and marshes, with towns and attendant farmlands built on the usable sections. This is Ta-Mehu, the "land of papyrus," Ta-Sheema's wilder, more rustic neighbor.

As it flows north to the sea, the river divides and divides again into seven main courses. The capital city of **Inbu-**





Hedj lies on the west bank just before the first major division, controlling all river traffic moving south into Upper Kemet. It also serves as the first nome of Lower Kemet, alone in not having a nomarch as it is the seat of the king.

Ta-Mehu's nomes are numbered sequentially like Ta-Sheema's, numbering the westernmost main watercourse to the sea, then the next most western, then the next, and so on until the 20th nome in the Far East. Together with Ta-Sheema, Kemet is therefore divided into 42 nomes.

Before the conquest, Ta-Mehu's capital was **Per-Wadjet** near the mouth of one of the river's courses, on the shores of a great lake. The city is named for Wadjet, the cobra-goddess who has become Lower Kemet's patroness. Other northern towns include **Iunu**, stronghold of the sun-priests who have ascended to near-rule of the country, and **Sena**, a fortified port guarding the land-bridge to Mafkat and the approach to the easternmost branch of the river from the sea.

DESHRET: THE CHAOS OUTSIDE

On either side of the river lies **Deshret**, the red desert. Home to nomadic tribes who wander from oasis to oasis, bandits, and well-guarded outposts, the people of the river think of Deshret as an inhospitable land of chaos. The Arisen know that Irem lies ruined somewhere beneath Deshret's sands. The symbolism of the sun's course would point to it lying to the west of the river, but they can't be sure.

Kemet's main use for the desert is its natural resources — quartz, gold, and jasper are all mined under guard. Trade caravans head for distant lands to the south, bringing precious metals, jewels, and other goods.

CITIES OF THE LIVING

Most people in Kemet are rural, living and dying within a short span of miles their entire lives. The exceptions are Kemet's famous cities, paltry villages compared to long-lost Irem but impressive to living eyes. Arisen awakening during the Turn find themselves needing to infiltrate these urban areas in search of cultists and relics, or returning from henet in Kemet's many necropoleis.

Most cities in Kemet feature a temple complex to a particular god, a version of one of Irem's nameless pantheon that struck a chord with the local clans and has been incorporated into the people's religion. Many are also the capitals of their nomes — it's rare for a nome to be so populous it can support more than one urban area beside the dozens of farming villages that make up most of the population.

INBU-HEDJ, THE WHITE WALLS (MEMPHIS)

Founded in the First Dynasty as commemoration of Kemet's unity, the great city of Inbu-Hedj is the largest metropolis on the river and the royal residence of King Unas. Built in Lower Kemet at the first division of the river, the city sprawls across dozens of districts divided by habitation and usage — parks, residential districts for natives and foreigners, palaces, cemeteries, temples, workshops, dockyards, and warehouses. The original fortifications have long vanished, dismantled in the never-ending cycles of construction and demolition as successive kings put their stamp on the city, but by tradition major buildings are still painted white.


The busiest districts of the city are Hutnub ("place of gold"), housing the royal workshops, and Peru-Nefer, which makes up the majority of Inbu-Hedj's dockyards. Both spark memories of life in Irem's guild houses and provide potential cultists for visiting Arisen, especially Mesen-Nebu, Maa-Kep, and Tef-Aahbi. In these hives of activity traders sell their goods, and artisans forge weapons, build ships, set jewels, and carve stone. Surrounding residential districts house these craftsmen and their families, plus those required to keep them fed and clothed. These parts of the city never sleep, staying abuzz with the constant din of tens of thousands of people pressed into a relatively small space.

Other districts of the city are almost silent except for prayers and songs for the gods' ears. Temples hold their land sacrosanct — peasants are not permitted to enter their grounds, or set foot on the procession-ways linking the major sites. The largest temple in the city is to its patron god, Ptah the Craftsman, who created the world. Ptah does not appear in any memory of Irem the Arisen can recall, leaving the disturbing implication that he is in some way based on Irem's guilds, repositories of magical knowledge about all forms of artifice.

As symbol of the two lands united, Inbu-Hedj holds the main palace of the Great House, which together with its surrounding gardens takes up several districts of the city. Although the king's religious power is waning compared to that of the priesthood, the festivals for coronation and renewal take place here and at the temple to Ptah. The main palace is divided from the city by a canal crossed only by a bridge to the procession-way leading directly to Ptah's temple; the servants must enter by river, when they don't live entirely on the grounds.

To the west of Ptah's temple, the city becomes dominated by mortuary temples and cemeteries, collectively called Ankhtawy: the "life of two lands." The urban area has already encroached on several of the earliest tombs. Spreading west of the city's heart, the necropoleis hold






The Secret of the Sphinx

Lurking next to the pyramid of king Khafre (who its human head supposedly resembles) in the heart of the plateau necropolis, the Hor-Em-Akhet ("Heru of the Horizon") is the most powerful element of the landscape. Its physical resemblance to a gigantic Amkhat would be troubling enough, as would its construction at the rise of the solar religion's dominance, but it goes beyond the mild heka of the surrounding pyramids and tombs to twist the flows of magic around it in an unhealthy perversion of the Tef-Aahbi's arts.

Rather than containing Sekhem as a proper effigy would, the Sphinx instead *absorbs* it, pulling it from the pyramid field and swallowing it whole. Mortals approaching the monument act in a foolhardy nature as though mildly intoxicated (in mechanical terms, it imposes a -1 penalty to all Composure-related rolls), but Arisen feel the full effects. Staying within sight of the Sphinx at sundown provokes an immediate Descent roll. Affinities and (once they're discovered) Utterances related to commanding locations or the landscape cost their usual amount in Pillars, but simply fail without a roll within a mile of the Hor-Em-Akhet.

This bizarre curse remains in effect even to the modern day. If any mummy ever solves the mystery of who built the Sphinx and why, he will not (and cannot) remember it after that Descent.



both the ancient squat tombs of the earliest kings, the high plateau containing the Great Pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty, and the more modest pyramids of the last centuries. King Djedkare's mortuary complex was completed just before the Turn, and King Unas' complex — including his pyramid — is already underway, and expected to take at least a decade to finish.

None of the tombs bordering Inbu-Hedj house mummies — at least, not at first. The city was founded halfway through the long henet, but Arisen still find themselves drawn to the pyramid fields. Mortuary temples — those venerating a deceased king, maintaining his place in the afterlife — inevitably fall off in use after two or three successions, such that only those of the most recent kings are still staffed by priests. The older parts are all but abandoned and gathering sand. Despite the weathering of age and mortal craftsmanship, mummies can still sense the faint pull of magic in the air around Ankhtawy, especially around the high plateau. Some tombs may house relics, keys to Utterances recorded by unknown hands, or act as large-scale vestiges.

ABDJU, THE HILL OF RELICS (ABYDOS)

Once an important religious site for Upper Kemet, and the traditional burial place of the first kings before they abandoned it for the land west of the capital, Abdju at the start of the Sothic Turn is a forgotten backwater, eclipsed by the cult centers at Inbu-Hedj and Iunu. Within a few years, it will rise again to be one of the most important temples in the nation, thanks to its unexpected residents.

Abdju is home to the Arisen.

The tribesmen who settled this place in the pre-dynastic times between Irem's fall and the rise of kings went digging for resources in the hills west of the river. They found stone shaped by human hands, strange items, and the wrapped remains of the dead. They called it Abdju, "Hill of Relics," and aped what they thought were ancient funeral rites.

Over the centuries Abdju developed a faith based on old images of the nameless Jackal and the magical, never-rotting bodies they found in the hills, naming their deity Khenti-Amentiu, "foremost of the dead," which most people in Kemet take to be a local name for Anpu. By the time the first kings arose in Upper Kemet, the priests at Abdju were revered for their wisdom in matters of the afterlife. They made their offerings, buried the dead with great ceremony, and guarded the mummies they'd found. Even as Re's priesthood at Iunu and Ptah's cult in Inbu-Hedj grew more powerful, they remained faithful. When the kings built pyramids for themselves that looked to the sun rather than the darkness beneath the ground, the priests at Abdju persevered. When King Khufu forbade the sacrifice of human servants as attendants to the dead, they substituted crude non-magical effigies.

None were more surprised than Abdju's faithful when the mummies woke up.

As far as the Arisen manage to remember, years into the Turn, Abdju was once the site of a Su-Menent funerary complex in the Nameless Empire, where the guild of the Shell experimented on dead flesh. After the Rite of Return, several dozen Arisen were interred here in what proves to be the largest concentration of mummies anywhere in Kemet. Mortals discover 15 of them by digging into the hill. Two were destroyed by fire in separate accidents over the years, leaving 13 kept as holy relics by the priests of death.

Dozens of Arisen awaken here over the Turn — five of them within the first month. They hammer the priests and peasantry of Abdju with Sybaris, and soon take over the town. At first, the immortals reside in the temple, forging the priests into a cult while they wait for their fellows to awaken, but by the middle of the Turn mummies openly walk in the streets, commanding the population. By the end of the Turn, Abdju is home to the reformed Su-



Menent guild and the first Arisen nome. Under Arisen guidance, the temple to Khenti-Amentiu is rededicated in the true faith of Azar, the god of Irem, and his worship spreads across Kemet.

IUNU, THE PLACE OF PILLARS (HELIOPOLIS)

The foremost cult center of Kemet, Iunu is the house of Re, the sun god whose faith has overtaken the Black Land. Capital of the delta's 13th nome, the city has grown in prestige along with its priesthood, eclipsing Abdu and approaching Inbu-Hedj in magnificence. The House of Re owns more land, relative to the size of the city, than its counterparts in other polities, and centuries of indulgence from Kemet's royalty have left it extremely rich — the priests who staff it spend the months that they do not offer devotions in study rather than the fields, and Iunu has a reputation as a center of learning and medicine going back to before Imhotep. It trains architects in sacred geomancy, teaches village doctors what prayers to say and how to set bones, and employs thousands of scribes. The arts of heka are literally enshrined, as the sun's priests describe it as Re's feminine counterpart in the creation of the world.

To the Arisen, Iunu is both hauntingly familiar and off-putting; feelings which become clearer as Memory rises. The knowledge taught here is not the full lore of Irem's guilds, but contains just enough scraps of real principles to be dangerous. Worse, Iunu seems to invert the teachings of Irem in dangerous ways — instead of the djed, the great spines reaching into the earth, of Irem, Iunu's "Pillars" are solar obelisks, erected to track the sun in his passage across the sky over the year. At the heart of the temple complex, Re's priests sacrifice cattle over a miniature pyramid made of a single, pure-white stone, and consult it as an oracle. They are obsessed with the sky and the written word. Some are sorcerers, ham-fistedly manipulating Sekhem without the proper knowledge to know what they are doing.

Deathless seeking to turn Iunu to the will of the Judges face a daunting effort overturning centuries of tradition, but the potential reward is great enough that several try over the course of the Turn; political power over Kemet, access to the mortal population's greatest minds (both magical and mundane), and a treasure-trove of possible vessels. The danger is that Re's priests find the Arisen equally fascinating, and by the end of the Turn attempt to capture Deathless for magical experiments.

NEKHEN AND NEKHEB (HIERACONPOLIS AND EL KAB)

The twin cities of Nekhen and Nekheb lie in the third nome of Upper Kemet, 50 miles north of Waset. Nekhen is on the west bank of the river, and Nekheb almost opposite it.

A sleepy town of only 2,000 people, Nekhen was once the capital city of all Kemet; before Scorpion was the first

king of the Upper Valley, he was chieftain of Nekhen, and five dynasties later the Great House still maintains a palace here for when the king tours his dominion. Unas has not visited since becoming king, however (many kings never bother); and Nekhen is dwindling compared to its neighbors.

A few things attract the Arisen's interest to Nekhen; within Nekhen, the temple of Heru is where the (to them) pernicious and false myth of the mortal king being the *bau* of a god originated. The oldest kings left relics behind in the temple to rulership, some of which are vessels. Heru's priests keep King Scorpion's weapons under guard, in a chamber that conceals their magical aura. Once revealed, these relics will spark the decisive battle of the Turn — one so awful in its consequences that the participants erase it from history.

More important (and nearly three times larger than Nekhen) is Nekheb, on the far bank. One of the oldest fortified settlements along the river, Nekheb adjoins the first necropolis; many tombs here date back to the Nameless Empire and contain Arisen. The city of the living is surrounded by a vast, mud-brick wall, and the inhabitants tell myths of the dead walking at night around them. The city is dominated by the Temple of Nekhbet, the vulture-goddess patroness of Upper Kemet whom the Black Land's religion reveres as a creatrix and the mother of Heru. Her priestesses, called "the mothers," wear head-to-toe cloaks of vulture feathers and are renowned fortune-tellers and diviners. The high priestess is consulted as an oracle by Kemet's nobility, whose gifts help fund the temple. One of King Unas' queens trained in the vulture's cult, and emissaries from Inbu-Hedj frequently come to consult the oracle on his behalf.


NUBET, THE GOLDEN (NAQADA)

The people of Kemet know Nubet as the gateway to the Red Desert. It is one of the few places whose inhabitants consider the world outside the river's embrace on a daily basis. The reason for this difference in outlook is multiform. The city is one of the main sites where overland routes to far-off oases approach the river. It lies at one of the narrowest points of the Black Land, and maintains the garrison protecting the royal gold mines a few miles outside the fertile soil. Because of this status, it is the site for the temple of Sutek, god of chaos, foreigners, and the red desert itself.

Unknown to its mortal inhabitants, it is one of the few surviving outposts of the Nameless Empire.

In Irem's time, as in 1,461 years later, Nubet was a gold mine. The Arisen were the skilled craftspeople of Irem, with a gulf of difference between even an engraver or alchemist working with gold, and the slaves who lived





and died in the mines. Nevertheless, the guilds maintained holdings here to oversee the mines, and when Arisen were entombed during the Rite of Return some of them were interred outside Nubet. These tombs now form the heart of its sprawling, millennia-old necropolis. In the early Turn, these Arisen have the great advantage of proper tombs located a safe distance from mortal habitation (unlike their counterparts in Abdu and Nekheb), and some even have vessels already entombed with them.

Unfortunately, Nubet is also one of the power bases of the Shuankhsen. And they were here first.

The Shuankhsen Mesedikereh spent his miserable mortal existence in the mines of Nubet, was buried alive and fed to the Devourer as his reward for years of toil, and has returned here during the Sothic Turn. Filled with the Devourer's hunger, he sought out sources of Sekhem, discovering the tombs of three Alchemists. His first target awoke and nearly destroyed him, prompting him to ally with eight other Shuankhsen — there were more, but many early Lifeless prey on each other, and some were too traumatized by their time in Ammut's grasp to understand his offer. His pack successfully ate the other two Alchemists, and three more they discovered through clues and omens. While other Shuankhsen scatter to the winds, Mesedikereh and his followers acquire enough Sekhem to remain and build a cult that seeks out mummies for their consumption. While they still explore Nubet for prey, their agents travel further afield, following traffic from the mines in search of the delectable enemy. These journeys eventually take them to the gates of the Great House.

PER-WADJET, THE GREEN (BUTO)

As Nekhen and Nekheb are to Upper Kemet, Per-Wadjet is to the delta. Originally a cluster of villages arranged around one shore of a lake, Per-Wadjet was unified by the temple complex of Wadjet, the cobra-goddess of fierce protection who strikes at the king's enemies. Wadjet serves as patroness of Ta-Mehu just as Nekhbet is patroness of Ta-Sheema, and Unas' second queen grew up on the shores of the great green lake, daughter of the city's nomarch.

Compared to many of the southern cities, Per-Wadjet is sprawling and open, with vineyards, beehives, and fruit orchards occupying districts next to the workers' residences, temples, and the nomarch's palace. The lake means the land here does not flood as drastically as in other parts of Kemet, but remains fertile, allowing for more long-term cultivation. The city exports wine and other foods to other nomes. Even common workers share in the city's bounty with annual feasts to their goddess.

The city of connoisseurs is also, in dark rumors, the city of poisoners. The cobra remains undetected unless threatened, when it spits fire into the enemy's eye; other Lower nomes

routinely accuse Per-Wadjet's rulers of interfering with their politics when the green city decides it has reason. The priests of Wadjet, meanwhile, openly handle snakes, milking them for their venom which they consume (in extremely diluted form) in oracular ceremonies.

WASET, THE CITY OF THE SCEPTER (THEBES)

Capital of the 11th Upper nome and second-largest city in Kemet, Waset is one of the wealthiest cities in the country thanks to its abundance of good grazing and farmland. The nomarchs of Waset have always been powerful, even before the unification, but in the First Dynasty they were kept in check by the relative closeness of the Great House in Nekhen. With King Unas many days' sail away in Inbu-Hedj, and the power of the monarchy steadily failing, the nobility of Waset look at the revenues they send away in taxation every year with increasingly displeased eyes. They send funds to the cult of Re in Iunu directly, naming their local sun-god Montu as an aspect of Re, and build solar temples in their own names. Waset's current nomarch Ramose has even begun construction of a small pyramid to house him after death.

SENA, THE SHIELD (PELUSIUM)

The far northeastern outpost of Kemet, Sena sits within massive brick fortifications at the edge of the fertile delta and the salt-water marshes of the coast. Only three miles from the sea, it serves as Kemet's port for seagoing ships — especially the trade route to Byblos. Kemet has never been attacked from the water, however; Sena's foreboding military readiness protects the Black Land from incursions across the Mafkat peninsula to the east, a final line of defense should the outposts in that territory fall.

The farmland around Sena is almost entirely given over to flax, which does well in the cooler climate near the coast. Flax is used for everything from lantern oil, to medicine, to the white linen garments of priests and nobility, but Sena has to import food from other Lower nomes. The defenses can hold against external enemies for years, but Sena would fall in a month to a siege from *inside* Kemet.

LANDS BEYOND

Arisen in the First Turn hear of other lands, trading partners and rivals of the Black Land. The Nameless Empire extended far beyond Kemet's borders, and as they regain their sense of self some Arisen remember coming from tributary nations and conquered peoples who no longer exist. Speaking to caravan masters and ships' captains will provide a sense of geography, but their homelands have changed at least as much as Kemet. A minority of Arisen awaken in neighboring countries, thrown adrift by the Nameless Empire's collapse.



KUSH (SUDBAN)

The people of the river call the region extending south, following the river to its source, **Kush**. Rather than an Empire, Kush is a territory made up of several peoples, tribes, and independent states. No king has conquered all of it. The area of Lower Kush immediately to Kemet's south is **Ta-Seti**; the land of the bow. Its people, whom Arisen recognize as one of the four races of Irem, are called the Medjay. Medjay are famed archers and are found in large numbers in Upper Kemet, where they mostly find work as soldiers and bodyguards. Many mummies are ethnically "Medjay" to Kemet's eyes, as almost half of Kush lay within the Nameless Empire's borders; and a handful even awoken at the start of the Turn in the hills of Ta-Seti rather than Kemet.

TJEMEHU (LIBYA)

The land and people of what will one day be Libya, along the coast of the red desert west of the river, are called **Tjemehu**. Fiercer than neighboring tribes, the Tjemehu have displayed a willingness to abandon their nomadic lives when the opportunity arises, taking farmland on Lower Kemet's westernmost edges for themselves unless driven off by armed response. King Djedkare defeated three Tjemehu chieftains in the last five years of his reign, and at the time of the Turn nomarchs of threatened nomes (some of whom are ethnically Tjemehu, themselves) call for King Unas to lead another expedition west. These calls are only amplified once the Arisen return; although none can remember the location of Irem, as Kemet's immediate western neighbors the Tjemehu may drive their herds over buried riches.

MAFKAT (SINAI)

The desert-peninsula adjoining Kemet to the east has been the main focus for the Great House's military adventures since the unification of the two kingdoms; it has long since been conquered, but is repeatedly under threat from external powers. Inhabited by nomadic shepherd tribes, **Mafkat** is richer in mineral resources than the red desert immediately outside Kemet, such that its name means "land of turquoise." It controls the land routes both north to Byblos and to the great cities far to the east. Those city states have attempted to take control of Mafkat several times in the centuries since Kemet conquered it, though they have not been successful by the time of the Turn. In Unas' reign Mafkat is at peace. The frontier is studded with forts and monuments to past battles, but also exploited for copper and turquoise, with some mines dating back centuries. The largest are known as the Terraces of Turquoise, sited in the southwest of Mafkat.

HAW-NEBU (THE MEDITERRANEAN)

Kemet has only a few outposts on its northern border. The settled delta of Ta-Mehu breaks up into a thick band of largely uninhabited saltwater marshland before the sea. The people of the river refer to marsh and sea both as **haw-nebu**, the salt-water wastes, and think of it as a natural barrier between their world and the strange foreigners beyond. The sole port accessing the sea is at Sena, and shipping hugs the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to trade with the city-state of Byblos.

BYBLOS (SYRIA)

Byblos, on the coast of the Mediterranean, is Kemet's oldest and most faithful external ally, so much so that the city now almost seems a colony. Her nobility dress like nomarchs, decorate their palaces in the style of the Great House, and are economically dependent on trade with Kemet. In return, ships (Kemet's sailors call all ocean-going vessels "Byblos-Ships") arrive every year bearing timbers and other goods the river valley cannot easily produce. Once the diaspora begins late in the Turn, several dozen mummies move through Byblos on their way to what will be Turkey and Georgia.


PUNT (SOUTHEAST AFRICA)

By long land-routes winding through Kush, or perilous sea-journeys to the southeast, Kemet trades with what the people call the **Land of Punt**, the exotic territory south of the red desert and even the river. Most traders in Kemet have never set foot in Punt. Its goods (palm trees, strange animals, precious gemstones, and strange incenses) make their way to Kemet's trading-houses by repeated exchange. King Unas keeps giraffes in his menagerie, nomarchs preen over emeralds and rubies, and storytellers weave tales of the strange people of the south that are almost entirely fanciful. To the Arisen, Punt is a complete mystery; Irem's Empire never extended that far south, and even after recovering Memory most had no idea the world extended that far. During the diaspora, a few mummies decide to brave the arduous journey south, reasoning that Relics may have been traded to Punt during the long henet.

KI-EN-GIR (MESOPOTAMIA)

Officially, Kemet has no rivals. King Unas is rightful monarch of the whole world, all who sail upon his waters, and all who live upon his lands. Across the desert east of Mafkat, however, a mighty civilization flourishes on the banks of their own great rivers; the **Ki-En-Gir**, or "land of civilized kings" in their language. This region was settled even in Irem's time — Arisen who recover memories of the Nameless Empire sometimes recall great wars against the demon-sorcerers of the eastern cities. In Irem's absence,





the cities of Uruk, Lagash, Kish, Kuara, and Akkad have grown large and prosperous — at the time of the Turn, Uruk is the largest city in the world, home to almost 80,000 people. Fortunately, the cities' military power is diminished by the distance overland between them and Kemet, and by internal feuds. Thirty-seven years after the Turn begins, King Sargon of Akkad will conquer the others and establish an empire. For now, the cities are the focus of stories of strange foreign gods, barbarian heroes, and dark magic. Kish in particular holds a dark reputation in Kemet for human sacrifice and profane rites. Arisen seeking to follow their Judges by reclaiming magic from unworthy hands find much to attract them in the east, and the bloody upheavals the region will undergo during the diaspora may stem in part from Iremite magic clashing with the Shan'iatu's ancient rivals once again.

THE LIVING

Just as the river needs no name, the people living on its shores call themselves only *remet-en-kemet*; “People of the Black Land.” Nationalism as later societies will know it is reserved for ones' nome, not the country as a whole; a last vestige of the individual states King Scorpion united 730 years ago. Unas may be weaker than his legendary ancestors but the Great House's rule is a divine fact, not something an ordinary farmer ever questions.

Rich or poor, young or old, male or female, everyone's lives follow the rhythms of the river. The people of Kemet divide the year into three seasons of four months each based on the river's annual flood. New Year is marked by Sothis rising before the sun at dawn, heralding the inundation or “Time of Flood.”

The high water lasts from July to October, then recedes in the “Time of Emergence,” during which farmers plough the newly-deposited silt into their fields and sow crops from the last year's seeds. The final season, or “Time of Harvest,” sees the produce of the year gathered, stored, and taxed beginning in March until the next Sothic New Year.

The flood cycle has left indelible marks on Kemet's society. The exact shape of the land *changes* every year as the flood waters carve new channels and leave new deposits, so the wealth of every individual is assessed annually during the Time of Emergence. Taxation is applied by the regional chiefs, supervised by scribes working on behalf of the Great House.

Most people's contributions to society, however, come during the Time of Flood itself. In lieu of material wealth, those individuals who can't perform their work during the high water (such as all the farm workers) instead give up a portion of their time to community projects. When the river covers the fields, farmers become masons and

laborers, building Kemet's monuments, repairing dikes, and even serving as soldiers. Returning Maa-Kep often find issue with local implementations of the labor force, but not the basic principles of communal effort Kemet runs on; and the Engravers find fertile ground for building their cults in the great work-gangs assembled every year in the name of civic duty.

Marriage in Kemet is a simple legal recognition of a couple (a man can have more than one wife, but in practice it's very rare) co-habiting, with no religious ceremony involved. The people of the river have no concept of “legitimacy” with regard to children; your parents are simply your parents, whether they're married or not, complete with inheritance rights. Children and adults may also be adopted by individuals wishing to grant them inheritance rights; the people have no concept of wills, so the usual method among the nobility of dividing an estate among friends is to adopt them, even in old age. Divorce, too, is as legally simple as one party moving out of the shared house. Women have equal legal rights to property, inheritance, and self-determination as men, but careers are heavily gender-segregated. Women may not take part in any activity involving blades. This restricts female soldiers to archery, and numerous careers from butchery, barbering, and even many farming jobs (reaping implements count) are male-only pursuits. Most rural women work in textile production halls, grind grain, or make bricks while their brothers and husbands are in the fields. Female Arisen during the Turn have to assert their right to bear arms or keep this segregation in mind when attempting to pass unnoticed as mortals.

SOCIAL STANDING

The overwhelming majority of people in Kemet are simple peasants, not slaves. Civic slavery is a punishment levied for crimes including being a debtor and evading tax. The slave has reduced rights, including losing the right to decide which career to follow when not in Flood. Slaves may still marry freely and own property, and their punishment isn't hereditary — their families are normal members of society. Slavery can be life-long, but is usually for a fixed number of years.

Citizens occupy all walks of life, from the agricultural workers to the skilled craftsmen and women of the great cities, who receive rations and shelter along with their pay. Even small villages have professional musicians, hired as entertainers or by nobles and temples.

Apart from the majority, a few distinct social classes have emerged.

Scribes, or *sekhau*, are the educated class, who enter school at an early age to become literate. Scribal schools are regional institutions, set up in the larger population centers,



although all scribes are legally employed by the Great House itself. They serve Kemet as civil servants, administrators, economists, historians, and emissaries. Painters, engravers, and other fine artists are considered scribes as well — and as royal servants, the entire profession is exempt from taxation and the civic labor duties of the lower classes. Any child can enter the scribal schools, though by the time of the Turn most applicants are the children of scribes themselves, and female scribes are very rare.

The continued existence of a scribal “guild” is of great help to returning Sesha-Hebsu during the Turn. Rivalries and secret traditions within the schools make them fertile ground for recruitment as Cults. Many have private gods already, usually aspects of Djehuti, the Ibis. Once a mummy takes control of a scribal school she enjoys access to the mechanisms of state and governance, even to the Great House.

Medjay are the ethnic group hailing from Ta-Seti, the foreign land bordering on Kemet’s southern reaches. Large numbers of Medjay have entered Kemet over the centuries, and they maintain their own clans in and amongst the greater population. Medjay have no rights as citizens, though are still protected from wrongdoing by the law — they don’t take part in civic labor, but aren’t supported in hard times either, and must find work for themselves. Their people have a long martial tradition of their own, and as they don’t work in other careers most of the year like Kemet’s own citizen-soldiers, many Medjay find work as hunters, bodyguards, soldiers, and constables for local law enforcement. By the time of the Turn, the Medjay working for the nomarchs and Great House make up almost all of Kemet’s tiny “standing army,” and armed Medjay are an unremarkable sight in and around the nation’s centers of power. Arisen who are ethnically “Nubian” are usually seen as Medjay by mortals once their sahu fully forms.

Kemet still has a large and many-layered **nobility**, descendants and successors of the clan chiefs who were united by conquest by the Great House. The chiefs own land (granted to them by the Great House) and administer local matters, from taxation to legal judgments. The Great Chief (*Haty-A*) or nomarch for each nome rules it in the king’s stead. The Great House can demand workforces, supplies, boats, and soldiers at any time, but the 42 nomarchs expend resources on their own projects as well as those for the monarchy. Most have family histories every bit as complex and storied as the royal family, or are distant relatives of former dynasties. Technically, the position of nomarch is assigned at the pleasure of the king, but as any recipient of the post must be able to carry it out, it’s almost unheard-of for someone not already a member of a nome’s wealthy elite to be elevated to the position. Some nomes, like Waset, are virtually monarchies of their own.

The power and privileges of Kemet’s nobility pose a problem for the Arisen. Irem had no social elite beyond the Shan’iatu, and seeing some mortals elevate themselves over others enrages a few mummies (especially Maa-Kep) and intrigues others (especially Mesen-Nebu.) Gaining influence over regional officials is necessary to secure cults and gain labor for tomb construction, but many Arisen find it difficult to understand the nobility’s mindset and find themselves resorting to threats or offers of supernatural backing for petty ambitions. Once Sybaris takes hold and the Turn progresses, many nobles become obsessed with leaving records of their accomplishments, desperate to prove to the universe that they left legacies. They commission engravers to carve autobiographies into the walls of their tombs, and throw more resources into shrines and monuments.

The **Great House** is key to controlling Kemet, the capstone on the pyramid of mortal society. Central bureaucracy, royal family, and temple to the living god-king in one, it employs hundreds of people in the palace at Inbu-Hedj alone. It also funds mortuary cults, exerts influence over temples and the nobility through land grants and resource demands, and commands the loyalty of a legion of scribes. Acquiring even a lowly position at court is difficult, and *any* role that involves approaching the king’s presence is filled by the upper echelons of nobility; even the king’s fan-bearer is the third son of a nomarch.

King Unas spends his days at the center of a highly regimented machine of prestige and power. Audiences take place only at certain times of the day and require weeks of favor-trading even for nobles and high priests. No commoner — or Arisen posing as one — will ever see the king as anything other than a distant figure on a balcony. Courtiers are graded as “friends” or “acquaintances,” with differing levels of protocol expected of each. As Shuankhsen insinuate themselves into the Great House these difficulties either increase, or appear to vanish when Ammut’s children use an audience to lure prey.

How do the Arisen gain access to a system specifically designed to deny outsiders access? One might pose as a foreign diplomat, or assume the identity of a courtier using magic to conceal her sahu. Others work with their cults to gain “legitimate” entrance to the Great House, whether through scribal houses, craftspeople, or subverted temples.

RELIGION

Before the Arisen work their influence and Sybaris on it, the faith of Kemet is not the morbid pessimism that future societies will paint it as. The average citizen accepts that the gods exist as a fact of life, does not worship only a single deity, and prays when attempting to beg divine influence over an aspect of his life. Although gods are associated with



particular cities, this is a matter of where the gods' physical manifestations are present, not where they are exclusively worshipped by supplicants. Most people will never set foot in a temple, as common folk aren't permitted entrance to the gods' sanctuaries.

Most worship takes place at small unmanned shrines that dot the landscape, and ordinary houses usually contain a very small shrine to one or two household gods and the inhabitant's ancestors.

Priests (and priestesses) staff the temples, which are less places of public worship than engines feeding sacrifices and life to the divine in order to keep the universe functioning. Temples follow strict timetables of prayer and offerings 24 hours a day; the schedule is so punishing that all temples divide their priests into shifts who perform the rites for a single month per season, rotating out to other civil or religious work at other times. Smaller temples' priests spend most of their year as nobles, craftspeople, or scribes. Even in larger temples which can feed and house their entire priesthood all year, Arisen navigating Kemet's faith must bear in mind who priests are when they are not tending to religion.

Kemet's religion supports three kinds of temple.

Sanctuaries are the houses of the gods, often named "House of —." A sanctuary is built on a site sacred to a particular deity and houses a statue representing the god, which the temple's rituals use as a focal point.

These divine khats are only brought out on special occasions like festivals, remaining hidden from outsiders at all other times.

A **mortuary temple** is devoted to a former king, maintaining its focus' place in Duat through worship of the king as embodiment of Heru. Each king builds his own temple at the same time as preparing his tomb; Unas' is under construction already.

The **solar temples** of Re's priesthood center around a solar obelisk instead of a cultic statue-form or the legend of a deceased monarch. They are smaller and require fewer priests than other temples, so that nomarchs can afford to sponsor them themselves. While most gods have two, perhaps three sanctuaries at most, Re has several dozen temples spread along the river.

All forms of temples sometimes contain vessels among the gods' sacred possessions. Solar temples are especially prone to act as crude vestiges and disrupt geomancy, and sanctuaries may contain proper relics handed down from the Nameless Empire. Mortuary temples are the least interesting, magically, beyond acting as guardians of the tombs that *do* contain artifacts.

As the Turn progresses, the Sybaritic auras of Arisen affect the people around them, one manifestation of which is the urge to focus on projects that will stand the test of time or write permanent messages. While they aren't divine, so can't have mortuary temples of their own, Kemet's nobility

Military Technology

At the time of the Turn, horses are still wild animals found in far-off lands; they haven't been domesticated yet, so the famous chariots of later dynasties don't exist. When Kemet goes to war, it goes on foot.

The principal weapons of the Old Kingdom are the spear and bow, though well-equipped soldiers use short, chopping swords of bronze and many men carry knives. Hunters sometimes use leather slings to propel stone bullets.

Consult the World of Darkness rulebook for Sword, Knife, and Spear statistics. Items made of Bronze keep a good edge, but have a Durability of 2. Metal is also very expensive – increase the Cost of Bronze weapons by •.

Bows have a damage rating equal to the archer's strength. Short range is triple the user's Strength + Size + Archery. A bow's Size is one less than the Size of the individual it was built for. Penalties for insufficient strength are doubled for bows.

Type	Damage	Ranges	Capacity	Strength	Size	Cost
Bow	Strength	special	1	special	special	•
Sling	2	Thrown x3	1	2	0/P	–

The people of the Turn do not wear armor – the heat in Kemet, and the materials available, make it untenable. Soldiers use large leather shields that have a pointed end for planting into the sand. These shields require Strength ••• to use and add +2 to the user's Defense, or +3 if the user isn't wielding a weapon. All attacks made while using a shield suffer a –2 penalty, although characters with the Ambidextrous Merit reduce the penalty to –1.



become obsessed with writing autobiographical texts on the inside of their tombs, some of which are magically active as vestiges or even Utterances. Furthermore, works inspired by Kemet's living, solar religion appear to hold back the grip of Sybaris, as detailed on p. 33.

TECHNOLOGY

Irem raised the river's people to the Bronze Age; a full Turn later, their descendants have made some advances in material culture but have yet to improve on Nameless metallurgy. Most buildings are of mud brick or wood; stone is reserved for monuments, temples, palaces, and other important sites.

Kemet's natural resources, and those of the surrounding deserts, influence what technology the people have retained or developed. Silver is considered more valuable than gold because it's much rarer. Kemet has no paved roads, and reserves bridges for minor tributaries — no bridge spans the river, but people make extensive use of ferries. Wheels are used for mills and small carts, but all bulk transportation is done by river.

Most farms grow barley or flax for food, drink (in the form of thick barley beer), and clothing material. Textile houses produce linen by the bolt; common people wear

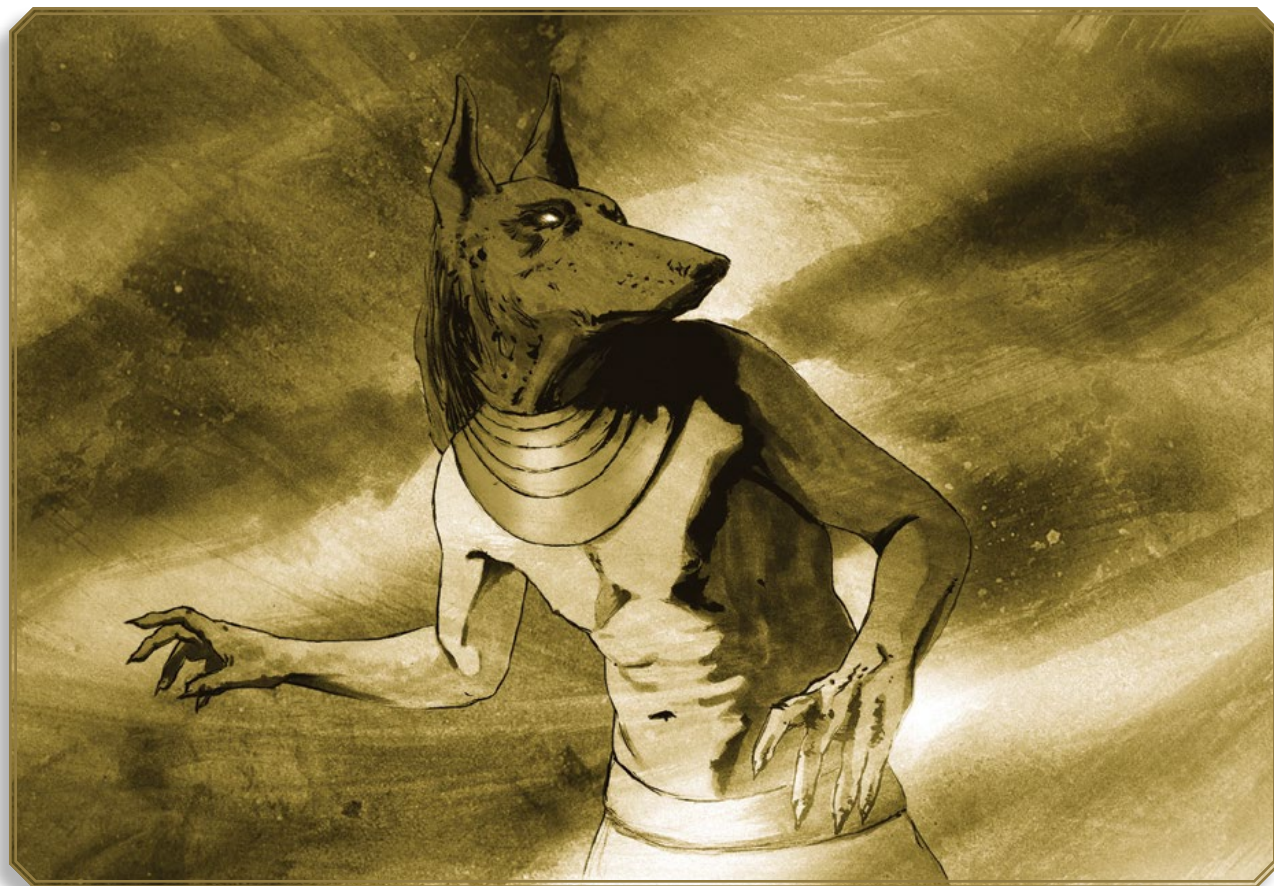
undyed rough linen kilts (for men) and simple shifts (for women), while higher-status priests and scribes wear purer white linen. Colored clothing is reserved for the nobility.


CREATURES OF THE NILE

Humans share the Black Land with a wide variety of creatures, some tame, most wild. Farmers keep cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats; birds are hunted and trapped for meat and eggs. Fish are only eaten by commoners. Domestic dogs live with human families as pets, serve as hunting companions, and catch vermin. Dogs and cattle are the only animals given names. The wild horse is known to live in faraway lands, and the Great House occasionally imports strange creatures from Punt and elsewhere.

Wild animals include cats — regarded as magical animals but in no way domesticated — wolves and jackals at the desert's edge, and snakes and scorpions of many varieties, several highly poisonous. The largest wild animals, both persistent dangers to human beings, are crocodiles and hippopotami.

Some stories of legendary creatures recall Irem's greater array of domesticated animals. Many of these were bound by sorcery, not animal husbandry, and reverted to wild behavior when the Nameless Empire fell. Yet notably absent





are those products of sorcery gone awry, the Amkhata. These existed in the time of Irem and even before, when Sekhem congealed into strange patterns more readily than it does now. The Nameless Empire enslaved or destroyed most of them; the remainder were imprisoned in magically reinforced tombs and storehouses, and do not go forth unless freed by Arisen or hapless mortals.

One mythic beast looms in popular imagination, though it is supposed to have left Kemet sometime during the reign of King Scorpion. This is the *sha*, Sutek's animal of the curved snout, square ears, and forked tail. Priests remember commands to supplicate the *sha*, but even they have little idea of its true nature. As the Turn matures, the beast comes to certain Arisen, revealing itself as a shapeshifter and ally, created to help the confused find meaning — though not always the purposes given them by their Judges. For more on the *sha*, see p. 33.

III NETER-KHERTET

Although Irem erased evidence of its existence well enough in the living world, in Neter-Khertet, where all ghosts dwell, some of the Empire's dead howl and stalk mortals, occasionally ripping down Anpu's curtain to reveal themselves. Yet the number of ghosts is smaller than you might expect. Many Iremites were sent straight to Ammut's maw when the city fell, and quite a few passed through the gates of Duat to suffer judgment, or eroded down to raw death-ephemera when everything connecting them to the world was destroyed. The surviving Iremite ghosts either inhabit tomb complexes and other surviving aspects of the Empire, or have attached themselves to their descendants. Thus, ancestor worship is a common practice in all levels of Kemet society, and some particularly devout lines possess as many active dead as living members. Ghosts who remember Irem are invaluable allies, but are rarely inclined to help the Arisen, whom some recognize as powerful figures from a sadistic culture.

As the guardian of Neter-Khertet, Anpu patrols invisibly, to prevent Arisen clothed in flesh from drawing too near to Duat. The Jackal takes many forms: His namesake animal, an amalgamation of jackal and man (most common), and certain indescribable aspects that would flay the Memory from Arisen witnesses. Anpu cannot be defeated by the Deathless, but only acts against them if they attempt to pervert the cycle of life and death so radically that it would harm Kemet society. Anpu follows certain laws known only to himself, and these sometimes necessitate that he urge Arisen to act as his agents, to banish the unruly dead or guard important tombs against intruders. Anpu might even provide knowledge of Utterances in return. Nevertheless, Anpu never takes sides in the various struggles that surge during the Turn. He has far greater duties to attend to.

SOTHIS ASCENDANT

In the fourth year of Unas' reign, the Arisen return. They died in Irem's temples, at the base of the pillars, but return to life in lonely tombs — when they don't find themselves shucking off the bare desert sands.

More than any other Turn, the events of the First are dictated by the dual rhythms of Memory and Sekhem. Because the Arisen all begin with the same ignorance of themselves, and a Sothic Turn does not imprint an all-consuming mission on their minds, they don't know what their purposes are until enough of them regain enough Memory to recall meeting their Judges — and that takes *time* they don't have. Once enough Deathless recall the guilds, they can organize; but remembering brings its own risks. As per page 155 of **Mummy: The Curse**, regaining a dot of Memory provokes Sekhem loss, so those Arisen who rediscover their purposes are comparatively weakened, especially compared to those who awaken months

The Enemy Also Rises

Hurled back to the world by Ammut, the Shuankhsen rise first, but not all at once. Mighty as she is, the Devourer can only channel a finite amount of Sekhem to her chosen at any given time. Therefore, Shuankhsen appear in waves. Some attack slumbering Arisen to acquire their Sekhem, but this is rarely successful, for even before the First Turn, mummies occasionally rise to defend themselves. Mesedikereh (p. 30) and others manage it, however, and cultivate mortal connections capable of leading them to new victims. By harvesting Arisen and vessels, they give Ammut the power to raise more of their kind. Shuankhsen remember Irem well, however, and many would rather flee than fight. They hate the Arisen, but think they can live again, far from its cursed tombs. Estimating the extent of human civilization based on memories of the Nameless Empire, they journey to foreign lands. Ammut's hunger will eventually take its toll, but for now, Shuankhsen can be found outside of Kemet, ready for Arisen invaders.

The Deceived respond to the First Turn as other Arisen do, but soon learn that they're not like other mummies. The temakh roars riddles and hateful rants in the heart, warning them away from other guilds. They rediscover their guild faster, but that doesn't teach them anything about who the Arisen are. Their temakhs only say they've been imprisoned and suspect the others of having a hand in it, but these complaints are too abstract for the human fragments of the Deceived to immediately understand.

or years later in the Turn. The latecomers have the advantage of having the situation explained while they are still strong, assuming they can find another mummy; it's the best-placed of these who become the first guildmasters.

During a Sothic Turn, a mummy doesn't risk losing her last dregs of Sekhem unless she provokes her patron Judge of Duat — this effectively becomes her first purpose. If an Arisen doesn't displease her master, she can eke out a long life at her powers' lowest ebb. After the initial burst of activity from 2371 BCE to 2765 BCE, then, increasing numbers of mummies die and are called back, while those who avoid going westward slowly tail off. Eventually, the Arisen are called less and less, until by the end of Unas' reign the number of active Arisen settles into what will be its normal amount.

The Turn, then, can be divided into three rough phases — the initial confusion and discovery of purpose; the entrenching (where mummies recruit their cults, rebuild the guilds, and acquire vessels); and the decades-long tail-off as more and more Arisen sleep for centuries or leave Kemet behind in the great diaspora.

To provide a framework for Storytellers to craft their own chronicles of the First Turn, we've outlined these phases in broad strokes, avoiding specific dates and for the most part, firm game Traits, both to capture the story of the age in a manageable amount of space and to acknowledge that due to the vagaries of Sekhem, you should craft antagonists to suit the powers of the players' Arisen. Some Storytellers prefer to design uncompromising challenges bound to the fact that as creatures whose power ebbs and flows, choosing when to act represents an important strategic choice — move at the wrong time, and you might as well be ants facing a god. Others prefer to keep the story moving by tailoring the situation to characters' present conditions. Both are valid options.

PLAYING THE TURN: CHARACTER CREATION

Thanks to the First Turn's special circumstances, Mummy characters differ slightly in character creation.

- **Memory:** All Arisen awaken at Memory 0 as they do in later Turns, but they only rise to Memory 1 once the initial shock of returning to life wears off. Mummy characters in the First Turn earn Sebayt experience and buy Memory dots as usual, but their "natural level" is Memory 1, not 3.
- **Pillars:** In the First Turn, Arisen only possess five dots to distribute among their Pillars, but are subject to the same restrictions in assigning them as listed on p. 75 of **Mummy: The Curse**. This mandates that players assign two dots to the defining Pillar and one dot to three others, or one dot to each Pillar.
- **Merits:** Arisen in the First Turn cannot start with dots in Cult, but can buy it as normal once active, or

New Mental Skill: Religion

Faith in Kemet isn't a simple matter, but a confusing web of hundreds of gods, many of whom are officially or unofficially "aspects" of one another. Is Heru Re's brother, son, or a subsidiary aspect? What are the proper spells for ensuring a bountiful harvest, or a profitable journey? Who is the god of the nearest city, and how does he relate to those further away? The Religion Skill allows a character to keep it all straight, perform ceremonies, and make proper offerings to Kemet's gods. It differs from Medicine in that Religion covers the spells for health that doctors use, while Medicine is the more mechanical art of setting bones, stemming bleeding, and the like. It differs from Occult in that Religion is the Skill covering the accepted practices of Kemet's faith, while Occult handles secret, fringe beliefs and foreign demons. Religion would be used to determine which god an unknown temple belongs to or apply a spell; Occult would be used for understanding a text calling on a demon or the dealings of a Shuankhsen cult.

Possessed by: Sages, priests, nobility

New Physical Skill: Archery

Archery doesn't only cover bows, but any form of physical projectile from javelins to slings. The bow is the tool of hunters in Lower Kemet, and the signature weapon of the Medjay. Dramatic failures on Archery rolls usually involve the weapon breaking in some way.


Possessed by: Hunters, Medjay, soldiers

New Physical Skill: Sail

The river binds Kemet together and gives it shape, navigated by thousands of boats and ships every day. Vessels moving south must travel under sail against the current, those going the other way still have to steer. This skill covers the physical act of sailing a ship, the ability to navigate by the stars, and aptitude at steering a vessel. Like the other Physical Skills, it also covers "Mental" tasks relating to shipping — assessing the worthiness of a craft, recognizing a vessel from a distance, and repairing it after damage. Despite the name, it applies to oared as well as sail-powered travel.

Possessed by: Traders, explorers, ship builders

quickly build it with Affinities like Pharaoh Reigns Anew. Most mummies have no dots in Tomb or Relic at first, but the Merits aren't banned — some



lucky Arisen wake in a properly-sealed tomb, or clutching a vessel. A few are lucky enough to rise near ghosts who are inclined to help them.

- **Guild Status and Affinities:** Until the guilds are reformed late in this Turn, no Arisen character starts play with dots in Guild Status. Until a character has a dot in Guild Status, he does not receive a Guild Affinity; unlike Utterances (which have to be learned in play) the first Guild Affinity appears for free as soon as a mummy remembers her allegiance.
- **Utterances:** Arisen do not receive an Utterance during character creation, and don't receive one for buying a dot in every Pillar. Yet the power to learn Utterances is innate, and the mummy effectively has an "empty slot" to fill with an Utterance for which she possesses the prerequisite Pillars for at least the first tier. Filling this slot has no Experience cost, as mummy absorbs the Utterance as if it were a long-forgotten song, newly remembered. Utterances might be found in Iremite ruins, or in tomb writings and other works inspired by Sybaris. A few talented mortals, sorcerer-sages in the tradition of Imhotep, may know the words and principles of an Utterance, though they may not use it themselves, except in some twisted, degraded form. When the sha appear they lead the way to Utterances, but no method guarantees the Arisen will discover an Utterance for which she meets the prerequisites. Nevertheless, she intuitively understands where her fivefold soul may be deficient, and is capable of hoarding and trading opportunities to learn Utterances with other Arisen.
- **Experience:** Arisen do not receive the 20 Experience provided during Step 8 of character creation.
- **Skill Substitutions:** Characters in this Turn do not use the Firearms, Drive, or Computers Skills, replacing them with **Archery**, **Sail**, and **Religion**. (Horse riding is unknown to the people of Kemet, so no Skill exists to represent it.)

FIGURES OF NOTE

Most of the people Arisen encounter will be farmers and laborers. If the first people to discover a mummy are commoners, the very next will be local elders. These are the people that the aristocrats and their functionaries will speak to first when the situation comes to their attention. Ultimately, influence settles around *Haty-A* nobles who rule the nomes, scribes, wealthy priests, and representatives of the Great House. Shuankhsen lurk in palaces at Inbu-Hedj and stalk the Nile in search of Arisen prey. The individuals below command

particular attention, as they drive certain events during the era.

The following descriptions take liberties with the poorly understood history of the time. Except for Mesedikereh, all of the following people belong to recorded history, though their biographies have been filled in to detail who they are in the World of Darkness.

KAGEMNI, VIZIER OF THE GREAT HOUSE

Kagemni attained his position as supreme administrator during Djedkare's reign and will keep it after Unas dies, earning himself a grand tomb in the future king's necropolis. He follows a conservative policy of gathering power, never using it in ways that could enrage his royal superiors. He controlled access to the king until Mesedikereh slipped by him. As Unas' reign matures, Kagemni finds himself pushed off to the side, as the king listens to Shuankhsen promises of immortality.

In the rising crisis, the vizier primarily concentrates on surviving Unas' reign and facilitating a smooth transition of power. He isolates Queen Khenut so that she will survive Unas' follies. Shuankhsen infiltrators would rather be rid of him, but they know that his personal prestige maintains the civil administration — no Kagemni, no taxes, trade, or government. He may reach out to Arisen for help, but if that costs him his life, Kemet shatters to a degree that defies the historical record. If that happens, the best thing to do might be to find someone to impersonate him....

KHENUT, QUEEN OF KEMET

Khenut became Unas' second wife at Kagemni's request, to deal with the death of Queen Nebet's son, Unas-Ankh. After spending a seemly amount of time with Unas to placate the nobility and get on with the business of producing offspring, Khenut returned to her own estates, now staffed almost exclusively by women to deter slights on her honor — and keep her as far away from the diseased politics of the Great House as possible. She gives birth to a daughter, Iput, who is destined to marry the future king Teti, legitimizing his dynasty.

Khenut's combined holdings make her as powerful as an independent nomarch, but once Iput is born she must move carefully, as the girl is the only royal offspring outside the Great House's direct control. Convinced of his approaching immortality, Unas cares little for matters of succession, but others realize that if the king dies without male issue, Khenut can use her daughter to set the strongest claim to the throne.

MESEDIKEREH, HATE IN THE NIGHT

Slain in Nubet's mines when they belonged to Irem, the Shuankhsen Taset returns from Ammut's caress with a soul flayed down to his heart, filled with angry ambition. Other Shuankhsen flee the Nile Valley, but Taset understands he's leapt into the future. Finding tombs in the ruins of the old fortresses, he uncovers Arisen, eats, and grows strong. He teaches other



lingering Shuankhsen the sacred feast to cure their hunger. He renames himself Mesedikereh, “Hate in the Night,” to announce his intentions: He will become an anti-Pharaoh who consumes gods, starting with the old Deathless overseers. He uncovers Nubet’s Arisen tombs and learns certain rites in the Temple of Sutek that prepare him for the tasks ahead.

He enters the Great House with Queen Nebet’s permission, to heal the gravely ill Prince Unas-Ankh. Using his newfound lore, Mesedikereh raises him as the first Fasad. Disgusted yet fascinated, King Unas confines son and mother to a sealed wing of the palace, and orders the Shuankhsen to give him endless life. Mesedikereh agrees, but warns that true, flawless immortality can only be stolen from existing immortals. They must plunder tombs and grind potions from Arisen flesh. Although Unas becomes his creature, Mesedikereh cannot make the Great House entirely his plaything. Kagemni controls the administration, moving neither for nor against the purported “priest from Nubet.”

NEBET, QUEEN OF KEMET AND MOTHER OF THE SECRET HEIR

Nebet was once a formidable figure, often ruling in Unas’ stead when he grew impatient with matters of state. She prepared Unas-Ankh to be the ruler his father wasn’t: informed, confident, and prepared to strengthen Kemet. He fell ill, and when no doctor could cure his fever, she let Mesedikereh into the Great House. The Shuankhsen brought him back as a withered, insane husk. Nebet’s spirit broke.

In an isolated wing of the palace she cares for her son, the rotting Fasad. She commands a group of illiterate, mute servants, for Unas has told the people that Unas-Ankh is dead. The sorcery animating her son drives him to love Mesedikereh. The Shuankhsen sometimes visits their chambers, treating them as son and wife. She almost believes the lie, but part of her searches for a way to destroy the Shuankhsen, though he laughs at the knives and poisons she uses across successive attempts.

RAMOSE, LORD OF WASET

Ramose is the strongest nomarch in Lower Kemet. He rules Waset as an independent kingdom in all but name — and of course, taxes go down the river for the glory of the Great House. Ramose is an old soldier, raised to nobility after leading warriors to the edge of Punt at the behest of Unas’ predecessor, Djedkare. Now that Waset prospers, he expects the next level of reward: marriage into the Great House.

Unas doesn’t answer his written overtures, but assessors sent by Kagemni never miss their scheduled visits. Ramose knows how painful war can be, so even this isn’t enough to spur open rebellion; but once Unas’ reign declines under Shuankhsen influence, he decides that Kemet’s needs have finally aligned

with his own — and by this time, he’s given many gifts to the priests of Re at Iunu, and has trained soldiers who cry “Waset!” when captains ask them to declare their loyalty.

UNAS, KING OF KEMET

A lover of hunting and war, Unas never prepared for the rigors of rule. By the time he took the throne, Kagemni had already proven himself a competent administrator with no desire for the throne. Unas settled into the monarch’s ritual duties, marrying the women he was told to marry whenever he could tear himself away from his violent passions. He never felt so alive as when he felt the wet blood of a gazelle or an enemy captive on his hands.

Irem’s children return as Unas enters middle age. His body aches and his tactician’s mind reacts with a breath’s delay. The Great House won’t let him die in battle. Palace life bores him. He’s not particularly religious and isn’t attracted to pleasures of the flesh. He does his part, producing a son to rule after he dies, and daughters to cement alliances with powerful nomarchs.

When Prince Unas-Ankh falls ill, his father cannot even imagine securing Kemet politically. No, he needs to grind ambitious enemies under his heel, waging punitive campaigns for as long as it takes — perhaps forever. After Mesedikereh raises his son into a kind of half-life, Unas sees an opportunity to sidestep political complexities completely. All he needs to do is to never, ever die.


As the Arisen (and the Sybaris they inspire) inflame conflicts throughout Kemet, Unas’ Shuankhsen advisors convince him that harvesting Deathless flesh will not only eliminate enemies, but provide the vital ingredient he needs to attain true immortality. He considers the Arisen to be manifestations of Kemet’s gods. As King of the Two Lands, he must eat their flesh to ritually demonstrate his supremacy. These meals and potions turn him into an ashen-skinned man filled with mad visions, barely able to shuffle along in wasting flesh. The only benefit the potions provide is the ability to sense Sekhem and feel beyond the veil that disguises its supernatural bearers, but these new senses accompany other hallucinations. Mesedikereh’s dark miracles prove that Unas is following the correct path, but the king continually revises his expectations. In the end, he expects to physically rise from his tomb to conquer Kemet. After he dies in 2345, priests transcribe his visions into the Pyramid Texts, whose spells say he’ll devour the gods.

If the magic worked, it didn’t bring him back in this age. Yet when they rediscover his tomb, his body is gone. Perhaps it was looted? Perhaps.

PHASE ONE: FLOOD OF THE DEAD

At the start of the Turn, rough tombs open and Arisen come forth, confused by lack of Memory. Irem has not only vanished — in many cases, if the Arisen could remember where they were interred for the Rite, they would be surprised to now see





foot upon strange sands, far from where they were eviscerated, wrapped, and dedicated to Duat. For the most part, this change has happened for mundane reasons. Survivors looted their tombs, took the stones for other construction, and traded the mystic vessels they found. In fact, Arisen who dare the pyramids may find stones from their own tombs upon them — though they stand virtually no chance of recognizing them.

An Arisen will shake off death, and after a period at Memory 0, stabilize at Memory 1. Unless she takes her first steps in a secluded place, she might blunder into conflicts with mortals, whom she kills or ignores depending on the supernatural stimuli around her.

Once this period of confusion subsides, the mummy still remembers nothing of Irem. Yet at Memory 1 she can speak and read the Iremite language, and after a few moments of confusion, the related, Kemetic dialects favored by the literate classes. While Kemet doesn't have a big enough population for anyone to assume the Arisen is local to a particular town but has been overlooked for years, mortals might believe her to be someone from the other side of the kingdom or a foreign emissary, especially since she is able to read and write. Privacy and freedom to travel are both foreign concepts to Kemet's

people, so most will report the stranger to the local nomarch and his representatives — but people in conflict with the regime might conceal the Arisen “fugitive.”

Many Arisen return in a highly suggestible, disoriented state and believe whatever they're told, leaving certain mummies to play at mortal life. Unfortunately, the Arisen first came forth as a corpse. Only at Memory 1 does her sahu settle into something that passes for human, but features elements of unsettling simplification. Her eyes don't blink enough. Her heart never races, or her laughter sounds mocking and false.

Without a clear first purpose or memories, the a newly Arisen relies on her instincts to discover who she is. Notably, mummies feel the pull of *kepher*: the ability to sense vessels crafted by their forgotten guilds. They feel an urge to acquire them. They also experience the emotions that remain from declaring their decrees, but possess no conscious recollection of asserting themselves before the Judges of Duat. Yet strange as they are to the mortals of Kemet, the most human thing about the new Arisen might be the impassioned spirit they summon forth at need. Driven by intuition, the Deathless meet, discover patterns in their desires, and as they earn Sebait experience, begin to recover their memories.

Story Seeds

- **Prosaic Unlife:** An Arisen awakens far from tombs and vessels, coming to his senses in one of Kemet's far-flung communities: a village that sits along a trickling branch of the Nile, visited only by tax collectors when the season demands it. Local elders believe he was injured and try to take care of him, but when it becomes apparent that the stranger isn't a living man...they hide him from visiting officials and put him to work farming and hunting. Morbid strife builds with his continued presence, but he's genuinely pleasant and helpful — and at this point, they're afraid of angering him by driving him away. They send a few younger villagers to find someone capable of luring their “friend” to his proper place, wherever that is.
- **To Want in Common:** Driven by scarcely-remembered greed and *kepher*'s pull, several Arisen meet in pursuit of the same relic. A direct connection to the vessel eludes them, but several leads emerge from *kepher*'s mystic connections. One family remembers the time of Irem; a ruin contains the ghost of the Arisen's former slave. By the journey's end, the Arisen acquire the Sebait experience and common understanding to rediscover their old guild, but the process has also alerted the Shuankhsen to their quest, and one of them has taken the vessel for herself.

PHASE TWO: BEASTS, ENEMIES, AND SECRETS

Arising in Kemet provides an unparalleled opportunity to acquire Sebait experience, as the mummy visits places she once lived, and explores tombs she might have helped build. Arisen remember who they are and, in pursuit of vessels, renew the guilds. Remembering Irem, they explore Dshret and other strange and forbidden places. These actions, plus rumors of strangers arriving throughout Kemet, come to the attention of the nomarchs and eventually, the Great House itself. Deathless who hear of King Scorpion may wish to present themselves as either returned gods or messengers sent to cleanse Kemet of false doctrines.

Worming his way into Unas' confidence, the Shuankhsen Mesedikereh uses his dark gifts to help the king intimidate rebellious nomarchs. Unas knows that Mesedikereh wants these hallowed dead and is pleased to collaborate on schemes to acquire them, lest they ally with malcontents at Waset and elsewhere. While the Shuankhsen help Unas pacify the less obedient nomes, these small victories add up to a losing strategy. The Great House has grown sinister; emissaries vanish from the palace and nobles lose their trust in the divine dynasty.

Unas knows the Shuankhsen practice a form of sacred cannibalism, and demands to share in it. Mesedikereh works with the king's doctors to create potions out of ground Arisen flesh. These fail to halt Unas' aging or provide divine powers, but are addictive psychedelics that let the imbiber see Sekhem-bearing entities through their disguises, as Arisen do. This is the grindstone upon which the king scrapes his sanity.



THE DOMINION OF RE

The cult of Re responds to the people’s problems, managing storehouses and communal labor while Unas argues over the exact wording of spells to be written in his tomb. People increasingly rely on the cult not only to deal with the Great House’s failures, but because of creeping Unease Sybaris (see **Mummy: The Curse**, pg. 148). If any period in ancient Kemet could be called “gothic,” it’s this one, where fearful commoners cling to religion in the face of a corrupt dynasty. Duat’s call affects all walks of life.

Those who care little for Re find themselves dreaming of older gods, and scrawl their hymns in dust at night. Some try to destroy Arisen; others fall in worship. The Deathless form their first cults, but low Memory leaves them wanting for doctrines.

Yet Re’s faith provides refuge against Sybaris, through its obelisks and sky-facing temples. Shrines to Re’s sun and sky aspects add +3 to Unease Sybaris ratings for as long as one stands in the shrine’s presence, or for a lunar month after offering sincere worship. Temples add +4 to +6, depending on their size and complexity. Mortuary temples fail to provide this protection, as their death symbolism erodes the aspect of Re as creator in favor of his less familiar role as a traveler through Duat — an aspect stolen from Azar.

How does the Re-centered faith accomplish this? The answer isn’t because of “true faith,” or anything of that sort. Mortal and Arisen alike would scoff at this sort of subjectivity, even though they implicitly indulge it when they change the gods to suit local political arrangements. The people see no contradiction here, for their faith is a concrete, everyday affair, and their revelations change as they do, not according to far-off, ancient traditions. As the Deathless rebuild Memory, they recognize Iremite geomancy and occult craftsmanship in Kemet’s obelisks, expressed in a mystically inverted form. By interrogating priests and Great House scribes closely, an Arisen might trace these skills back to Imhotep, the founder of Kemet’s approach to sacred architecture.

THE SHA AND OTHER SECRETS

Pursued by Shuankhsen and their royal collaborators, Arisen array themselves by guild and region, but soon all accessible vessels belong to one mummy or another. As their Sekhem declines, they grow more vulnerable. Then the *sha* come out of Deshret.

Mortals recognize them as Sutek’s beasts, but when the sha visit the Arisen, these mummies see the combined apex of their occult crafts. Sha are made of dead human flesh that has been painstakingly shaped into bestial effigies. Their eyes are amulets; their joints are threaded with gold wire, and they’ve been given simulated intelligence by scrolls thrust down their throats. Their natural forms resemble nothing earthly, though the silhouette might be mistaken for a huge

wild dog’s. They possess the power to change shape into subtler forms, however, and as red-haired men and women they relay certain secrets to the Arisen.

The sha tell the Arisen of the Utterances they must learn. Each sha knows a single Utterance, but more importantly, understands where others might be found. They point the way to pyramids, Iremite ruins, and Sybaris-maddened mortals with special insights. Sha also reveal the ways mortals might call Arisen from Duat’s embrace to escape the Long Death between Sothic Turns. Not all Arisen discover these secrets because of the sha, but of those who discover them independently, many did not even know such things were possible before Sutek’s beasts arrived.

Despite appearing to be products of Irem’s arts, a sha says nothing of its purpose and origins. In the old religion, Sutek exalted Azar by killing him, freeing him to go westward. Each says “I am sha, beast of Sutek,” and nothing more about its nature.

The sha are not indestructible. None survive the age, for their Sekhem does not renew after diminishing. Yet studying a sha’s body teaches Arisen the Rite of the Engraved Heart, as they adapt the magic animating it to the needs of a human Sadikh. On a darker note, several sha are captured by Shuankhsen and Unas. In analyzing their

Story Seeds

- **Minions of Sutek:** Using his ties to the Great House, Mesedikereh organizes a campaign to capture and destroy the sha. His motives are threefold: Devour them for Sekhem, deny the Arisen secrets that the sha might reveal, and harvest sha corpses to research sorcerous rites, including the creation of Greater Amkhata. This campaign also bridges the alienation between the Great House and priesthood of Re, since Sutek, traditionally framed as an ally of the sun god, might gain too much prestige through his supposed creations.
- **Dawn of Utterances:** Sha point the way to Utterances recorded on the remains of Iremite temples, and Arisen find them in the testimony of Sybarismad mortals. As the Deathless reclaim their magical heritage, they build an ever-greater threat to Kemet’s stability and security, as some of these powers can unleash apocalyptic results such as earthquakes and insect plagues. Their diminished facility with their Pillars (compared to later Arisen) limit these manifestations to an unfortunate few, but when one a mummy unleashes such an Utterance in a rash moment, the disaster compels others to protect their nascent cults and brace themselves for mortal retribution, backed by the Shuankhsen-supported forces of the Great House.





corpses, they discover how to perform various disgusting rites, including Amkhata creation. After the sha arrive, they begin to Descend as Arisen do, until they collapse into their component crafts, never to return.

PHASE THREE: AZAR'S HARVEST

After most Arisen walk into the sun's gaze, learn Utterances, and rebuild their memories and guilds, they set the stage for a multifaceted, catastrophic conflict. The return of the Deathless exaggerates tensions in Kemet between local nomarchs, the Great House, and the priesthood. Strife between the solar religion and Deathless cults afflicts all levels of society, from commoner families to high-level dealings between priests and nobles.

Rebellious and disorganized nomes spark a famine. Farmers throughout Kemet defy the tradition of communal labor and nomes hoard what they have, leaving poor and arid regions to starve. After Unas dies, artisans will depict the starving in his mortuary complex as both a subtle rebuke to the king and a lesson in what happens when Kemet fails to unite behind the Great House. Unas sends soldiers to seize the rebellious nomes' granaries by force, which further aggravates animosity between the factions. Peasants and slaves suffer more than any other group; these are the people most likely to come under the sway of Arisen cults, as they lack the status to seek refuge with the priests of Re and banish Sybaris' lure. These conflicts eventually divide Kemet along three alliances: Waset and Iunu, aligned under Re; Inbu-Hedj and Nubet, subjects of the Devourer-corrupted Great House; and Abdju, where the Arisen gather.

Iunu's priests recognize Ramose, *Haty-A* ruler of Waset, as an autonomous ruler, though they don't go so far as to judge him worthy to rule all Kemet. The priesthood loves Ramose for more than his piety, for his farms produce surpluses to not only help Iunu as the political situation fragments, but feed his levied troops, ensuring their loyalty. Medjay sent by the Great House swear oaths to serve Ramose and the gods, in that order.

What does Iunu have to offer beyond religious comfort? Magic. Kemet has its skeptics, but they've been swept aside in the face of increasing displays of power from Irem's returned children. The plague of sha tells the priests that this is some scheme of Sutek's. Their religion casts the sinister god as the guardian of Re's solar barque, but they haven't forgotten older tales about the killer of Azar, and posit that imbalanced cosmic forces have brought dark magic to the world. The righteous must set things right, in accord with Ma'at. The priests haven't come to the struggle unarmed, either. They've inherited Imhotep's wisdom, and as mortals they possess the ability to refine it into the power of sorcery. These priests can't summon columns of fire or make the earth shake, but a few of



The Nature of the Sha

The true origins of the sha are left as a mystery for the Storyteller to resolve. Note that, to those who have studied the mystery of Apotheosis, Sutek is a patron who literally existed and shaped the history of the Arisen. Furthermore, the sha are obviously created things whose manufacture appears to have required cooperation from all the guilds. Their true origins might be revealed to Arisen who attain reliable memories of Irem, or the sha may have been made between the Rite and the First Turn – though who would be awake to craft them is unknown.

Each sha is made from human muscle and bones that have been rebuilt with support from a lattice of alchemically purified gold wire. Its lapis eyes are inscribed after the fashion of Maa-Kep amulets. Its skin is made of bark that appears black from a distance, but in fact is covered in densely written Iremite script. It is a living, moving effigy of Sutek's animal: a beast with square ears and a face like a canine's, yet with the stature of a lion and a long tail with two scorpion's barbs side by side. In many respects it resembles an Amkhat built with far more sophisticated techniques.

Roleplaying Hints: Sha are enigmatic beings who challenge Arisen with riddles that guide them to moments of self-discovery, but also to better ways to serve the Judges, begging the question of who, or what, they really serve. They are mystical automata, however, unable to provide any information beyond what was written into them with Iremite sorcery.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Composure 4, Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4 Occult 4, Stealth 4

Willpower: 8

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 18 (Species Factor 8)

Size: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	6(L)	14
Tail	2(L)	10

May attack with bite every turn. Barb poison inflicts 8 – (target's Stamina) dice of bashing damage per subsequent turn, until it inflicts 0 damage, in which case the effect ceases. Multiple stings can restart damage but do not accumulate.

Health: 15

Special Abilities:

• **Eyes of the Maa-Kep:** The sha can see into Neter-Khertet, and its gaze reveals the true forms of Sekhem-bearing beings.

• **Forgotten Lore:** The sha may teach one Utterance, inscribed on its skin. Without the sha's guidance, the Iremite script is indecipherable and filled with deceptive glyphs. Sha also know how Arisen might discover other Utterances, both generally and from a handful of sources within the Nameless Empire's territory.

• **Indomitable:** No sha can be supernaturally compelled. If such an attempt would succeed, the sha vomits flaming pieces of parchment from the scroll in its throat that provides its consciousness, and loses a dot of Sekhem instead.

• **Mortal Form:** The sha can take the shape of a human. Each sha has a unique alternate form that does not resemble other humans except by coincidence. All possess reddish hair. Shapeshifting requires a full turn.

• **Sekhem:** The sha possesses Sekhem 5, but only harnesses it to resist supernatural powers. Unfortunately, the sha suffers the Descent as an Arisen does, though it is not governed by any intelligible purpose. Simply check when the time comes. Once a sha loses all Sekhem it falls into its inanimate components, never to rise again.




them learn to sense beings powered by unnatural Sekhem. Studying the corpses of fallen sha, they learn to create relics and Amkhata. They'll never attain the raw power of their supernatural enemies, but they at least develop the resources to ensure that anyone who opposes them pays a price in pain and fear.

The Innu-Waset alliance relies on swift passage through the Nile, so Waset's Medjay mercenaries become a common sight on its waters, guarding barges bound for one of the

two cities. They pass by Inbu-Hedj without stopping to pay tax or homage to the Great House. This blatant act of defiance infuriates Unas, but bloodying the river with rebel soldiers and priests would provoke a conflict he's not sure he can survive. In any event, his advisors have promised him that a few more potions will ensure his immortality, so he can outlast any enemy. His forces are better put to use collecting taxes — and in this, he proves successful, largely because Nubet's mines remain in his sphere of influence.





Nubet's loyalty flows from Unas' Shuankhsen allies. Mesedikereh treats Nubet and its mines as his personal fiefdom. Gold fills the Great House's coffers easily enough, but they can only buy agricultural and artisanal goods at inflated prices — there's not enough food to go around, and the country's in turmoil. Shuankhsen shadow tax collectors and gold shipments in search of prey. They do not rule Nubet with intentional cruelty — they were once slaves themselves — but the Devourer sometimes inspires them to betray and eat their subjects.

Although Arisen remain spread out throughout Kemet, the highest concentration can be found in Abdju. The Su-Menent are the most powerful guild here, and the Mesen-Nebu the weakest; for while the former find many of their relics here, the latter suffer from Nubet's hostility. The Alchemists kept many wonders near the mines but can only reach them now by battling the Shuankhsen who carry them. Re never had many temples here, so Sybaris manifests in its full majesty. Mortals entranced by auras of death and eternity walk through life as if it were a demon-filled dream. Arisen of sufficient Memory preach the glories of Azar and Anpu, and praise the harsh righteousness of their Judges.

Famine strikes the hardest in Arisen-held nomes, as neither the royal nor priestly factions are willing to help them. For all their might, the Arisen are poor administrators of the living, and often let their subjects starve needlessly.

THE THREE ALLIANCES

Each side commands far-flung territories, relying on the Nile to move goods and people. The Iunu-Waset alliance relies on it the most because rival cities sit between them, but all know that as long as they limit conflict on the river to occasional raids, they might stretch out the situation until one of the alliances weakens, and the others join forces to topple it. Ramose and the priesthood are counting on it, but not the others.


Unas' motives are paradoxical, because even though he's certain divine immortality awaits him, potions are sapping his life in the sunlit lands. His Shuankhsen minders are primarily interested in preying upon the Arisen and avenging themselves on anything left of Irem. It pleases them to see this king of the Nameless Empire's shadow suffer while they capture Deathless to maintain their Sekhem.

The Arisen break this diseased equilibrium. In Abdju, they remember moments of Irem and rebuild their guilds. Although the people fear them as gods incarnate, they endure the poverty brought on by Deathless misrule. And as the Arisen feel their Sekhem drip away, they remember the powers of Utterances and recovered relics, waiting to be used. The Mesen-Nebu possess the fewest vessels, but perhaps the fact that their newly remembered philosophy

Iunu's Sorcery

Drawing upon Imhotep's teachings, unearthed vessels, and the remains of captured sha, the priests of Re at Iunu become some of the most accomplished sorcerers to ever gaze upon the Nile. Kemetic magic does not depend on weaving spells out of will and imagination, however. Spells are carefully crafted rituals performed to exacting standards. They draw upon gods, secret names, and metaphysical principles to either accomplish a single, mighty feat or craft a relic. Most mortal magicians perform one or two effective rituals after a lifetime of study, though many develop passive abilities, such as the abilities to sense Sekhem and perceive the dead. With always-opened eyes, they see past the veil of life. This leaves most of them more than a little unhinged.

Besides the (by Iremite standards) blasphemous nature of the Re cult, distress grips Arisen who learn these mortals can create relics — a power the Deathless eventually remember they once possessed, but no longer. Ruthless mummies capture and torture artisan-magicians for their secrets, without success. They soon learn that without Shan'iatu guidance, mortals are rarely able to repeat the act of creation — after one or two masterworks, they're done. Then again, it may be that the greatest magicians use sorcery and prophecy to predict Deathless attention, and hide themselves from the troubles of the age.



fills them with the greatest sense of entitlement motivates them to disrupt the balance.

Ultimately, the Storyteller decides who moves to open war and why, but by default the Alchemists take action, seizing shipments from Nubet's mines. They justify this as not only an opportunity to enrich failing Abdju, but injure the Shuankhsen. Spread throughout distant communities, Kemet's alliances thrive on the unspoken understanding that the river is neutral ground, too important to trade to violate with more than small disputes. The Alchemists crush that custom. Cut off from the bounty of the mines, Unas sends his forces to war, but not just to Abdju. For years, Inbu-Hedj's gold, crafts, and royal prestige have compensated for its agricultural poverty. Without gold, the king needs some other way of feeding his people, so he orders warriors to seize Waset's barges and assault rebellious nomes. This doesn't bring Waset and Iunu to Abdju's side, however. Its people eventually learn that Abdju is ruled by walking corpses.

At first, each alliance displays some concern for Kemet's survival. Mindful of Irem's crimes, even Shuankhsen



act subtly, through mortal warriors and cultists. The arrangement collapses when sinking Sekhem compels desperate Deathless and Lifeless to wage open war. Using rites they barely understand, Iunu's sorcerer-priests unleash Greater Amkhata and call upon their relics.

THE FORGOTTEN APOCALYPSE

At Nekhen, priests keep King Scorpion's weapons in a vault that, unbeknownst to them, shields their magical resonance from detection. Concerned by ever-bloodier battles, the priests move them to the Temple of Nekhbet in nearby Nekheb, rendering them visible to occult senses as relics of extraordinary power.

It takes less than a day for assembled combatants to depopulate both cities. They summon falling stars and life-leaching clouds of darkness. They display effigies of such beauty that upon seeing them, mortals commit suicide, because all else appears too disgusting and profane to endure. Demons bearing stone jugs pluck the hearts out of cowering mortals and, after squeezing the blood out of them, sink to Duat, to fill Shezmu's winery. Arisen, Shuankhsen, and Amkhata battle without restraint until night falls, and a small number of Arisen survive on slivers of Sekhem.

They are fewer and weaker, and their drained vessels scatter the battlefield, but they *have* won. The Amkhata are but rotting animal parts, and the Shuankhsen have been devastated. Lacking cults and other means of return, many enjoy Ammut's embrace until the next Sothic Turn. A few find new bodies and flee. Mesedikereh returns to Nubet, his final fate unknown to even clear Arisen memories. He leaves Unas to the rebels' revenge.

Ramose pacifies the Nile to rehabilitate trade. At Inbu-Hedj, he enters a Great House filled with ghosts and mad courtiers. Unas is a withered lunatic who rants about devouring the gods. Yet he still enjoys popularity among artisans, scribes, and aristocrats because he kept the gold coming and let them do as they pleased. During the chaos of the three alliances, Sybaritic dreams and Arisen influence resurrected the old, Azar-centered faith. In time it will overshadow Re-centered theology. Ramose arranges with Unas' vizier, Kagemni, to put forward the royal daughter Iput for marriage. The Great House still denies him membership, but agrees to support a candidate more easily influenced by the nomarchs.

At Nekhen-Nekheb, the Arisen survey their terrible victory. Mortals resettle the cities; in an act of contrition, the Deathless help them rebuild, but the people of Kemet despise the mummies so much they refuse to record the cursed events that emptied the cities. Abdju fares scarcely better. Loyal cultists remain, but to most of Kemet it's a citadel of death. The Arisen hold

court based on sparse memories of Irem's government. The court can't punish the Mesen-Nebu for taking action against the Shuankhsen, but they agree it was done unilaterally. Once the war began, the gathering of so many Arisen ensured it would lead to terrible destruction. The Arisen might survive, but at the cost of dead mortals and drained vessels. And kepher calls them from foreign lands.

The Sessa-Hebsu record the code that Arisen will obey to govern themselves, so that a single guild can never again trigger such conflicts, but it isn't enough. They are too many in once place. The Deathless begin their great diaspora while Unas gasps on his deathbed.

Story Seeds

- **Mesedikereh's Last Repose:** Mesedikereh fled the battle at Nekhen-Nekheb to hide in Nubet. From there, no Arisen claims to know his fate, but that might only be true because *your* players' Arisen have yet to tell the tale! This prince among Shuankhsen has stolen Arisen tombs, built tunnels between them, and even fortified depleted tunnels in Nubet's mines. The entire complex shames the Cretan palace that will inspire myths of the minotaur – and Mesedikereh is capable of creating horn-headed enemies to exceed the foreign Ionians' worst nightmares. He may have been the mightiest Shuankhsen to ever exist, and one of the first to discover that devouring the Deathless could enhance his power. Unless the Arisen defeat him, he may return to corrupt the next dynasty.
- **Arms of the Scorpion King:** What happened to King Scorpion's weapons? The pre-dynastic monarch was the last to march under Irem's sign, but little else is known of his history and accomplishments. His weapons consisted of a golden flail and a mace carved with the symbols of conquered tribes. Arisen who remember Irem might have seen these weapons before, wielded by masked Shan'iatu in ritual displays of power, whenever the Nameless Empire's legions returned with captives and other tribute. The Arisen believe that Amkhata destroyed these relics in the fields of Nekhen-Nekheb, but other stories claim they were returned to the chamber where they were once hidden, and that this room, a relic itself, was spirited away intact as a spoil of war. As the regalia of the Shan'iatu, King Scorpion's weapons are of particular interest to the Deceived, who after a fashion *were* the fallen lords of Irem. Anyone who possesses the weapons might be able to harness their incredible powers, but would be set upon by any Deceived who discover them.



Hieroglyphic text arranged in vertical columns at the top of the page.



CHAPTER TWO

THE MIGHTY DESPAIR

(SIRIUS)

If you see the oppression of the poor, see justice and righteousness trampled in a country, do not be astounded.
— Solomon, King of the Israelites

Djau slowly approached the pharaoh. Silence fell upon the members of the court. Perhaps with all the rumors of rebellion, they feared the news that Djau brought. In truth, he was the one who felt dread. Though his chariots had won many victories, something about being in the presence of Pharaoh Osorkon I gripped Djau with religious dread. Djau was a general; Osorkon was a living god.

Djau knelt and struggled not to tremble. He only hoped that sweet smells from the cooking fires had put the pharaoh in the mood to listen to his words. Tomorrow was the Feast of Bast, the pharaoh's favorite celebration.

"Rise," commanded Osorkon. His voice was strong and firm.

Djau stood. Even though the court of the pharaoh's royal residence was silent, the sounds of the revelers in the streets of Bubastis slipped in through the high windows of the palace. Drums, flutes, and hand-clapping brought a happiness that seemed wrong to Djau.

"Speak," said Osorkon.

"O great Pharaoh, I have served in your armies and those of your father before you. My life's purpose is to defend your reign. I am loyal to you above all else, and it is out of loyalty that I must tell you that as one of your generals, I am troubled. When we seized the relics of Israel from the Temple of Solomon, I believed that an age of glory had come. Yet now, men who are unfit to view your divine personage ignore their duties throughout the land. There is talk of rebellion from Upper Egypt to Lower Egypt."

The pharaoh nodded. "I know of such things as my father did before me. I am the pharaoh. My general, you spoke of an age of glory, but it is not glory which we need but wisdom and prudence. The time of the bright star Sirius has come. Do you know what that means?"

Djau swallowed hard. "It marks a new cycle for the Nile."

"True," responded Pharaoh, "But the royal astrologers and priests tell me that it marks the time when living gods sent back from Duat will rise. They will all come at once, and the Earth

will struggle to hold their power. They will rise here, and in Israel, Phoenicia, Assyria, Babylon, even to the ends of the Earth. We will need a strength that no chariots can provide. I do not fear mortal men, but these are foes that may destroy even a pharaoh. I am not sure even Egypt can survive."

Djau felt cold. "What can we do?" He thought his voice sounded small. The sounds of revelry now seemed mocking, as if the enemies of the gods laughed.

Pharaoh smiled. "My father knew this time was near. That was why his victory over the Israelites was so important. He needed the relics contained in the great temple built by King Solomon. I have kept them as he instructed."

Djau shook his head, not understanding.


Pharaoh said, "We will do as the Israelites did when they faced our armies. We will trade relics for our survival."

For the first time in their existences as servants of the Judges, mummies must come to terms with what they have become. Moreover, this is their chance to make their own choices, unfettered by purpose. It is an age for rivalries and relationships to be renewed, and for the Arisen to explore goals truly their own.

The world has changed dramatically from the days of the Nameless Empire, and even from the First Turn. The great civilizations of the Fertile Crescent have been in decline. Babylonia is a shadow of its former self, and the Assyrians have only begun asserting their power as the Sothic Turn begins. Egypt remains the most powerful of all nations, but the mummies can see that it has fallen far, even if the Egyptian people cannot. Other lands teeter on the verge of barbarism or struggle in ages too dark to recall.

THEME

The Second Turn is a time of dark reflection. The mighty empires of the past are but shadows of their former selves, and the Arisen have a chance to spend time with one another and come to terms with who — and what —



they are. Irem is long gone. The Arisen are dead beings who rise to serve the will of the Judges and collapse after their Descents are done. They aren't even certain who they must be in an uncertain time, as their memories become more and more elusive.

PERIOD OVERVIEW

The time of the Second Sothic Turn, 910 BCE, is a time shrouded in mystery. While archaeologists and historians have done their best to ascribe particular events to specific dates, oftentimes what may be presented as facts from this time frame and farther back are supported by single sources or writings that date from centuries later. Additionally there are several examples of later pharaohs and dynasties erasing names and events from history, notably the cartouches of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut being chiseled away from monuments. One of the best known stories of ancient Egypt, the Biblical Exodus, isn't recorded in Egyptian texts. Some scholars believe that it never happened, while others debate when it happened and where it might have happened. Dates range across centuries, and the truth may never be known with any certainty.

More than a few historians believe that ancient Egypt was in contact with the Americas, and there is some evidence that trade routes went from Africa all the way to Siberia. The truth about the world 3,000 years ago is something that is still being discovered.

So, what does this mean for Storytelling?

It means that you have freedom to take what is known and extrapolate your own "facts" from it. For example, the Mycenaean civilization in Greece fell around 1100 BCE, perhaps a century to a century and-a-half after the Trojan War. However, if having a Trojan War-style outpost holding out in Greece fits the needs of a chronicle, by all means, create it. If a Nubian invasion of Egypt inspires your story, let the masters of the bow come and Upper and Lower Egypt tremble as a Nubian king is crowned. If any members of the troupe should dispute your version of history, simply let them know that later pharaohs would remove all records of this time and create a new version of history — the one that we've come to know. After all, the records of the Nameless Empire have been lost....

Even more than that, it's quite plausible for lost civilizations to exist during this time beyond the boundaries of the Fertile Crescent. Barbarian invaders could have been driven into Assyria or Babylonia by civilizations that modern man has yet to unearth. If a people built their monuments out of wood instead of stone, and kept no written records, it's unlikely that modern archaeologists will discover them. A great deal from this time, too, is lost.

With so little real world information about this time, it may seem intimidating to consider setting a chronicle or even a flashback during this period. There is more information in the Storytelling section, but the most important thing to remember is that though time and technology may change, human behavior doesn't. In 910 BCE, people worry about putting food on their tables, complain about tax increases, and look forward to holidays and religious festivals.


There are many things that aren't understood from this time period. For example, while we don't have many writings from northern Europe, the people of the British Isles, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia had settlements connected by well-traveled paths and tracks. There is ample evidence that the tin trade flourished between the people of Cornwall and those of Austria and the Fertile Crescent. Evidence also exists of an "Amber Road" from the Baltic and North Sea coasts to Italy and Greece in ancient times. The construction of circles of standing stones indicates some knowledge of engineering, and there are many who believe that the methods of raising the stones in places like Stonehenge were learned from the methods the Egyptians used to raise obelisks.

When the Iron Age began, new technology spread within a few generations even to the most far-flung human settlements, implying communication and trade. How did all of this happen? Probably caravans and traders from Egypt and elsewhere went much farther than generally understood in search of valuable goods. After all, the Phoenicians would circumnavigate Africa only a few centuries after the events of this Sothic Turn. They almost certainly had made it to Britain.

Even in the Fertile Crescent, there are groups and places mentioned which modern archaeologists simply can't find. One example is the island of Dilmun. Mentioned over the centuries as a place that served as a go-between for Babylon and distant lands, the historical record indicates that it was a hub for trade possibly from Africa and even the Orient. Although there is plenty of evidence of its existence, the actual location is lost. The best theories suggest that it should have been near modern Bahrain, but Dilmun has yet to be discovered.

As a Storyteller, if you wish to fill in missing pieces of history, look at these lost civilizations and unknown peoples as opportunities to weave in the Nameless Empire and adversaries of the Arisen, such as the Deceived. Perhaps Dilmun vanished when a cult attempted to recreate the Rite of Return? Religious texts and myths also provide copious amounts of material. Nearly any creature of legend can become an Amkhat.

Again, although this section is filled with information on history for you to use in setting your chronicles during



Names of Countries and Cities

The names of countries and cities in this text come from multiple different sources, and some may even be anachronistic. One example is the capital of Egypt, the city of Thebes. In ancient Egyptian, the city's name was Waset. The Greeks would later name it Thebes, but many people know it by the later name of Luxor. The land of Kush would later be known as Nubia, which the Greeks referred to as Aethiopia. Feel free to use different names to convey a sense of the time period, but be warned that players who don't understand that Kemet is the land known today as Egypt may become confused.

910 BCE, feel free to change it to make it your own. Create an empire lost to the mists of time. Scatter ruins of the Nameless Empire throughout your world. If a player tries to correct you, remind them that history is often reinterpreted and even blatantly changed for political and religious ends. They are experiencing the Sothic Turn as it truly happened.

On that note, be warned that with a little research, conflicting dates and timelines can be found for nearly everything in this section. The following assumptions are being made herein:

- Osorkon I was the ruler of Egypt in 910 BCE.
- The Kingdom of Judah broke off from Israel after the death of King Solomon.
- The Assyrian Empire began its rapid expansion through the Fertile Crescent.
- The city-states of Greece remained in a dark age.
- The Phoenicians spread the alphabet, and established colonies and trade throughout the Mediterranean.
- The Minoan Empire has fallen.
- The Etruscans have established themselves in the land that will be known as Italy.

One last note: The view of the known world in this history of **Mummy: The Curse** is an Egypt-centric one. There are other civilizations in the world, notably in China and Peru, but these are largely outside the world known to the Arisen in 910 BCE. Feel free to explore those outliers, should your chronicle take you there.

LIFE IN 910 BCE

Attempting to run or play in a chronicle or even a single story set nearly 3,000 years ago is a daunting task for Storytellers and players. Enough detail about the setting is needed to convey the feel of the ancient world, but if the troupe worries during the sessions about whether the world is “historically accurate,” it harms the story. This section contains some overarching thoughts and details about life at the beginning of the Iron Age.

First and foremost, the most important concern of this age was food. This meant that the governments of all nations needed to be sure that fields were worked and harvests were plentiful. Livestock was precious. It was worth killing to obtain and dying to protect. Animals were also a sign of wealth. Priests earned their status by watching the movements of the heavens to predict the seasons. It was their responsibility to make sure that farmers knew when to plant their fields and when to harvest.


For nomadic people, hunting and gathering was their source of sustenance. As animals migrated, they would follow. If civilized people would trade food for furs or other items these nomads could find, they would gladly do so.

No matter how hard people worked, dry seasons, diseased livestock, and swarms of locusts brought on famine and starvation. When food ran out, people blamed their leaders for offending the gods. Rebellion and war followed famine. Civilizations that couldn't feed the people ceased to exist.

The societies of this age generally possessed three classes. First, as always, the upper class — a nobility, usually related, who possessed most of the wealth and held the positions of influence. This class perpetuated itself by giving out roles of authority to family members and arranging marriages to forge alliances. The second class was made up of people who had little in the way of resources, but still had opportunities to achieve some level of comfort through hard work. Traders and craftsmen would come from this group, and those who proved their merit might have the chance to marry into the upper class.

Finally, there were slaves. Slavery was commonplace during this time, and it wasn't associated with a particular culture or group. Criminals and people defeated in warfare became slaves. An influential slave with the ear of a king or queen might possess more power than a lesser noble. Many household slaves trained the children of rulers and lived lives of comfort. However, there were plenty more who were forced into hard labor until they died. Still, in any society, a talented slave might find the opportunity to earn her own freedom.

Death was an ever-present part of life. Childbirth was dangerous and childhood even more so. Every parent expected to lose a child before adulthood. Families produced as many children as they could, and couples with no children



were seen as having failed their city or tribe. Everyone in this age faced death before they reached adulthood.

Disease was the wrath of the gods; once it took hold, only those who lived in cities could do anything other than pray. The Egyptians and Babylonians had some medical knowledge, including the ability to perform some surgeries. However, the diseased were often cast out due to their supposed curse.

Even in Egypt, wild animals remained a threat. Nile crocodiles were so respected that people worshipped them as Sebek himself, and hunting hippopotami was considered the height of courage. Lions still lived in Europe, and it's possible that in the far north, Ice Age megafauna might have still lived. Imagine an encounter with the last known mammoths that died out only 4,000 years ago.

Nearly all settlements were found near water, usually along the banks of a river. This is certainly true of the Babylonian and Assyrian cities found along the Tigris and Euphrates, and the cities of Egypt all along the Nile. A notable exception is Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. However, Jerusalem does have a number of streams.

Cities during this age were walled fortresses, punctuated by mighty towers. The thick and high walls were virtually impenetrable to an attacking army. This was a necessity because nomadic tribes could attack at any time. Almost all of the great civilizations were nearly destroyed by barbarians at one time or another, including the Egyptians. This was the Iron Age, when iron weapons and armor had replaced bronze.

Each city not only had a palace for the local ruler, but also a temple or temple complex for the high priests. In Egypt, the pharaoh was the head of the religion and the government; but in other civilizations, a high priest or priestess was the supreme religious authority while the king was the secular one.

Roads were mostly packed dirt tracks, sometimes poorly marked. Bandits would prey on travelers. Those who traveled without caravans took their lives into their own hands. Large wild animals lived in the forests, and many of these animals weren't afraid of men. Horses of this time could be ridden, but they lacked the robust strength of draft horses. Oxen and mules often pulled carts and wagons.

THE ARISEN TURN

The Sothic Turn is the time that the Arisen experience a Descent with no clear or defined purpose. For some, it is a time of reflection as they contemplate their existences and natures. It is also a time to reconnect with allies, and of course, a chance to renew old rivalries.

For the cults of the Arisen, the Sothic Turn is a grand event, for which they have prepared for years. A mummy may awaken to discover a feast waiting and people dancing

and singing in celebration. Unfortunately, a newly risen mummy may mistake such revelry for an attack; but hopefully, their priests explain the celebration before tragedy occurs. Other Arisen may wake to find themselves surrounded by priests, solemnly conducting rituals in Iremite or perhaps ancient Sumerian in hopes of appeasing the gods. Some high priests may read from a list of tasks to remind the mummy of her desires from a previous Descent. Unfortunately, these tasks may be out of context, and as the generations have passed, even the priests may not know what they mean.

The cults do know that the Arisen are supposed to meet with their brethren. After waking, many mummies will join caravans traveling to the great cities. These gatherings have been planned, and the information has passed between cults. For each guild, the city is different. The Mesen-Nebu gather in Tyre in Phoenicia, while the Sesha-Hebsu flock to the Phoenician city of Byblos. The Su-Menent gather in Egypt at the city of Memphis and the Great Necropolis of Giza, while the Tef-Aabhi choose to convene in the Egyptian capital of Waset. For the Maa-Kep, the Assyrian city of Nineveh hosts a conclave.

Similar gatherings happen on a smaller scale in other cities, with a mix of guilds. Not all of the Arisen and their cults have the desire or ability to travel.

At the guild conclaves in the great cities, discussions on leadership and purpose take place. New leaders are appointed and old ones are reaffirmed. Nomes and other divisions of lands are discussed. Almost as important, these gatherings become social events. The Arisen have a chance to socialize with their peers, bringing back memories and restoring longings for things that they have lost. With their inability to remember, some Arisen may form friendships with former enemies or develop rivalries with ancient friends or lovers, only to finally recall their previous experiences.

Once the gatherings have ended, the next steps belong to the Arisen. Where will they go? Do they wish to stay among their guilds or explore the world, seeking new relics? Will they wander into the endless Sahara searching for traces of the Nameless Empire?

GEOGRAPHY

Civilization in 910 BCE is concentrated along the Fertile Crescent, from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in modern day Iran to modern Turkey and Syria, and south along the Mediterranean coast to Egypt. However, invasions from nomadic tribes have devastated these lands in the last several centuries. The barbarians no longer fear attacking the lands of these civilizations. While they might not conquer the cities, the farms beyond the city walls have been at their mercy.



The ability to make weapons out of iron has now shifted the balance back in favor of the city-dwellers. After a time of dark ages, the kingdoms of the Fertile Crescent are ready to re-assert themselves. Assyria especially will rebuild its ancient empire and reconquer the lands that it once controlled.

Trade and culture has spread across the Mediterranean basin, often carried by Phoenician galleys. The seeds of the mighty Greek city-states have started to take hold, and the Etruscan civilization, which will be the precursor to Rome, has begun to emerge in Italy. Goods travel from as far as Scandinavia and the British Isles to as far as Babylon in the East.

EGYPT

Khu-hotep shook with anticipation. Behind him, nearly the entire village had gathered. Tonight was a night when the oil lamps burned brightly in the city of Waset, and the musicians would play and the dancers would perform; but in his small village, the excitement was far greater than that of any festival.

Tonight was the night that everyone had awaited.

Sirius was high in the heavens, and the gods would once again walk along the banks of the Nile.

He heard the sound of stones scraping from inside the tombs. He gazed upon the statues that his village lovingly kept in good repair, noting the features of the gods and the majesty of their bearings. He could envision the ancient sarcophagi opening.

He shivered again, but this time, he felt cold. Someone screamed. A terrible monster, an enormous serpent with a jackal's head and the tail of a scorpion, slithered through the crowd. Mothers gathered up their children. Fear gripped the faithful. Some of the village's warriors retreated with wide eyes.

The jackal-serpent gazed at Khu-hotep, fixing its eyes upon him. A forked tongue flashed out from canine teeth and he knew that the monster had come for him. He prayed for the all of the mighty ones, not just his revered Nofre-Mat, but his companions, Su-Thoth, Khuit, and Setka to wake.

"Save your servant!" he shouted in the language of Irem.

The stones sealing the tombs cracked with the sound of thunder. All of the members of the sacred meret stepped out into the night, illuminated by the moon and the starlight. The four were terrible in their visages, and a cold fear gripped Khu-hotep's heart.

The jackal-serpent hissed a challenge, and the Arisen rasped their acceptance in the ancient tongue of Irem.

Khu-hotep closed his eyes and pressed himself against the sand as he listened to the terrible battle. When silence fell, he still didn't dare to move. It was only when a skeletal hand gripped his shoulder that he opened his eyes.

Khu-hotep gazed at the golden death-mask of Nofre-Mat himself. From behind the mask, the Arisen asked a single question.

"What have we become?"

Before the Persians fought the Spartans at Thermopylae; before the Latins built a village called Roma on the banks of the Tiber River; before Troy fell to Mycenaeans and the patriarch Abraham received his promise from God... Egypt was already old.

The Great Pyramid at Giza is many centuries old at this time, and nothing rivals its majesty as it rises from the desert, with reflected sunlight gleaming from its peak as if the pyramid itself had captured a star all its own. While this is the most impressive structure ever built, even the least of the monuments of Egypt is enough to make visitors drop to their knees in awe. Centuries of effort have left the land covered in columns, statues, and obelisks, tombs and temples dedicated to pharaohs and gods, all of which would be marvels in other lands.

All of the cities of Egypt, including Elephantine, Abydos, Herakleopolis, and Tanis are greater than the capitals of other lands. They are filled with throngs of traders and craftsmen. The residences of the rich are tall, multi-story buildings, and slaves and servants cook food on the roofs or in fire-pits outside the building but within a small wall surrounding the home. Barges and ships constantly ply the Nile, and the docks are filled with traders from Phoenicia, Babylon, Kush, Hellas, Judah and anywhere else where men desire the riches of Egypt. Surrounding the walls of the city, farmland stretches all along the Nile. Wherever the water touches the black soil, food grows. The farmers set their humble abodes back away from the river to survive the floods. Few roads link the cities. They are not needed as the Nile is the true road connecting all of Egypt.

During this time, four cities hold greater influence than the others. Bubastis, the city of the cat-goddess Bast in Lower Egypt, was chosen by Osorkon's father as the royal residence of the pharaoh. The city is growing, and many new lavish and large temples are under construction per Osorkon's wishes. Leaders of the nomadic tribes of Libya come to visit and pay homage to Pharaoh Osorkon. They are well aware of his Libyan ancestry, and although the pharaoh considers himself fully Egyptian, he appreciates the loyalty his heritage engenders.

Bubastis also hosts the Feast of Bast, which has become the most important of all religious celebrations. Barges and ships fill the Nile, and music, dancing, and of course, feasting are all essential parts of the holiday. Word has spread throughout Egypt and into other lands that attending the Feast of Bast is the easiest way to curry favor with Osorkon. Pilgrims from Upper and Lower Egypt as well as foreigners flock to Bubastis to enjoy the festivities.

While the presence of the pharaoh elevates Bubastis, the other three cities outdo competitors with size alone.





Iunu, Inbu-Hedj, and Waset are all simply referred to as “the City” by locals living anywhere near them.

Heliopolis (Iunu in ancient Egyptian) stands on the banks of the Nile in Lower Egypt. Known for its mighty obelisks and temple of Re, this vibrant metropolis is the center of the worship of the sun god and one of the oldest cities in all of Egypt. The priests of Heliopolis are the most revered historians in the world. When oracles cannot give kings the answers they desire, delegations are sent to Heliopolis to beg the priests for knowledge. Even records from the Nameless Empire remain in Heliopolis, and some priests read ancient Iremite. Nearly the entire leadership belongs to Arisen cults, notably Sesha-Hebsu and Tef-Aabhi. They have little faith in the pharaoh, partially due to his Libyan ancestry, but more to their understanding of how weak Egypt has become. They look to the Sothic Turn as an opportunity for the Arisen to empower Egypt once more.

Despite the size and prestige of Heliopolis, the greatest city in Lower Egypt is white-walled Memphis (Inbu-Hedj in ancient Egyptian), with its population of over 50,000. Formerly the capital of Egypt, monuments dedicated to ancient pharaohs fill the city. Traders from foreign lands, Phoenicians, Greeks, and others come first to Memphis when they arrive in Egypt. The priests and governors of Memphis wield tremendous power and influence. If there

is one person that the pharaoh wishes to placate, it is the governor of Memphis.

The greatest city in the world in and around 910 BCE was the capital of Thebes (Waset in ancient Egyptian), in Upper Egypt, with a staggering population that may have reached over 80,000. This was the capital and the seat of power for the pharaoh. Although Osorkon may not have been as popular in Thebes as he was in Bubastis, here he has legions of administrators and priests ready to carry his commands to any of the nomes or provinces of the country.

As it has been for as long as men can remember, the people of Egypt rely on the Nile to sustain them. The river flows north from Kush in the south through Upper Egypt to Lower Egypt before emptying into the delta and into the sea. Channels from the river feed the black soil banks which provide food for Egypt. The Egyptians fish from the river and hunt waterfowl along its banks. The people see the Nile as the true road of Egypt and travel along the river to go between cities.

The current pharaoh, Osorkon I, basks in the glory of his father Shoshenq’s conquest of Judah. Treasures from the great Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem lie hidden in his vaults. The city of Bubastis honors him. He plans for the city of Tanis, where some of the treasures are rumored to lie, to be the site of his tomb as well as to one day rival





Thebes herself in its glory. He has established a time of peace throughout the land. Priests describe the pharaoh as mighty in the manifestations of Re, and during his time, many temples will rise along the banks of the Nile to honor the gods.

And yet, all is not well.

Whispers in the court of Osorkon's Libyan heritage poison the great families of Egypt against him. There are those who see his devotion to the gods as an acknowledgement that he is not worthy to be pharaoh. Local leaders wish to seize power for themselves, and ancient conflicts between Upper and Lower Egypt have returned. After millennia of greatness, Egypt is in decline.

Many of the soldiers who fought alongside Shoshenq do not understand why his son has so little interest in conquest, but Osorkon needs to keep his armies at home to maintain his crumbling control over the land. When he finally dies, many men will claim the title of pharaoh, including Pedubast I and Takelot II; and Egypt will for all practical purposes vacillate between splitting between Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt and reuniting.

To the south, in Kush, this weakness strengthens the resolve of those who resent being ruled by Egypt. The Kushites are a proud and mighty people, known for their skill with the bow. They maintain their own capital city at Napata. As to whether Kush is under Egyptian rule depends on whether an Egyptian or Kushite is asked. After centuries of Egyptian domination, the Kushites are culturally Egyptian and only cling to a few of their own rituals. This isn't seen as a weakness, but a strength. If a Libyan from the primitive desert tribes of the west can be pharaoh, certainly a man of Kush can take on the mantle.

To the west, the tribal peoples of Libya have fallen under Egyptian sway, and many of these tribes proclaim allegiance to Osorkon I, due to his Libyan ancestry. The Libyan nomads live in relative peace with the Egyptians and trade with them. The occasional skirmish takes place, but the tribes pose no threat to Egypt.

To the east lies Israel, still reeling from the looting of the First Temple by the Egyptians. The realm of King David has shattered into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, and with the death of Solomon has its own problems to overcome.

The great Feast of Bast draws pilgrims from across the world. During this time, watercraft fill the Nile full of men playing pipes, women playing cymbals and tambourines, and everyone clapping and dancing. They disembark at each town on the Nile to dance and sing before returning to their barges and other vessels and continuing up the river. When they reach Bubastis, they hold a solemn feast and drink copious amounts of wine.

Life for the average Egyptian seems largely unchanged from the past centuries. The Nile is the great source of

water and food. People fish from its waters and channel them to irrigate crops. Crocodiles are sometimes a danger, but the people are careful of them and see them as incarnations of Sebek. Farmers build their homes far from the banks of the river, but with the floods each year, a few houses are always destroyed.

Monuments fill the cities, but so do multi-storied homes. The wealthy have walls outside their homes and meals are cooked outside to protect against fire. Small windows high in the rooms allow light to enter the home and air to circulate but protect against the heat of the sun. Families of lesser means still live in tall homes as land is precious. Roofs are used to cook food and for gatherings as well.

Slaves, beggars, and merchants fill the streets of the cities. Slaves are constantly doing business for their masters, while beggars ask for food as opposed to coin. Merchants from many lands offer their goods, usually near the docks under colorful awnings. Trade in Egypt is conducted through a barter system, where services and goods can be exchanged as opposed to coins.

To the rest of the world the people of Egypt are blessed, even as they experience decline. The Egyptians know that the great monuments, such as the pyramids, weren't built in their lifetimes. They know that the Theban high priest once stripped the pharaoh of his divine authority, and that the gold which once came in tribute from Kush like the rushing waters of the Nile is now given only grudgingly as a gift. Leaders of cities discuss their interpretations of the pharaoh's will, and Osorkon struggles to keep the land at peace. Egypt is a land that has been in decline for 500 years, and will continue to fall from its heights in the years to come.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH

"Upon the orders of King Asa and in the name of the one true God, I, Nathaniel, bear witness to the execution of these heretics and blasphemers!"

With those words, Nathaniel's men decapitated the remaining cultists.

He was pleased. They had rooted out these men and women who had angered God. Now, it was time to destroy the hidden temple that the cultists had worked so hard to protect.

"Leave, and my master will show you mercy," shouted a woman.

She stood boldly in front of the cave that the cultists had used as a place of worship. Such a place should have been used for burials and remained sacred, but these cultists were even worse than the many people enticed to worship the Phoenician god, Baal. They had no respect for the dead.

"Who is your master?" asked Nathaniel. "Is he some cowardly old man who claims to be a priest?"

"No," she replied. "He is Khepera-Sut of the Su-Menet, and he is Arisen. If you leave and swear in the name of your god






The Treasures of Solomon

When Pharaoh Shoshenq took the treasures of the Temple of Solomon, he gathered all the gold and silver, including hundreds of shields of gold, and took it all back to Egypt. This included relics taken from other lands and tribes, especially from the Philistines of Canaan.

The most important holy item contained in the temple was the Ark of the Covenant. While there are some theories that suggest that Egyptians took the Ark (and possibly buried it in the Well of Souls in the city of Tanis), later in the Bible, the Levites are asked to return the Ark. If the Egyptians had taken it, the Levites wouldn't have been able to return it. More likely, the Ark was hidden before the Egyptians came to claim the treasures of the temple, or Shoshenq decided to leave it in the Temple of Solomon so he would not offend the Hebrew god. If he had taken the Ark back to Egypt, it seems unlikely in retrospect that the Kingdom of Judah would have accepted Egyptian rule.

As Storyteller, you may prefer to have the Ark travel to Egypt. It could be in the city of Tanis, where Osorkon's dynasty will have their tombs, but some other options include Bubastis, his residence, and the capital, Thebes, which would earn him favor with the powerful priesthood of Upper Egypt.



that you will never speak of this place, I will ask him to show you mercy, for you do not know what you have done here."

"Kill her," commanded Nathaniel. He had faced armies of Philistines and Egyptians. He would not be deterred by some witch's empty curse.

A shambling corpse draped in the robes of a priest emerged from the mouth of the cave. The dead man spoke a single word and the air fell still. Men screamed from behind Nathaniel, but he could not look back at them. The thing's empty eye sockets locked on to Nathaniel's eyes. With his last thought, he wondered how his silent god would judge him in the afterlife.

After King Solomon's death, the northern tribes of the Jewish people would not recognize Rehoboam, Solomon's son, as their king. Only the tribe of Benjamin allied itself with Rehoboam, and ultimately, a new kingdom, Judah, formed with Jerusalem as its capital. The northern kingdom kept the name Israel and went to war with Judah. Fierce battles ensued between the northern tribes and the southern ones. In order to protect his land, King Rehoboam built several fortifications and defenses against his northern neighbors, but he was helpless when the Egyptians invaded with horsemen and

chariots that far outnumbered his forces. Without defenses, the chariot army of the pharaoh could not be stopped. Faced with utter destruction, Rehoboam negotiated peace with Egypt, trading away the relics and treasures of the First Temple, the temple of his father, King Solomon.

Rehoboam's grandson, Asa, now rules over Judah with his father's recent death. His kingdom is a vassal of Egypt, and he has no greater ambition than to reunite Israel. The Moabites have risen up to fight against him in the name of their god, Chemosh. King Asa has turned to the prophets and believes that only by winning the favor of Yahweh can he triumph over his foes.

To win Yahweh's favor, he has ordered the destruction of worship sites dedicated to other gods. He has sent soldiers to drive out worshippers of other gods or have them put to death. He intends to have the entire Kingdom of Judah return to their covenant with Yahweh. Once this is done, Asa believes that he will be able to free Judah from its service to Egypt, but also reunite the Kingdom of Israel with the Kingdom of Judah.

Jerusalem is the capital of Judah, located on a mountain plateau and surrounded by forests of olive, pine, and almond trees. Like many other cities, it has strong walls and its location on a plateau makes it difficult to besiege. Numerous springs provide water for the city, which is one of the few large cities not located on the banks of a river.

Of all the lands under Egypt's rule, Judah, with its people's monotheistic devotion to Yahweh, has become the most difficult place for cults to thrive. The leadership of Judah is constantly vigilant to make sure that their people are not worshipping false idols. When cults are uncovered, their members face violence and usually death. Many of the cults of Judah have fled, taking their Arisen with them and seeking sanctuary in Egypt.

For its part, the Kingdom of Israel wishes nothing more than to conquer Judah. The current King Nadab has had little success, although the forces of the Philistines who once battled King David a century ago have dwindled to nearly nothing in his lands. Nadab has concentrated on building defenses, particularly in Ramah, a city located only five miles north of Jerusalem.

Unlike Judah, Israel is much more tolerant of other religions, and the traditional Canaanite gods of Baal, Astarte, and Dagon are worshipped as well as Yahweh. Anyone willing to fight against Judah is accepted in the kingdom. Israel trades with Assyria and Phoenicia. Nadab hopes that he will be able to overwhelm Asa, and the young King of Judah will surrender Jerusalem to him.

However, due to his devotion and piety, King Asa is popular among the people of Judah, while Nadab, due to his failure to defeat Judah, is seen as a poor leader by his people, particularly the captains of his armies.



Although war goes on between these two kingdoms, neither wishes to antagonize any of the other powers of the region, so caravans are allowed to pass through the two lands. Also, the season for war is a short one, falling between the end of harvest and the winter, preventing either side from being able to achieve any lasting success against the well-fortified border of the rival kingdom.

PHOENICIA

As the sea wind blew against his face, Mithonibaal smiled with excitement. The ship had reached its destination — a small island off the coast of Cyprus, virtually unknown to anyone outside of the captains of Phoenicia. He could see the eternal guards signaling to them from the entrance to the secret harbor. He shouted out to his crew to make certain that they steered well away from the rocks. If he could be so flush with enthusiasm, so could they, and it would only take a few fools to let the rocks find his hull. Though he trusted the strength of the cedarwood, he knew far too well that stone showed no mercy.

He unrolled a papyrus scroll and checked the manifest as he had a dozen times before. Papyrus and ink filled the hull, along with dozens of slaves, all of whom could read and write in a variety of languages. He carried with him gold as well, and even holy texts taken from the Greeks, Assyrians, and the kingdom of Israel. He mouthed the words that his grandfather had first taught him in Byblos, the sacred words that belonged to She-Who-Lay-Dreaming: “Sesha-Hebsu.”

The capital of Phoenicia is the city of Tyre, a walled city located on the coast of the land which will be known as Lebanon. The walled cities of Sidon and Byblos along the coast provide the other centers of the Phoenician civilization.

More than anything else, the Phoenicians are known as the greatest traders in the world. They are the only source of purple dye, made from the shell of the murex, a small mollusk, found in the coastal waters. Due to its rarity, purple has already become the color of royalty and wealth. It will retain its value for millennia to come.

Secondly, great cedar trees cover the mountains that rise up from the sea. Cedar columns stand in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Cedar is coveted by the rulers of both Egypt and Babylon. For the Phoenicians, it also provides the perfect material for ship-building.

The Phoenicians are the undisputed masters of the sea. They have biremes for war, with rows of oarsmen ready to ram and sink their enemies; but even more importantly, they have boats with rounded hulls and mighty sails which have allowed them to cross the Mediterranean and establish trading settlements in Crete, North Africa, Italy, Greece, and even Spain. Sailors from Phoenicia even braved the ocean beyond the Mediterranean and sailed around modern Arabia on the Red Sea.

In the last century, the Phoenicians have spread their alphabet throughout the Mediterranean; and while other forms of writing still exist, such as Egyptian hieroglyphics, the alphabet is the primary form of writing for trade. The Phoenicians import papyrus in mass quantities from Egypt. Phoenician scholars, particularly in Byblos, collect the stories and mythology of other peoples. The literature that their scribes possess is unparalleled. Their continual thirst for knowledge has pushed them to continue improving their ships and has helped them learn the secrets of metal to create some of the strongest iron weapons of any nation.

The Phoenicians have made their civilization the center of commerce. Ivory from Nubia and precious metals from Spain can both be found along the packed dirt streets of their cities. If the Egyptian or Assyrian armies threaten them, they have the ability to buy off their enemies if their armies don't prove up to the task.

Astartus, the King of Tyre, assumed the throne when he and his three brothers assassinated their predecessor. He is the first of his dynasty, and while Phoenicia prospers, the leaders of Sidon hope to see their city rise to eclipse Tyre's authority as it did in the past. Astartus is more concerned with troubles from Israel to the south and holding on to the throne than anything else.

The worship of Baal is common throughout Phoenicia, though in the colonies, the Phoenicians have little trouble worshipping different gods. They are masters of assimilation, and already the colonies of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos are developing distinct cultures.

Although the return to prominence of the Assyrians has not escaped the notice of King Astartus, he is more concerned with the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and their struggles. The Phoenicians covet Canaan and the lands held by the two kingdoms of the Hebrews. For now, they remain cautious, as they do not wish to anger the Egyptians by warring with Judah; but they know that if they attack Israel, they could weaken its leaders enough for Judah to reunite the two lands. Instead, they wage a cultural war, attempting to break down the Kingdom of Israel's devotion to its intolerant, monotheistic religion and lure them into Phoenicia's sphere of influence.


THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

Adad-nirari II stared at the royal astrologers. “Are you certain that the time of the gods is upon us?”

“Yes, mighty king,” said the chief astrologer. “The positions of the stars are indisputable. The gods will once again walk the earth, and everything will change.”

Adad-nirari rubbed his beard. “My family has diligently served the cult. We have endured even as the Assyrian Empire was destroyed. What must I do to make certain that when they rise, they will aid us?”





“They will want relics. They desire access to the histories.”

The king nodded. *“I will let it be known to all my subjects that I will honor the gods by reclaiming the lands of our forefathers. I will drive the warring tribes of barbarians from our borders. And then, I will give the unliving gods everything they could ask, as long as they lend me their power. Let the greatest among them know that we will be their empire.”*

“Sire,” said the chief astrologer, “what of Babylon? Surely they have gods of their own.”

Adad-nirari smiled. “Perhaps they will aid us as well.”

Assyria lies near the northernmost part of the Fertile Crescent in the lands which will one day be part of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Once the capital of Assyria, Assur, dominated this region; but barbarians, notably the Arameans, have stolen Assyria’s former lands.

A new king, Adad-nirari II, claimed the throne in 911 BCE. He is ambitious and intelligent, and he intends to restore Assyria to greatness. He knows that both Egypt and Babylon are diminished and the once-powerful Hittites have been swept away. He believes that this is the time for Assyria to assert itself.

To begin his reign, Adad-nirari has instilled the idea that Assyrians must be soldiers. He has honored the warrior above all others, and taken his newly ambitious Assyrian forces and attacked the Arameans, the Hurrians, and others. Victory after victory has strengthened his reign. The Assyrians believe that, with their iron weapons and their powerful armies, the gods have blessed them. Egypt and Babylon are weak; now is the time of Assyria.

Adad-nirari also belongs to the cult of a Tef-Aabhi, Gebmose, who has made his home in the city of Assur for centuries. In the past, members of the cult have been careful to keep the true nature of their devotion hidden out of respect for the gods of Mesopotamia. In the past, they have woken Gebmose to strengthen the walls of Assur against invaders, and they have done their best to aid him in his search for relics.

Adad-nirari does not want the Arisen to only protect his walls. He wants conquest. When Gebmose rose for the Sothic Turn, Adad-nirari was waiting, not as a high priest, but as King of Assyria. He brought relics forth to honor the Arisen, clay tablets with the mummy’s writings and slaves and craftsmen prepared to construct whatever the Tef-Aabhi commanded. He personally led Gebmose out to see the great Temple of Ishtar, which had been completed based on designs the Arisen had drawn in previous Descents.

As Gebmose beheld the grandeur of the large building complex of the Temple of Ishtar, Adad-nirari promised him that he would build far more, if only Gebmose would aid him. The king explained that after each of Gebmose’s previous Descents, barbarian invaders had come and destroyed the once-great monuments of Assyria. He

pleaded with Gebmose not to let the same fate befall the Temple of Ishtar, and explained that the only way to protect Assyria was to destroy their enemies. He asked Gebmose to aid him in his conquests.

Gebmose agreed.

New construction is now a constant in the walled city of Assur. Statues of winged bulls, new temples, and walls rise with each passing week. The Ziggurat of the Moon God has new paint and repairs to the brick walls. The palace of Adad-nirari II is becoming one of the grandest residences ever created. People now flock to Assyria from the surrounding lands, and Adad-nirari officially recognizes Aramaic as well as Akkadian as a language of his land.

The Assyrian city of Nineveh has also undergone revitalization, and trade has increased. Meanwhile, the armies of Assyria continue to triumph on the battlefield. In the east, the Aramaic Kingdom of Syria poses no threat, while Adad-nirari continues to expand his influence. To the north, the Kingdom of Urartu (also known as the Kingdom of Ararat) has posed little resistance to Assyrian forces and its leadership now seeks to exist under Assyrian protection. Finally, the Assyrians have already captured a few Babylonian villages — and if Adad-nirari has his wish, one day Babylon itself will fall to him.

While word of Assyria’s sudden revitalization and powerful armies has gone out along the trade routes, whispers have also traveled about caravans from lands such as Judah bringing religious pilgrims to worship at the new Temple of Ishtar. Meanwhile, Gebmose expands the influence of his own nome and dreams of a new Irem.

BABYLONIA

The guardsmen paced along the mud-brick walls of their village. They constantly kept watch over the green lands around them, trying to notice if any large groups approached. For so long, the great kingdom of Babylonia had ruled supreme over the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, or at least, those were the tales of the elders and the priests. Such things belonged to the ancients from the days before the Aramean barbarians had come and taken everything.

At least, Babylon had a king once more, but as the men watched a dark mass moving closer, they both wondered how long he would reign. After the alarms had been sounded and they joined the other soldiers on the ground in front of the village, they had doubts.

The men coming toward them were not another group of barbarians. They were the hosts of Assur. The Assyrians had come for conquest.

Shamash-Mudammiq rules over the Kingdom of Babylonia and its capital of Babylon, the first true king after years of anarchy. He dreams of re-establishing Babylonia as the dominant power in the Fertile Crescent,



and unlike some of his predecessors, he is supported by the priesthood which is the dominant force in Babylonian politics. Unfortunately for Shamash-Mudammiq, his reign will be spent losing battles to the Assyrians.

Babylonia has long rivaled Egypt, attempting to challenge the building of the pyramids with impressive ziggurats of their own. Every city has a ziggurat, a stepped pyramid in the center to serve as a temple. A shrine stands on the top of these massive buildings.

Unlike Egypt, stone and metal is scarce and construction is done with bricks of clay. All of the buildings of Babylonia are constructed from clay, as well as the tablets on which their astronomers record observations. What little metal can be found in Babylonia is precious. The Babylonians trade for tin and iron from places as far away as the British Isles.

Although the Babylonians have fallen from the might of their distant past, they still dominate the southern Tigris and Euphrates. They are an advanced civilization, and they pride themselves on their wisdom. Many of their people are literate, and education is as important as skill at arms.

The southern Tigris and Euphrates valleys are among the most fertile places in the known world. Babylon understands agriculture and food is plentiful in the good years; the city's stores are more than enough to endure years of drought and starvation. Many times the neighbors of Babylon have come to exchange tribute for food.

While the Babylonians may not travel the world to the extent that the Phoenicians do, they draw merchants and traders to them. Their neighbors in the beleaguered Kingdom of Elam trade heavily with them, and caravans from as far as India, western Africa, and even northern Europe seek out Babylon. The great city is the crossroads of civilizations, a metropolitan place where knowledge and resources are exchanged. A great zoo even exists, with elephants from Africa and exotic beasts from around the world.

The priesthood is less tolerant of Arisen cults than in most nations, and there are relatively few Arisen in Babylonia compared to other parts of the Fertile Crescent. Unfortunately, when the Arisen of Assyria come, Babylon will have few defenses against them.

CRETE

Centuries ago, the Minoans had one of the most advanced and flourishing cultures in the Mediterranean. They subjugated Greek islands and city-states, and sent ships to trade with Egypt. The multi-storied palace at Knossos with its colored columns and magnificent plumbing rivaled the seats of power belonging to the ancient empires.

Everything changed when the great volcano of Thera blew apart its island and rained ash down on the Minoans. The first true civilization of Europe was lost.

The isle of Crete is now home to a number of towns and villages, strongly influenced by the Greek city-states. These settlements are growing into their own distinctive city-states, and already the island is home to rivalries and even battles.

The palace at Knossos is quiet and lost, and none dares to try to rebuild it. However, Crete is in far better shape than the tattered remains of the island called Thera (now Santorini). After the volcano destroyed most of it, the Greeks say that only ghosts and the dead live on the island. It is believed to be haunted.

The Greeks are correct. The dead do live on Thera. The broken island has become a home of the Deceived, and their fanatical cult members conduct occasional raids on the Greek coast and other islands to gather whatever their masters' desire.

HELLAS

Antiopus dispatched his foe with a quick thrust of his spear. As he withdrew the bloody point, he found his next opponent. A man of Chalcis, who stood half a head taller than he did, stepped forward to face him.

They thrust their spears and circled each other, engaging in the dance of death. The Chalcian's reach was greater than Antiopus'. As they continued to clash, Antiopus realized that he was losing. When his foe struck him in the stomach, Antiopus stepped back and screamed.

"I will make your death quick. You have fought honorably," said the Chalcian, advancing.

Antiopus suddenly thrust his own spear forward, striking his foe high in the neck. As the Chalcian choked and died, Antiopus placed his free hand on the amulet that his mistress had granted him. The power of the Maa-Kep gave him the invulnerability of Achilles.


He looked down at the dead man.

"I don't fight honorably. I fight for my cult."

The city-states of the Hellenes stretch over the land which will one day be known as Greece, including the islands of the Aegean and the coasts of Asia Minor. United in culture, the Hellenes recount myths of the Olympian gods, but they save their loyalties for their own city-states. While the Hellenic warriors may aspire to emulate the heroes of the Trojan War, they are not the same peoples who fought in that epic war. The Mycenaean culture fell when Doric invaders burned the great cities of Mycenae and Tiryns while the Sea Peoples attacked from the south.

This is a dark age for the cities of Hellas. Tyrants rule the city-states and wage constant war with their neighbors. The land is difficult to farm, so the Hellenes rely on the sea to survive. In addition to being fishermen, they are pirates and raiders. To most of the cultures of the Fertile Crescent, the Hellenes are seen as primitive — little better than barbarians.





Slowly, events are taking place in these lands which will shape the future of Western civilization. The Hellenes have entered the Iron Age along with the rest of the Mediterranean world, and some new city-states have started asserting their dominance over their neighbors. Dual kings, Agis and Eurypon, have established the royal houses of Sparta. Spartan warriors have started conquering and enslaving their neighbors. The city of Argos has also increased its territory to include the nearby island of Cythera. The beginning of a bloody rivalry between these two Doric city-states has started, and it will last for centuries.

The city of Thebes (not to be confused with the capital of Egypt) is the greatest city in Hellas. One of the few cities to survive the invasions, the Thebans trace their founding back to the hero Cadmus, a Phoenician. Although the people of Thebes have suffered through the Dorian invasion, the city is a beacon of civilization in Hellas. Traders from the far corners of Europe come to the seven-gated walls of Thebes, and the Thebans are envied throughout Hellas for both their knowledge and their skill at warfare.

Another city on the rise is Athens, perhaps the last bastion of the Mycenaean culture. The Athenians are Ionians, and refuse to speak the Doric tongues of Argos or Sparta. Their city has survived without being burned by invaders, and they believe that the strength and wisdom

of their patron goddess Athena has protected them. The arrival of a Tef-Aabhi cult has led to the construction of buildings on the Athenian agora, and the Acropolis, the raised citadel at the heart of the city. The Parthenon will not be constructed however, for nearly 500 years.

Hellene sailors travel along the coasts up into the Black Sea and as far west as Spain. Some city-states engage in regular trade with not only the Phoenicians, but the Etruscans, the Philistines in Canaan, and the Egyptians.

Barbarian incursions from the North are a constant threat. Macedonians, Celts, and Cimmerians will raid down into the Peloponnesus.

The Deceived have sought refuge among the Greeks, sometimes appearing as gods and sometimes as monsters to these people. The Strangers have also made their way into Hellas, drawn by the legends of the Trojan War and the vibrant mythology of the land to seek heroes to aid them.

ITALY

Tarquin held his tribute tightly in his palm. The scrolls were safe under his arm. Starshine and moonlight illuminated the path, but he felt that he would have known his way even in the darkest of nights. He could feel the presence of the ancient.

He repeated the sacred words as his father had spoken them. He did not want to fail. As he stepped into the cave, he felt a slight chill move over his skin. The thought of a corpse, even a divine one, disturbed him. His people always burned their remains.

He reached the stone door and repeated the sacred words yet again, before pushing it open. He blinked as light streamed forth to greet him.

A skeletal figure stood before him wearing a mask of gold. She said something and gestured, but he didn't know the language. He replied using the sacred words and placed his tribute of precious amber down in front of her. She stared at the offering, before looking back up at him.

Using the words of the Phoenicians, she asked "Where are the others?"

Tarquin shuddered, but managed to answer in the trade language of the Phoenicians. "There are no others of your kind here. We only have a small village, and we are far across the sea from the great city of Tyre, but we have honored you for generations."

He showed her the scrolls, one at a time.

She nodded, "Then I am safe, but they will contend with each other. I have some time."

The towns and villages of central Italy are perhaps only a few centuries old at most. The former tribespeople who dwell here trade with their neighbors to the far north along the great Amber Road, and they have dealings with intrepid Phoenicians and Greeks alike from the east.

But...I Love Hoplites!

If your chronicle really needs Greek warriors with round hoplon shields and horsehair crests on their helmets, fighting in phalanxes, don't despair. Although they shouldn't appear for nearly 200 years, go ahead and use them. The date of the origin of the Greek phalanx is widely disputed, and similar formations had existed in Egypt and Babylon for centuries. It's quite plausible to believe that an exiled Assyrian, Egyptian, or Babylonian general could have made his way to Hellas and offered his services to one of the city-states. In the case of Thebes, the city had a reputation for the skill of its warriors, and easily could have had classical hoplites before the rest of Greece.

The Hellenes were citizen-soldiers for the most part, and each man paid for his own arms and armor. Hoplites would decorate their shields with family symbols or a symbol of their city-state.

The heroes of Greek myths often fall victim to their own pride.



The people call themselves Etruscans, and possess iron spears and plows. They have kings, but the villages largely govern themselves. Conflicts between villages aren't unknown, and a powerful village leader can usurp a king's throne.

In times of war, the people will unite to fight as a single army. To the south, barbarian tribes roam the forests and the hills, often making raids to steal food, livestock, or women from the Etruscans. Many barbarians live in the forests of the north as well, and they will attack travelers, given the chance. Despite the threats, the Etruscans remain strong.

Only a handful of Arisen dwell in Italy, but the people of this land are aware of the ancient ones. Most of the tombs here are found in caves, which are believed to be openings to the underworld. The cults seek out the Arisen as oracles and call upon them to protect the people in times of trouble.

The people of Italy trade amber with the Phoenicians and the Greeks. They will receive precious items from Egypt and even from as far away as Babylon. These items may be offered to the Arisen as well.

Dangers for Arisen living in Italy include the threat of

Deceived and Shuankhsen. As both are driven from the lands of the east, they have sought out places like Italy to bide their time and consolidate power before striking against the Arisen. However, an isolated meret spread out among a few villages in the hills might be vulnerable.

BRITISH ISLES


The inhabitants of the British Isles dwell largely apart from the rest of Europe. They are the barrow builders who praise the gods in circles of standing stones built by their ancestors. They have small settlements, and they trade with sailors from distant lands. A few bold Phoenicians even ply these waters. The people of Devon and Cornwall have mined tin for over a thousand years, and the demand for the metal has come from as far as Babylon.

This is an area of the world where little is known of the true history. In **Mummy: The Curse**, it is a land of Picts and ancient druids, where mystical fae may hold sway. Few of the Arisen have traveled to Britain, but if they do so, they may find untapped sources of Sekhem awaiting them.

OTHER LANDS

There are many other places that the Arisen may wish to explore. The lands of Hyperborea to the far north are





home to the ancestors of the Vikings. The people who live there dwell in villages and manage to conduct trade in amber with the peoples to the south.

Somali people in the city-states on the horn of Africa provide myrrh, frankincense, and spices to the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Phoenicians. Cults of Mesen-Nebu flourish in this region.

The eastern Kingdom of Elam, a neighbor of Babylon, faces constant struggles against barbarians who will become the ancestors of the Persians, a people who will build one of the greatest empires in history.

Nomadic tribes rule beyond the edges of civilization. These hunter-gatherers are powerful warriors and will raid or even try to conquer lands that they see as weak. They often have their own gods, but also venerate their ancestors. If they should see a mummy rise, they may try to destroy the Arisen or bow down in worship.

There are many more places that can be found with some research, and there are plenty of opportunities for Storytellers to create cities and countries of their own. Very little is known about this time and much of what is known is disputed, so as a Storyteller, enjoy the Second Sothic Turn.

THOSE MIGHTY GUILDS

What sort of business did the guilds of three millennia gone get up to? The following section offers a glimpse into the early halls of each of the five.

MAA-KEP

Of all the Arisen, the Maa-Kep have proven the most adaptable. During this Sothic Turn, they travel along with caravans across the Fertile Crescent and from Africa to Asia to Europe and back. Some of their cults only exist as merchant families who run caravans between the great nations. In these cases, the cult maintains a stronghold near the roads for the mummy to rest during her slumbers.

Maa-Kep can be found among all peoples, with some of the Falcon-Headed among them reaching the edges of the world. They serve as go-betweens for the cults of the other guilds which have spread across the lands.

Even barbarian tribes have cults dedicated to the Maa-Kep. The nomadic peoples all keep meeting places and sometimes burial grounds for mutual use. The tombs of Maa-Kep who live among these peoples lie in such places. The Arisen protects the area from looters, while the cult members return if the power of the mummy is needed. Like many other Arisen, these Maa-Kep are worshipped as gods or feared as demons. Some see them as travelers between the world of the living and the underworld (which of course, is accurate in many respects).

MESEN-NEBU

The visionaries of the Mesen-Nebu see this age as a time made for them. The nations of the world are in flux. As Egypt declines, culture and power flows to the north and west. While a number of the Alchemists can see the course that history is taking, not all of them wish to abandon the resources they have cultivated. Those established in Egypt want to see the nation rise once again, and the Mesen-Nebu in Assyria and Babylon believe that Mesopotamia will prosper in the next few centuries.

If there is a nation where the Mesen-Nebu would make their stronghold, it would be Phoenicia. The sailors ply the Mediterranean and cultists sail among them. Many of the Arisen have left Sidon and Tyre with their cults to go to new lands, such as Spain or North Africa. They sense that better opportunities will emerge from the new cities started there than the declining lands of the Fertile Crescent.

Some Mesen-Nebu have traveled even further, taking the Amber Road to the peoples of the far north to be venerated. Still others have ventured to the east, along what will one day be the Silk Road to distant China. It is even rumored that a few Falcon-Headed among the Mesen-Nebu have gone past the Western Isles discovered off the Iberian Coast (the modern Canary Islands) and ventured out into the ocean to find other lands.

SESHA-HEBSU

The Sessa-Hebsu are taking advantage of this Sothic Turn to try to piece together everything that has happened since the Rite of Return. They have gathered their cults in Byblos, Jerusalem, Heliopolis, Assur, and Babylon. Sages, philosophers, and scholars among their cults are traveling to aid the Arisen. As many of the Sessa-Hebsu as possible are seeking out clay tablets, copying texts and sealing them away so that they may be passed on for future Descents.

This activity among the learned has drawn the attention of politicians and religious leaders. In the case of Babylon, the king suspects that secrets of the ancient kingdom are being stolen or plundered to be used by the Assyrians to fulfill their ambitions. Spies abound in Byblos in Phoenicia, attempting to determine the nature of this conspiracy of knowledge.

Only the Sessa-Hebsu in Jerusalem have separated themselves from the rest of their guild. Due to the Kingdom of Judah's intolerance for anything that may have to do with other religions, the cults in Jerusalem have kept themselves hidden away and avoid contact with other nations. They keep many secrets, and some believe that they have secured many of the scrolls that were once hidden in the Temple of Solomon.



SU-MENENT

The Su-Menent have concentrated themselves in the great necropoleis of Egypt and in the magnificent city of Babylon. Their cults have established themselves within the local priesthoods. Whether the populace worships Osiris, Baal, Yahweh, Marduk, or Zeus, priests belonging to Su-Menent cults conduct their rites and ceremonies.

Of all the guilds, the Su-Menent have the most influence over the world's cities. No leader of this age makes a decision without consulting the will of the gods, and that will belongs to the Su-Menent.

The Su-Menent even possess their own unliving cities. The Necropolis of Giza, located outside of Memphis, is the largest of its kind, a vast city dedicated to the dead. This is where the tomb of the Prophet of Lower Egypt is found, and the guild regards Memphis as its own city. Another Prophet dwells in Thebes in Upper Egypt, although he is not considered the leader of his nome. Prophets may also be found in the cities of Jerusalem, Sidon, Assur, and Babylon.

Massive cities of the dead also exist in Italy. The Etruscans have built empty settlements with streets lined with tombs set into hillsides. These multi-room homes beneath the hills are elaborate and well-decorated. A faction of the Su-Menent have come to Etruria, believing that the enemies of the Arisen will attack the guild's strongholds during the Second Sothic Turn.

However, the final Prophet of the Su-Menent dwells in Hellas at the city of Ephyra, at the Necromanteion, the temple of Hades. The temple holds a reputation as the home of the Oracle of Death. In truth, the Oracle is the current high priest or high priestess of the Arisen, and their words have helped shape the history of the Greek city-states. The Su-Menent who dwell in Hellas believe that their fellow guild members dwell in the past. They see Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon as empires at the end of their lifespans.

The Sessa-Hebsu often come to the Su-Menent for guidance as well as information. In particular, many of them wish to learn more about death and the Duat. The Su-Menent typically take advantage of their opportunities to speak to the scribes about the gods. The Tef-Aabhi offer to build great monuments and temples and work closely with the Su-Menent, but the Mesen-Nebu already look down upon the ancient traditions that the Su-Menent practice, seeing the guild as unable to adapt to a changing world.

TEF-AABHI

During the First Sothic Turn, the Tef-Aabhi could see Egypt and Mesopotamia at their heights. Monuments radiated Sekhem as the people worshipped in awe. The peoples of the civilized world seemed headed for greatness.

Now, the mighty empires are in decline and recovering from dark ages. No pyramids have been built in Egypt for hundreds of years. The mighty ziggurats of Mesopotamia still stand, but they are themselves relics of the past. Nomads have come and scoured the great works of the Tef-Aabhi, whether they were Hyksos, Arameans, Scythians, or Libyans. What has been destroyed has not been rebuilt. Of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, only the Great Pyramid at Giza has yet been built, and it has been standing for over a thousand years.

The Tef-Aabhi see a world fallen into ruin. There are those who hope to rebuild Irem in Thebes or Memphis, but they are few in number. The monuments of the Nameless Empire are gone. Some of the Tef-Aabhi dedicate themselves to venturing out into the desert in search of Irem, but they do not even know where the City of Pillars once stood. Too much has changed and too little memory remains.

Some of the Tef-Aabhi, having realized that the great empires of the First Sothic Turn are now in decline, have ventured far afield in an attempt to build anew. Some have gone to Greece, looking to find city-states to glorify, such as Athens. Others have sought out the young Etruscan towns of what will be Italy, hoping to lay the foundations for a mighty empire. Still others have sought out the Phoenician colonies, hoping to mold the cities that rise on the coasts of Africa and Spain into their own image.

Wherever they go, the Tef-Aabhi are the defenders of settlements. They have no respect for the nomadic tribes and only see them as useful in that their children may one day desire cities of their own in which to dwell.


CULTS IN DESPAIR

With the notable exception of the Israelites, ancient societies were polytheistic. The gods that they knew were connected to a group or a tribe or a place, and it was a common practice to sacrifice to the gods of a foreign land upon traveling there. Even in cities with a patron god or goddess, people celebrated festivals dedicated to other gods and spirits.

Cults are simply seen as groups who worship other gods. Sneaking off in the dead of the night to celebrate mysteries by indulging in sex, drugs, music, and feasting was part of life. Some cults practice ceremonies dedicated to the gods of their ancestors, while others attempt to call upon the spirits of the dead. A few cults have little to do with worship, but exist to spread secret knowledge (usually mathematical or scientific in nature) among their membership.

In 910 BCE, cults of the Arisen don't need to hide (again with the notable exception of the Kingdom of Judah). They respectfully conduct their affairs and rituals out of site of non-members, but if others learn about a cult





attempting to procure an artifact or seeking out lost scrolls about the Nameless Empire, the first reaction is to see the cult members as being devoted to their worship. Most of the cults still use Iremite Egyptian during their meetings, and unless they are in a country where rebellions are suspected, the use of an ancient language or tribal tongue isn't questioned. Cults openly own buildings and gather to discuss issues with each other. In some cities, the Sothic Turn is general knowledge and the people have plans to celebrate the rise of the Deathless. Within their home cities, Arisen cults have more influence and power than they do in the modern world (and the effects of each point of Reach and Grasp should be increased accordingly, at the Storyteller's discretion).

However, although there is plenty of trade and communication between different lands, most cults have limited influence outside of their home cities. The alliances that extend beyond borders are arranged along

the major trade routes and follow guild lines. Maa-Kep cults often serve as emissaries between cults that aren't bound by guild ties.

While Egypt itself is divided into nomes, the effort to organize Arisen society this way hasn't been completely successful. Mummies and their cults are more concentrated than they will be in the future, and while the cities of Egypt have nomes and strong guild structures in place, younger civilizations and cities, such as the cities of Hellas, lack these structures. In other words, there are fewer rules and more conflicts between the Arisen, although the Judges still discourage the Arisen from battling each other.

ANTAGONISTS

Naturally, the Arisen aren't alone on the Earth at any time, and the Second Turn is no exception. What follows is a sampling of some of the challengers they face during this period.

THE STRANGERS

"Listen well, my brothers and sisters. In the time before time, before the rise of the Tower and even before the Deluge, there was an empire like no other since, with monuments to eclipse Egypt and with a city that would shadow great Babylon as she herself casts her shadow over the villages beyond her walls. This was Irem, the City of Pillars, whose tale has been passed from the great seers, sages, and astrologers to their students and children. As you all know, a time of sorrow came when the priests and mages of Irem sacrificed their own people to grant them life eternal."

"From that time on, the dead have not remained asleep. They arise, reborn and immortal, to accomplish the strange purposes of their lost gods and strengthen the foolish who choose to revere them instead of the divinities of their homelands. The time has come for them all to rise as one, for what forbidden and inscrutable purpose we cannot comprehend, nor would we wish to. This is the time of which our ancestors warned us. This is the age written in the secret prophecies, and we are the only ones who can defend mankind."

"We have studied them and collected their secrets. We know the words that they use for their utterances. We have secured the relics that they seek. Most of all, we have learned how to extract the divine essence from their undying bodies. This essence contains the strength of heroes, and we are the ones who will find those who are worthy. We will give them the power to stand before the dead and their legions and write their own legends. As for ourselves, we must stay protected. Our knowledge must remain hidden. Let the masses see us as instruments of the divine, as magi or angels. To even the heroes to whom we grant might, we must forever be the Strangers."

The Nameless Empire has not been forgotten, though it passed from the Earth nearly 3,000 years ago. Hints were

Hospitality

One of the most important traditions of this time, especially in the lands of the Fertile Crescent, is hospitality. Enemies become friends when hospitality is given, and the cults of the Arisen offer food and lodging to other cultists in their travels. Importantly, hospitality works both ways, as the guest must defend the home of her host, and all who live inside as well, and not cause anyone who lives inside to come to harm.

In exchange for such hospitality, host cultists will ask visitors questions about their homelands, their travels, and the purposes of their expeditions. These conversations may create new alliances, or even result in an Arisen reacquainting himself with a friend from a past life. If visiting cult members are evasive in their answers, they will still receive the benefits of hospitality; but once they leave, their hosts will certainly watch them and possibly warn others.

Hospitality includes protection. If an Arisen receives hospitality from the cult of his sworn enemy, he will enjoy their protection even against other Deathless. Even when he leaves, his enemy will wait before pursuing him. Anyone who violates the rules of hospitality will be considered a criminal by everyone who learns of his transgression. Even enemies such as the Assyrians and Babylonians would agree that someone who harms someone under his protection or who attacks his host deserves punishment.



found in legends and folktales. Exiled cultists provided information as well, and a few among the wise passed down tablets containing the truth about Irem.

Yet, even with this knowledge, the astrologers of different city-states saw no reason to work together. Most did not believe that the Arisen would return during a Sothic Turn. Those who learned of cults serving the Judges of the Underworld discounted them. But when the First Sothic Turn came, there could be no denying the presence of the Arisen.

Since those days, astrologers have continued to keep track of the movements of the stars from the banks of the Nile to the Tigris and Euphrates. A group of men and women swore to collect the truth about the legend of Irem and prepare their descendants for the next Sothic Turn.

Over time, this secret coven of astrologers, philosophers, priests, and priestesses have endured and gathered even more knowledge and understanding. They have infiltrated the cults of the Arisen and shared scrolls of secret knowledge using a cryptic written language only known to their order. They identify themselves to other members through discreet secret hand gestures, and though they share knowledge about the Arisen and other supernatural threats, they reveal as little as they can about their own lives to one another. They call themselves the Strangers.

They are an order that doesn't recognize the boundaries set by kings. They are Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, Israelites, Phoenicians, and Egyptians. Messages travel among their enclaves along the caravan trails. At times, three of their number will gather in the wilderness to speak, but they prefer to have no more than three in any place at any one time. They know that the mummies and their cultists will gladly kill them, and that the Arisen possess powers far beyond those of any ordinary man.

More than learning only the history of the Arisen, the Strangers have uncovered ways to fight them. They have discovered a ritual that allows them to distill the essence of a captured Arisen, to rend the Sekhem from him. They may take this essence and infuse it into a fruit such as an apple, pomegranate, or date. Upon receiving this essence, the fruit takes on a golden hue. Anyone who eats one of these fruits receives supernatural youth and vitality, giving him divine strength, speed, and endurance.

Though the order formed to combat the Arisen, the Strangers use their knowledge in struggles against ghosts, Amkhata, or other monsters, and even barbarian hordes. Through the years, they've learned that risking themselves in combat is foolish. The knowledge that they possess must survive to be passed on. Furthermore, a life spent in scholarship means that they don't have the skills to fight the Arisen or their cults.

Instead, they search the lands for heroes. When they learn of a man or woman of great fortitude and courage,

someone willing to be a champion among their people, they make certain to study him or her. If the observations confirm the virtues of this individual, a Stranger will approach and test the hero by asking questions or posing a challenge. Sometimes the Stranger will pretend to be injured and ask for help. Should the hero pass the tests, the Stranger will offer one of the golden fruits in exchange for an oath to defend humanity against the supernatural. In this way, the Strangers use the Sekhem of the Arisen to do good in the world.

Many heroes of legend owe their abilities to the intervention of the Strangers.

Unfortunately, the membership of the order has its own issues. Some of the Strangers have given in to the temptation of the golden fruit and have chosen to partake of it to extend their lives or give themselves incredible strength or stamina. They have spoken against the mummies for generations, but they fail to differentiate between Shuankhsen, Deceived, and Arisen. In their eyes, all of the mummies are the same — dangerous threats to the living. Every so often, members try to use their knowledge to further their own ends, or delve so deeply into the secrets of Irem that they become corrupted with desire for mystic power.

The Strangers often lurk in the shadows, watching and recording the deeds of the heroes whom they have empowered. They tend to wear cloaks to shadow their faces. If confronted, they will present themselves as astrologers seeking signs to use to predict the future. Due to the respect given to prophecy, this is usually enough to keep them safe and allow them to travel unhindered. If they need to, they will claim to be servants of the gods and use their knowledge to help prove their service. In the lands of Israel and Judah, they will say that they are angels.

NABU

Quotes: "The gods wish to show you their favor. Eat this apple and accept their gifts."

Background: Nabu was born in Babylon, and his parents were members of the Strangers. He spent his youth studying and training in secret to join the order. Those who knew his family were certain that he would become a great astrologer with the ability to predict the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates.

He had gone out to advise farmers from one of the villages surrounding the city on when to plant to take advantage of favorable omens. While he was gone, members of an Iremite cult attacked the library where his father studied. Rather than allowing the tablets stored there to be taken, his father set the library aflame and perished in the fire. Nabu would later learn that the cult had retrieved the



body of a mummy which had been kept in a secret room beneath the floor.

His mother died not long afterward. She had truly loved Nabu's father, and she did not wish to continue on after his passing.

After his mother's death, Nabu dedicated himself to hunting down the Arisen and their cults. He no longer had an interest in being an astrologer. He told everyone he knew that the death of his mother and father was a sign from the gods that he should go forth from Babylon. Taking the precious golden fruits that had been in the care of his parents, he set out on the caravan trails to see the world.

In time, he came to meet with members of the Strangers in Assur and Byblos. He decided to travel to the lands of the Hellenes and traveled among many city-states. He was welcomed as an oracle and a philosopher. During this time, he encountered a warrior named Achelos, who had proved his courage in the constant battles between city-states. Nabu approached Achelos and asked the warrior if he wished to serve the will of the gods and win glory for himself. Achelos laughed and replied that of course he did. Nabu offered Achelos a golden apple.

Since that time, Achelos' reputation has grown. He has defeated a chimera, slain bandits and pirates, and destroyed a Shuankhsen. With every victory, Achelos' pride leads him to believe that he is invincible; but for now, he continues to let Nabu guide him. With the coming of the Sothic Turn, Nabu intends to let Achelos avenge his parents' deaths upon the Arisen.

Description: Nabu is a tall man with a graying beard and mustache. He is lean, with world-weary eyes. His head is bald, but he hides it beneath the hood of his robe. He is fond of black and grey robes and usually wears sandals on his feet. He carries a staff which he uses as both a weapon and walking stick. When he speaks, he often becomes distracted and will occasionally stop in mid-sentence to stare in the distance. If jostled, he apologizes, but often needs to be reminded about what he was saying.

Storytelling Hints: Nabu travels with Achelos across Hellas. He carries a pack full of papyrus scrolls and is often discounted as a scribe or a servant. When he does speak, if he can manage to avoid distractions, he has a surprising amount of command in his voice.

Concept: Strange Guide

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

Skills: Academics 4, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Science 1; Brawl 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 2;



Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Language 3 (Akkadian [Babylonian dialect], Arabic, Aramaic, Greek, Iremite Egyptian)

Willpower: 7

Morality: 7

Virtue: Fortitude (Whenever Nabu faces adversity and overcomes it, he sees the hands of the Greek Fates involved, and it makes him believe that destiny will protect him.)

Vice: Pride (Nabu is certain that he and the Strangers are right. He discounts the advice of anyone whom he perceives as uneducated or unintelligent. Although Achelos provides for him and risks his life fighting cultists and monsters, Nabu sees him only as a useful asset and plans to find another hero should Achelos need to be replaced.)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks: If confronted, Nabu does not believe that he has the skill to overcome his foes through physical violence. He will try to negotiate intellectually and emotionally. If all else fails, he keeps some of the golden fruit on him at all times and could offer it as a bribe.



ACHELOS

Quotes: “I am favored by Zeus. Surrender, and I will show you mercy. Fight, and I will show you the wrath of the gods.”

Background: Achelos was born near Delphi in Hellas. Even when he was a youth, his physical prowess outshone that of other boys his age. No one ever doubted that he would be a great warrior. Some even believed that he might be a son of the gods.

As he grew older, he fought in more battles, traveling to other city-states as a mercenary at times. After he had slain the leader of a group who had declared himself “the king of bandits,” he was approached by a strange man. This man was Nabu, and he told Achelos that the gods had sent him to bestow Achelos with great power if he would serve their will. Achelos agreed gladly, and Nabu gave him a golden apple.

After Achelos ate the apple, he felt a change come over him. Strength flowed into his limbs. He was far stronger than he had ever imagined a man could be.

Since that day, Achelos has allowed Nabu to guide him, and Nabu continues to find enemies for Achelos to face. Achelos revels in the challenges that the gods have chosen for him and looks forward to more difficult ones in the days to come.

Description: Achelos is a tall, bronze-skinned warrior with dark hair and eyes. He carries a sword and shield. Upon his shield, he bears the symbol of the sun in reverence to the god Apollo.

Storytelling Hints: You are dramatic and loud, announcing your intentions. You believe that the apple from the gods has given you a touch of divinity. There is little that you fear. Despite his bluster, Achelos may well be the most powerful fighter of his time.

Concept: Hellenic Ideal

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3; Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6; Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 2, Medicine 1; Archery 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Weaponry 4; Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize 2

Merits: None.

Willpower: 8

Morality: 6

Virtue: Faith (Achelos believes that the gods sent Nabu to grant him their favor. At times, he has suspected that Nabu might be one of the gods in disguise, perhaps Hermes or Apollo. He believes that his fate will lead him to glory.)

Vice: Pride (Achelos has come to see himself as the greatest warrior of the age. He always wants to have epic poems written about him and songs sung about his deeds. He imagines that one day the story of the Trojan War will be forgotten and instead, stories will be told about him throughout Hellas.)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks: Iron sword. Also note that the mystical energy of the apple gives Achelos the ability to harm Amkhata and other Lifeless.

THE DECEIVED

Menhit struggled for her own memories. She felt as if she were trapped beneath the surface of a dark river, desperately wanting to breathe.

“Mistress?” asked the mortal standing before her. He was a priest, or something that passed for one.


“Is it time?” she replied.

“The Sothic Turn has come.”

She nodded. Although this island was far from the lands of her life, it belonged to her completely. Hundreds of fanatical followers waited for her words.

“Raise the black sails on the ships. Let us find the tombs of our foes. They shall suffer as we have suffered.”





A small voice screamed inside her desiccated skull. She recognized it as her own, but she was past caring. The other guilds were betrayers, all. It was long past time for vengeance.

Driven into hiding, the Deceived dwell on the fringes of the known world. They have made their homes on forgotten islands and in settlements on the edges of nations. The past centuries have brought them terrible setbacks. Barbarian hordes have overwhelmed their cultists and their settlements as they sleep, and those who have ventured too close to the great cities have suffered at the hands of the other guilds. Still, they have survived.

The continued existence of the Deceived is something that the other mummies refuse to acknowledge. Many believe that they are extinct, utterly destroyed and exterminated. In fact, during this Turn many Arisen cults destroy anything that mentions the Deceived in an attempt to stamp out their memory from the world.

For now, the Arisen are too concentrated and too numerous for the Deceived to challenge them. Only a few are mad enough to launch direct attacks against their ancient foes. Instead, most plan to take advantage of the Sothic Turn and the confusion of their enemies to lure them into jeopardy. They send pawns out to spread rumors of relics and tales of the Nameless Empire, hoping to draw the Arisen away from the cities and their allies. Once their foes are exposed in the wild and forsaken places of the world, the Deceived can turn the tables, calling on their brethren to harry and occasionally even destroy the Arisen.

A few Deceived may reveal themselves at the beginning of the Sothic Turn, perhaps in an attempt at self-destruction, perhaps in the hope that the Five Guilds will make a crucial mistake. Those who do will ultimately be destroyed. Most will plot and plan, like spiders at the centers of invisible webs, using myths and legends to manipulate their foes. They will offer tales of the Nameless Empire and promises from forgotten lives to weaken the other Deathless. After giving out hope, they will strip it away. Those Arisen who break from the revelation, who have weak cults and little Sekhem, will know only terror and failure in their recollections of this Turn.

THE DEATHLESS IMMORTAL

The Phoenician captain hurried into the ruins, carrying the ancient copper sword that he had been commanded to retrieve. A group of men, clad in rags, seemingly spirits of the dead condemned to lurk in this fallen city of ancient Mycenae, surrounded him. They chanted words of encouragement.

"Hurry," rasped a hooded figure who lurched out of one of the few intact buildings, a temple dedicated to the goddess of the dawn. The captain nodded, regarding the bronze mask that the speaker wore.

"Yes, Tithonus. Am I in time?" he said, handing the copper sword to the figure who stood in front of the temple, kneeling as he did so.

"Barely," replied the hooded Tithonus, snatching up the blade. "Now, begone, and do not return unless you bring back a treasure of the palace of King Minos or a relic of lost Atlantis."

"Of course," said the captain, already turning to run back to his ship.

Tithonus forced himself back inside the temple, moving as quickly as he could muster. The copper sword sang to him of ancient battles, of drinking the blood of kings, of heroes who had faced Amkhata and given them names like Chimera and Python. The relic's Sekhem sang a siren's call to him, but he needed to resist. This gift wasn't for him.

Eos, once worshipped as the goddess of the dawn, lay barely moving on her ancient throne. She lifted her head as she sensed the presence of the blade.

"Yes, my love," said Tithonus. "A gift from the Phoenician. He serves us well. Take it and let your life continue." He gently placed the hilt of the sword in her hand and closed her fingers around it.

Within a moment, she drained the essence from the relic, restoring herself with its precious Sekhem. She inhaled deeply and the flower of youth flowed back into her skin.

Tithonus gazed deeply into her beautiful amber eyes.

"I don't remember, my love. I was so weak that time. How long has it been?"

"I have lost track over the centuries. All I know is that the relics have become harder and harder to find."

"What of the sacrifices?"

"Our numbers have fallen. Many of our cultists have been attracted by promises of rival cults."

"Why is that?"

"The Sothic Turn comes. Our brothers and sisters will rise. Even humans seem to sense that the world will change."

"Why is that a problem, Tithonus? Surely, our brothers and sisters will bring us relics. After all, we have lingered on through the years. We have memories to offer them."

Tithonus nodded. "Indeed."

In the future, there will be those mummies branded as "lingers" who refuse to succumb to the slumber, those who do not wish to give up their Descents. However, in this time, a group of Arisen comprised of multiple merets have banded together to aid each other in avoiding a return to Duat. Calling themselves the Immortal Deathless, they have not only commanded their cultists to retrieve relics from the lost cities of the Nameless Empire, but from dozens of other fallen civilizations.

If that were their only offense, perhaps their crimes against the Judges would seem terrible enough, but they have learned another method of prolonging their Descents.



They have the ability to take Sekhem from the souls of mortals sacrificed to them. In many cases, the Deathless Immortals have presented themselves as gods to mortals. They have come to be known by other names — giants and titans.

Unlike most other adversaries, they do not wish to harm their fellow Arisen. Rather, they wish to continue to sustain their incredibly long lives. They hope to reach out to other Arisen with offers of memories and information. They intend to take advantage of their fellows and trade information for relics. If possible, they may try to recruit a few promising Arisen, but they are as likely to try to recruit the cults of the Arisen to have new sources of human sacrifices when relics cannot be found.

There are a few signs that indicate the Deathless Immortals are unlike other Arisen. Most importantly, they have high Memory scores and little Sekhem compared to mummies who rose during the Sothic Turn, as they have remained awake since long before the Turn. Their cults will speak of how the Immortals have always stayed the same since the time of their grandparents' grandparents, unchanging as the mountains.

To these “lingerers,” nothing is more important than staying alive. Of course, their actions go against the Rite of Return. If an Arisen returns one of the Immortals to the Duat, they can be certain that they will be rewarded.

SHUANKHSEN

Every city-state has its share of slaves. The enslaved came to their status through either conquest or betrayal. They are of many different backgrounds. Once they come into a master's service, other slaves teach them the rules of survival. The new members of the household or work force must learn everything from how to please their masters to how to avoid punishments for trying to escape.

When a cruel master decides that a slave needs to be broken as an example to keep others obedient, many slaves whisper their devotions to members of the Shuankhsen. The cults of these mummies carry on among the slaves, as they hold on to hope that their Shuankhsen shall rise, overthrow their masters, and bring ruin and destruction upon their masters' households.

There are many accounts of such attacks, but most see these events as related to offenses against the gods or some unknown family curse, rather than realizing that the Shuankhsen may be taking vengeance for the slaves. As the Sothic Turn comes, the Shuankhsen will rise along with the Arisen.

For those who know of them, such as the Pharaoh Osorkon I, such thoughts lead to nightmares. As the high priests of Arisen cults expectantly await the awakening of the mummies, they also dread the return of their enemies.

Nowhere are the Shuankhsen more numerous than in Egypt. The Tef-Aabhi feared their influence and made certain that the great monuments were the work of craftsmen, not slaves, to protect their secrets from the Shuankhsen. Some cultists suspect that the Arisen, not the Hebrew god, were responsible for the exodus of the Hebrew slaves in an effort to break the power of the Shuankhsen.

If the Shuankhsen could unite, they might overwhelm the Arisen. They know that their ancient foes hide behind city walls, and their cults are indistinguishable from the many cults of the other Deathless. Fortunately, they are not organized. Most of the Shuankhsen act without the aid of their brethren, with only the support of their own cults.

In the land of Judah, efforts to remove ancient cults have all but driven the Shuankhsen from southern Canaan. The Shuankhsen are most concentrated in Babylonia and Egypt. When the Sothic Turn begins, the nomes of the cities of Babylon and Egypt will have to unite to drive off the initial attacks of these creatures.

Unfortunately, damage will be done. To mortals, these attacks represent the wrath of the gods. Both Babylon and Egypt will be weakened, with Babylon failing to protect itself from its northern neighbor, Assyria, and Egypt being torn by governors in different cities asserting their authority over the pharaoh's commands.

THE JUDGES OF JUDAH

Both the father and grandfather of King Asa of Judah failed to reclaim the Kingdom of Israel and reunite the tribes. Fortifications dot the landscape north of Jerusalem, and the continued battles have led to revolts among tribes of Canaan, notably the Moabites. The efforts of the men of Judah have failed, so Asa has turned to God for victory.

After speaking to the prophet Obad, Asa has determined that the reason Judah has failed to overwhelm Israel is that the people have turned away from Yahweh and embraced the Canaanite and even the Egyptian gods. He has decreed that all altars and idols to other gods will be destroyed in Judah, and those who worship these gods will be put to death. No one is exempt, even his own mother, who is executed for worshipping an idol in a grove. Only when all the people of Judah have reaffirmed their covenant with Yahweh will victory over the north be assured.

Asa has appointed men of faith to command soldiers and scourge the land of any gods other than Yahweh. These groups of hunters put shrines to the torch and worshippers of idols to the sword. Even those who violate the laws of God, those who work on the Sabbath or eat unclean food, are killed to purify the land.



In order to survive, many cults have fled Judah, but a few have chosen to hide among the cemeteries or flee to the mountain heights or the wild places. Many believe that the power of the Arisen will be more than enough to overcome any group of men, but these Judges are fanatics who believe their work will lead to salvation. Their leaders often aspire to being prophets and see themselves as heroes in the tradition of David, Joshua, and Moses. They sometimes carry relics with them, and have the strength to defend themselves against Utterances and Affinities.

ELI

Quotes: "I do not fear you. I am Eli, appointed by King Asa, and mine is the wrath of the one true God!"

Background: His father and grandfather died fighting against the Kingdom of Israel, and like most men of Judah, he has served his time in the army. He has fought against the Moabites, the Philistines, the army of Israel, and the nomadic tribes from the wilderness. Battle holds no terror for him, but warfare is not all that he has seen.

In the aftermath of a defeat, Eli and the other soldiers with him were separated from the main Judean force. They fled into one of the many narrow canyons that cross the difficult terrain north of Jerusalem. Their enemies pursued them, and they were forced to hide in a cave deep in the chasm.

They rolled a stone to cover the entrance. Although the cave was unsettling, it provided sanctuary. Eli kept his sword at the ready and pressed against the stone in case the enemy tried to move it. After an interminable amount of time, he heard the enemy pass. Still, he waited with the others before rolling back the stone.

When he stepped out, darkness filled the canyon. Only half the men who had entered followed him out. As they stared at each other in surprise, something else came out of the cave. Dry bones cracked as a corpse wrapped in bandages strode out, grabbed a young soldier and tore his body apart. Before anyone could act, a second man lay in red ruin. And yet, it continued to kill.

Eli was the last man standing. He whispered a prayer to God for his salvation, and as his last companion's skull cracked open, Eli pushed past the corpse and back into the cave. He rolled the rock into place, hoping that it would slow the monster. The dead thing moved it and stepped inside with a slow, almost casual effort. It was as if the thing knew that Eli was the last, and it intended to savor his death.

As Eli rushed to the back of the cave, he stumbled over the bodies of the soldiers who had never made it out. He paid them no mind as the instinct to flee overwhelmed everything. Finally, he reached a wall. Feeling around for a way out, his hands found a jar of pottery. Eli picked it up, intending to throw it at his pursuer.



"No..." rasped a harsh voice.

Feeling as if God were guiding his hands, Eli smashed the jar against the wall. Something fell from the shards. Eli stomped down and his heel crushed something wet and fleshy. A harsh, hissing sound came from the darkness in front of him.

"Lord, give me strength," he called out. He drew his sword and thrust it at the sound with all the strength he possessed. He heard the sound of bone cracking. What happened next, he cannot remember. When he emerged from the cave, he fell to his knees and said, "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil."

When King Asa called him to Jerusalem and commanded him to drive the unholy from Judah, Eli knew that the king spoke with the voice of God.

Storytelling Hints: God saved you from an evil that you now know as a Shuankhsen. You belong to the Lord with your body, heart, and soul. Nothing will deter you from your purpose.

Description: Eli is a fit man in his early 30s with dark hair, a full beard, and thick eyebrows. He wears an officer's uniform. Instead of looking at things, he studies them intently.



Concept: Hebrew Judge

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

Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 2, Medicine 1; Archery 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Weaponry 4; Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize 2

Willpower: 8

Morality: 8

Virtue: Faith (Eli has absolute faith in the Lord. He believes that the commands of King Asa of Judah come from God himself.)

Vice: Pride (Eli feels that he has been personally chosen for this work by the Lord. He refuses to consider that he has any alternative but to drive non-believers from Judah. He will not ally with an Arisen cult to stop a Shuankhsen. Both must be purged.)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3

Speed: 9

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks: Iron sword.

CHRONICLES OF DESPAIR

Many modern chronicles have parallels in ancient times.

The following chronicle suggestions are meant to spark the imagination, not serve as a definitive list. Any chronicle focused on character development can work within the setting of the Second Sothic Turn as well as in the modern world. First and foremost, the chronicle ideas presented herein are intended to capture the events and flavor of the time.

THE WAR FOR EGYPT

Across Egypt, the Arisen have returned. They find a land caught in its own Descent, losing power and prestige, but also losing its memories of the past. The Tef-Aabhi see that great monuments are no longer being built. The Su-Menent see a country influenced by outsiders, with a Libyan pharaoh and cults in disarray. The Mesen-Nebu believe that wealth and the power to transform have slipped away from Egypt to the lands of the Phoenicians. The Sessa-Hebsu believe that the scholars of Jerusalem and Byblos are gaining knowledge, while the priests of Heliopolis face stagnation. The Maa-Kep now travel far from the Nile in search of relics.

Something must be done.

A meret of Arisen in Memphis swiftly move to have their cults take control of the city. Soon, they head to Bubastis to try to kill Pharaoh Osorkon I with the intention of placing a new dynasty on the throne.

Osorkon escapes, thanks to warnings from cultists who follow a mummy whose tomb lies in Bubastis. When word comes that the pharaoh has fled Lower Egypt, governors and high priests see their chance to seize the throne. Civil war has come to Egypt, and the cults of the Arisen battle each other for supremacy.

In this chronicle, the members of the meret may be directly involved, trying to kill the pharaoh or protect him. They could also try to keep their city neutral in the struggle between Upper and Lower Egypt, or they might seize the opportunity to steal the relics taken from the Temple of Solomon. Another variant would be for the Arisen to have their own exodus from Egypt, fleeing with their cults to Judah or Phoenician holdings along the African coast, or even south to Kush, where they may support Kush's invasion of Egypt in years to come.

THE RISE OF ASSYRIA

Adad-nirari has waited for the Sothic Turn and the rise of Gebmose, but Gebmose is not alone. In this chronicle, the characters are part of Gebmose's meret. While they may initially celebrate King Adad-nirari's victories over the Arameans as Assyria reasserts itself, they may question the role that the Arisen should have in building nations. With each victory, Adad-nirari becomes more confident. When the lands of Assyria are liberated, he seeks to turn Gebmose's power south to conquer Babylonia.

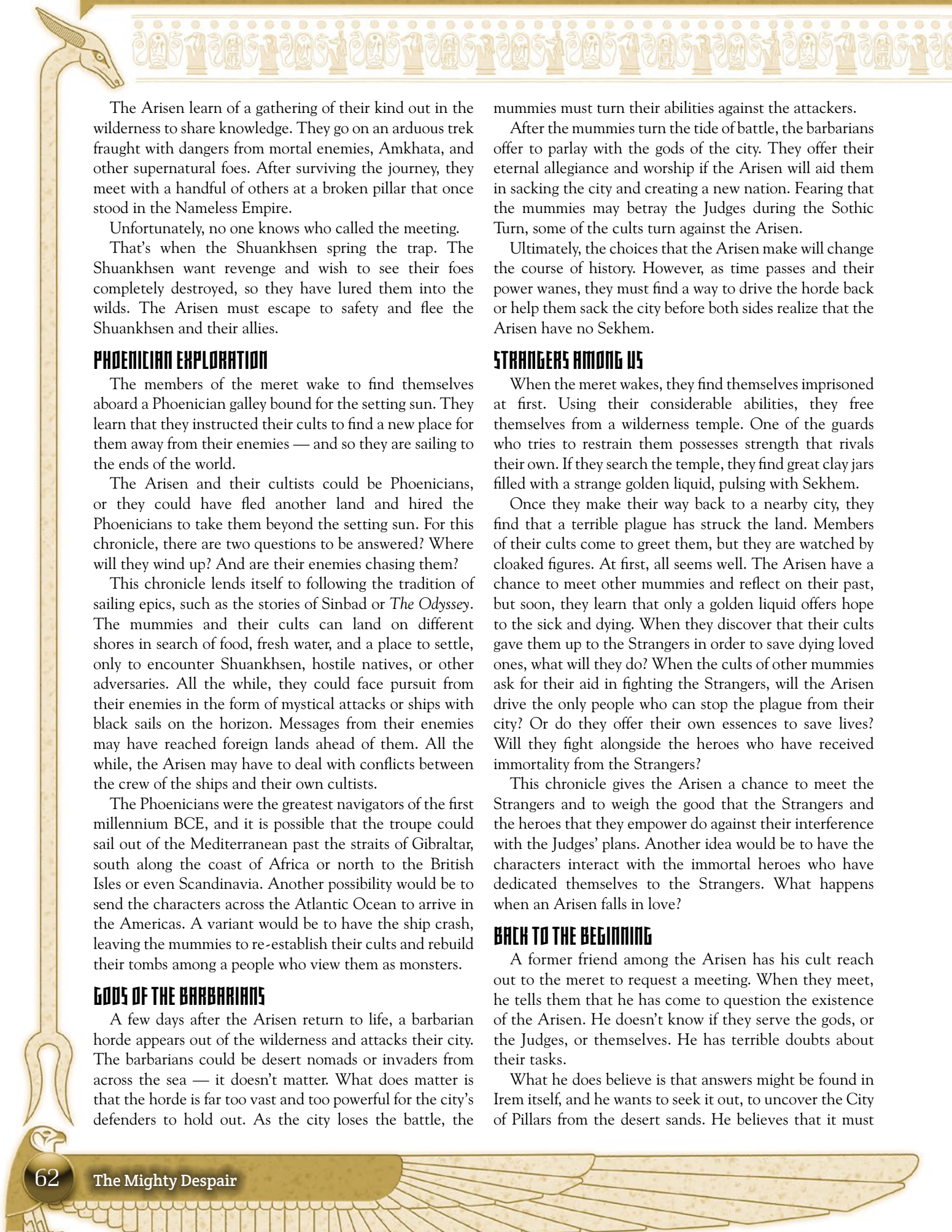
However, Babylon is home to other Arisen. Tef-Aabhi, Maa-Kep, and Sessa-Hebsu all have cults spread throughout Babylonia. While they certainly understand that human kingdoms will go to war, they don't intend to stand idly and watch the armies of Babylon defeated by Utterances and Affinities. Will the characters continue to bolster their cults in Assyria and aid Gebmose and Adad-nirari? If so, they will have to face the Arisen of Babylon. If not, what will they do when the Assyrian king turns his soldiers against their cults and Gebmose chooses to end their Descents?

THE CULT OF ISIS

The god Set slew his brother Osiris and chopped him into pieces, then scattered them throughout the land. Osiris' wife and sister searched for the pieces, and after gathering them together was able to return Osiris to life. This is a retelling of an older story about Azar, but it is one which the Arisen recognize and know well.

Some mummies believe that as Azar returned, they may return to life as well. This is the first time that the Arisen have had a true opportunity as a group to consider the prospect of an escape from their existence, although the path to Apotheosis isn't known as it is in the modern world.





The Arisen learn of a gathering of their kind out in the wilderness to share knowledge. They go on an arduous trek fraught with dangers from mortal enemies, Amkhata, and other supernatural foes. After surviving the journey, they meet with a handful of others at a broken pillar that once stood in the Nameless Empire.

Unfortunately, no one knows who called the meeting.

That's when the Shuankhsen spring the trap. The Shuankhsen want revenge and wish to see their foes completely destroyed, so they have lured them into the wilds. The Arisen must escape to safety and flee the Shuankhsen and their allies.

PHOENICIAN EXPLORATION

The members of the meret wake to find themselves aboard a Phoenician galley bound for the setting sun. They learn that they instructed their cults to find a new place for them away from their enemies — and so they are sailing to the ends of the world.

The Arisen and their cultists could be Phoenicians, or they could have fled another land and hired the Phoenicians to take them beyond the setting sun. For this chronicle, there are two questions to be answered? Where will they wind up? And are their enemies chasing them?

This chronicle lends itself to following the tradition of sailing epics, such as the stories of Sinbad or *The Odyssey*. The mummies and their cults can land on different shores in search of food, fresh water, and a place to settle, only to encounter Shuankhsen, hostile natives, or other adversaries. All the while, they could face pursuit from their enemies in the form of mystical attacks or ships with black sails on the horizon. Messages from their enemies may have reached foreign lands ahead of them. All the while, the Arisen may have to deal with conflicts between the crew of the ships and their own cultists.

The Phoenicians were the greatest navigators of the first millennium BCE, and it is possible that the troupe could sail out of the Mediterranean past the straits of Gibraltar, south along the coast of Africa or north to the British Isles or even Scandinavia. Another possibility would be to send the characters across the Atlantic Ocean to arrive in the Americas. A variant would be to have the ship crash, leaving the mummies to re-establish their cults and rebuild their tombs among a people who view them as monsters.

GODS OF THE BARBARIANS

A few days after the Arisen return to life, a barbarian horde appears out of the wilderness and attacks their city. The barbarians could be desert nomads or invaders from across the sea — it doesn't matter. What does matter is that the horde is far too vast and too powerful for the city's defenders to hold out. As the city loses the battle, the

mummies must turn their abilities against the attackers.

After the mummies turn the tide of battle, the barbarians offer to parlay with the gods of the city. They offer their eternal allegiance and worship if the Arisen will aid them in sacking the city and creating a new nation. Fearing that the mummies may betray the Judges during the Sothic Turn, some of the cults turn against the Arisen.

Ultimately, the choices that the Arisen make will change the course of history. However, as time passes and their power wanes, they must find a way to drive the horde back or help them sack the city before both sides realize that the Arisen have no Sekhem.

STRANGERS AMONG US

When the meret wakes, they find themselves imprisoned at first. Using their considerable abilities, they free themselves from a wilderness temple. One of the guards who tries to restrain them possesses strength that rivals their own. If they search the temple, they find great clay jars filled with a strange golden liquid, pulsing with Sekhem.

Once they make their way back to a nearby city, they find that a terrible plague has struck the land. Members of their cults come to greet them, but they are watched by cloaked figures. At first, all seems well. The Arisen have a chance to meet other mummies and reflect on their past, but soon, they learn that only a golden liquid offers hope to the sick and dying. When they discover that their cults gave them up to the Strangers in order to save dying loved ones, what will they do? When the cults of other mummies ask for their aid in fighting the Strangers, will the Arisen drive the only people who can stop the plague from their city? Or do they offer their own essences to save lives? Will they fight alongside the heroes who have received immortality from the Strangers?

This chronicle gives the Arisen a chance to meet the Strangers and to weigh the good that the Strangers and the heroes that they empower do against their interference with the Judges' plans. Another idea would be to have the characters interact with the immortal heroes who have dedicated themselves to the Strangers. What happens when an Arisen falls in love?

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

A former friend among the Arisen has his cult reach out to the meret to request a meeting. When they meet, he tells them that he has come to question the existence of the Arisen. He doesn't know if they serve the gods, or the Judges, or themselves. He has terrible doubts about their tasks.

What he does believe is that answers might be found in Irem itself, and he wants to seek it out, to uncover the City of Pillars from the desert sands. He believes that it must



be located to the west in the Sahara Desert, based on the creation myths of the Egyptians and the Babylonians.

LEGACY OF THE SECOND TURN

If the Second Sothic Turn is run in flashbacks during a chronicle, questions may arise as to the aftermath of this time.

The conflicts between cults in Egypt furthered weakened the ancient kingdom. Although Pharaoh Osorkon I's dynasty held onto the throne, the treasures that his father took from Jerusalem were scattered and lost. The pharaohs who followed him became weaker and weaker as Egypt continued to decline. Many Arisen fled Egypt after the Second Turn due to the conflicts caused by such a concentrated population. The Arisen population has established nomes at all major cities to maintain balance between cults.

In Kush, the rise of Shuankhsen united the people. Now, the Kushites are ready to seize control of Egypt, and the Arisen in Kush support their armies. Soon, they will conquer Egypt and place a Kushite pharaoh on the throne.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire would become one of the world's first great empires, eventually conquering the Kingdom of Aram in modern Syria and much of Phoenicia, and subjugating the peoples of Canaan. Babylon would pay them homage before reasserting itself and founding the Neo-Babylonian Empire which would absorb nearly all of Assyria's conquests.

As for the Hellenes, most know that the cities of Athens and Sparta will eventually dominate their neighbors; however, city-states such as Thebes and Corinth will also remain strong.

In Italy, a tribe known as the Latins will found a city called Rome in 753 BCE. The legacy of Rome will still be felt in the next Sothic Turn.





CHAPTER THREE

RETURN TO DUSK

(THE END)

*Glory to God who has thought me worthy to finish this work.
Solomon, I have outdone you.*
— Justinian I, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire

The Sothic Wheel rotates once more. The Arisen awakening to see Sothis in the night sky bear witness to the star at its brightest, and to a world profoundly changed since the previous Turn. This is an era of great religious and social upheaval, one for which few among the Deathless can be adequately prepared.

Great empires have collapsed and new ones stand precariously atop the ruins of the fallen. The Nameless Empire sinks deeper beneath the desert sands of Africa as Egypt, its natural successor, has been declared a part of the Eastern Roman Empire. Its rulers worship the sole god of the Christian faith. To awaken to witness the loss of the closest approximation to Iremite culture that remained would likely drive many Arisen to see this Turn as cruel punishment enough by their deific masters — were other revelations of this Turn not equally as jarring.

In the years just preceding the Third Turn, an apparently natural cataclysm occurs in the east. None can claim to know the cause of this disaster, but the effects are felt in what once the heart of the Empire. Darkness falls across all inhabited lands, Re's blinding light struggling to permeate the thickness of the gloom enshrouding the world.

Smothered light results in crops failing to grow. Armies go unfed in the field, and subsequently find themselves unable to fight for their masters. Their lords suffer the same plight at home alongside their people.

The sickened sun results in disease spreading like the Greek Fire so recently introduced to Constantinople. The protections the gods bestowed upon mortals (and those mortals' previously hardy constitutions) fail in the face of a plague emanating from the same lands as the darkness.


When Sothis emerges from the blackness and the Third Turn begins in earnest, the Arisen find mortals clamoring for war, fighting over scraps of a cursed world. The Deathless frequently Descend to the backdrop of war, and just as often

rise to its continuation. To them, mortal hostilities are to be expected and weathered. It is a mark of one's ability, to survive such a tempest of death without disturbance. Despite this, barely a land from Britannia to the Levant goes without conflict, leaving few Arisen rests undisturbed.

Out of meetings of cultures through both war and trade, more has become known of distant lands. Men and women from every empire migrate from their homes to escape whatever ails their people, whether it's famine, disease, or destruction through war. Emperors and overlords send armies or delegations to serve as introduction to foreign rulers. Others travel to spread philosophies as missionaries with their own agendas, operating under the auspices of Sasanian Zoroastrianism, tribal Judaism, Roman Christianity, or ultimately, at the close of the Turn, the surging wave of Islam. The latter faith rocks the cradle of Arisen society and culture. If the Third Turn is marked as inauspicious for any reason other than the coming of plague and war, it is due to the birth of the religion most potentially dangerous to the Deathless since Akhenaten declared himself the one true god.

The Arisen do not exist in a vacuum. Some would certainly wish it at times, as they awaken in lands altered beyond recollection, surrounded by people they have never seen or heard of before now. The proportion of those Arisen with active and powerful cults and those fortunate enough to have had their rests undisturbed by intervention or calamity have in most recent centuries felt compelled to depart the hotbed of activity in the lands surrounding the Nile. Arisen now have tombs as far south as the mighty Limpopo River, as far east as the Gupta Empire, as far west as the hardened Visigoth Kingdom and as far north as the fragmented Saxon holdings of what was once Germania.

The Deathless know the third ascendance of Sothis by multiple names — the Years of Plague, the Age of the



One God — but of all the titles this Turn receives, many Arisen are in agreement that none suit it better than the Turn of Dusk.

THEME

Those Jackal-Headed mummies grin broadly as they identify the Third Turn as their own. All others despair. The era began with a literal shadow falling across the land, and the Deathless wear that theme like a caul throughout their Sothic arisings of this time. The Arisen have been present for a great many endings, but the sheer potency of what ends and what begins during this time is an object lesson to all those who serve eternally at the whims of distant Duat.

EMPIRES OF THE WORLD

What did the world of the mid-6th to mid-7th centuries look like? The following sections provide an overview of the major civilizations in play during this period.

EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Rome has fallen, yet Rome is not dead. Like the Deathless, the Eternal City lives up to its epithet. More than just a city, though, and more than a simple empire: Rome is culture, conquest, invention, and religion.

The capital may have moved to Constantinople, but the empire persists. Some mummies think of Rome as an undying flame, burning brightly for its ancestors and descendants and a natural heir to the Nameless Empire. More consider it little better than a malignant tumor; swollen, all-encapsulating, and rotten. Whether applauding or admonishing, the Deathless cannot help but respect what Rome has achieved across peoples spread far and wide. Rome has conquered and converted a greater assembly of mortal groups than even the Nameless Empire managed at its height.

At the commencement of the Third Turn the ruler of the Roman Empire is Justinian, a devout Christian who endeavors to spread the faith of Rome to all lands, distant and near. The Roman Christians meet fields of resistance in every land, but through a combination of armed backing, sufficient bribes, and true fervor, the 6th century sees provinces all over the world produce converts to the Christian faith. The mummies can only watch in horror as their pagan ideals are stamped out fanatically by these monotheists with their “bastardized” religion, stolen as it is from the legends of Mithras, Ishtar, and most importantly, Azar himself. The most enterprising mummies take advantage of Christianity in whatever way they can; a good third of the colossal cult known as the Azar Devoted grows in Constantinople. The Devoted seek

to subvert monotheism in favor of the deity from Irem’s past, effectively performing an act of heresy against both the Christian and Arisen faiths through shackling them to one another.

The Deathless recognize Justinian as the paramount Roman emperor of recent centuries. At Justinian’s right side, his general Belisarius resurrects parts of the long-since fallen Western Roman Empire. Sections of Hispania fall in line, the Vandal Kingdom caves beneath Rome, and Rome itself comes under Justinian’s sway temporarily. His ongoing war with the Persians sees the Byzantines claim sections of Armenia and Iberia after several years of dreadful siege. The conflict finally comes to a close when the Byzantines agree to pay the Sasanians an annual stipend of 500 pounds of gold. Despite these successes, even the most hostile-minded Arisen can see when a kingdom is overtaxing itself in an attempt to expand. Many among the guilds take one side or the other; the Mesen-Nebu declare the exchange of currency and lives for territory as simply another form of Dedwen, while the Tef-Aabhi argue that reclaiming old and desolate lands serves naught but nostalgia. Memory serves a purpose, but reliving memories as an objective in and of itself is self-defeating.

While the Roman Empire’s religious and expansive aims draw the ire of many an Arisen, the scholars among the Sessa-Hebsu and Maa-Kep are fascinated by the Empire’s intent to spread Latin as a global language. The Scribes and Laborers also see the benefits to many of the laws instigated during Justinian’s reign. As the Third Turn progresses, a meret known as the Order of Ízft, comprised entirely of Jackal-Headed Arisen, begins an aggressive exercise of locating and translating ancient Iremite scripture and carvings into Latin, housing the results in the sepulchers beneath the Hagia Sophia cathedral. They claim their intention is to modernize the lore of the Nameless Empire and allow cultist, Sadikh, and Arisen alike the ability to learn of what went before so both mistakes and successes can be studied. The Order is in its infancy at this stage, but has drawn an impressive following, despite rumors of the group accumulating this cache of vessels for a heretical purpose.

Most cults within the city of Constantinople have taken to forming vast conspiracies of their own within the supporter groups of popular charioteer teams, with the Hippodrome of Constantinople being a favored meeting place for collusions and intrigues due to the tens of thousands of mortals who attend the races and go unchecked by the Roman guards. These cults have a real influence over economic, political, and religious issues through the masses of supporters in attendance. For the cultists these manipulations come to a head when the groups of supporters war with one another during



the explosive Nika revolt, leading to uncontrollable fires responsible for the burning of a full half of Constantinople. Several Arisen see the size of the resident merets as the instigating factor behind the riots, citing a shocking spread of Sybaris from the Bosphoros to the desert.


The Hagia Sophia falls victim to the inferno, with the Order of Ízft barely capable of preserving the vessels within. The perpetrators are punished severely; the cultists are not exempt from Byzantine justice. By the order of Justinian, the executions of 30,000 rioters are carried out within the Hippodrome, and the sands turn red with blood. The luckiest Nika conspirators evade capture and continue to pursue their masters' machinations, albeit with restrictions. The Hagia Sophia is rebuilt, more opulent than ever before, under the supervision of a newly arrived meret known as the Khent-henu ("First Chorus"). The Order of Ízft is quick to produce tales of over-reaching cults, spreading the words of such misdeeds across Constantinople. The First Chorus and the Order become among the most powerful merets in the Eastern Roman Empire, clashing as often as collaborating — the First Chorus attempts to, in essence, recreate Irem in Constantinople's streets and architecture, while the Order defiantly opposes this move at every turn.

Two Arisen of the Khent-henu, Seb-Hetchet and Ur-Qeb, have retreated from the constant battles in Constantinople in order to practice the craft of talismans in Athens. Seb-Hetchet reasons that stored vestiges of Memory may be the key to thwarting their opponents in the Order of Ízft. The reclamation of Irem can only be carried out by Arisen of singular cause, making these talismans integral to the waking months of all mummies of the Khent-henu.

Despite the Byzantine machine working at full capacity, the devastating effects of the bubonic plague are enough to jam the gears. The Su-Menent dub the pandemic the Plague of Justinian, the name swiftly falling into common parlance in Constantinople and beyond. When citizens start to associate an emperor with a pestilence, the tide of mortal opinion begins to turn. Azar's Priests are quick to pick up the pieces, gaining a firm foothold in Constantinople through healing victims of plague and scavenging vessels left unguarded by their deceased protectors. With the city burnt and the population depleted, the heart of the Roman Empire slows its beating.

As Byzantine tendrils wrap around Coptic Egypt, its echo still resonates in barbarian Germania and Britannia,





its faith still dominant in Rome itself. Many mummies are thunderstruck by the pervasiveness of Roman culture; these devotees to the myth of Rome form merets and cults as a strange form of tribute to what may still be gained in its name. The Phiaro Boatmen is a large meret of Arisen spread widely around Egypt, dedicated to manipulating the focus of Roman attention toward excavating the buried treasures of their Alexandrian nome. The Boatmen firmly believe Irem is buried beneath the sands surrounding the Nile, and with perseverance unparalleled have discovered relics in a pattern seemingly pointing to a disappeared city.

Not all merets within the empire are held in high regard. The Apotheotic Movement of Jove is reviled as

deeply heretical during this time. Centralized on the city of Rome, but with a reach suspected to cover all Roman territories past and present, the Movement seeks nothing more than the forbidden knowledge of the Deceived and the secrets leading to fabled godhood. The name of the meret has rung out across provinces far and wide; its actions and agents are many. The only identified member of the group is the so-called Crimson Pharaoh of Rome — a mummy of unknown guild supposedly in the counsel of the mortal papacy. The Crimson Pharaoh can be said at the very least to have access to the papal records. The worst suspicions have him influencing the actions of the Catholic Church. The cults and mummies working for

The Bedouin, Mecca, and Muhammad (recorded for posterity by Asem Dedi, the Alchemist)

I mark these walls, turning sand to glass, as tribute and record of the deeds of the mortal Muhammad and the Bedouin tribes as I observe them.


My understanding of Muhammad's youth is limited. His life went without notice until recent times. It is known that he is a native to the sun-blasted peninsula within which my tomb is buried. At the time of my writing it is a land of savage scarcity where the resident Bedouin tribes are constantly engaged in war. The tribes are useful for the harvesting of cultists and have great skill with animal husbandry, but accomplish little else for their constant fighting. It was not always this way, with even my fragmented memory recalling times of verdant green and towns of billowing tents. Such is the way of alchemy. Lands change, just as do the people.

Muhammad's clan shares the tales that have been recited for centuries. The Bedouin are an oral culture, with a great respect for those who can recite poetry without prompt or script. I can imagine few who can read adequately. They sing the glories of their tribe, they tell the stories of their tribe. To the Bedouin, the word has a mystical importance. Poets celebrate values older than memory. It is the one sinew binding the tribes together; rejoicing victories and lamenting defeats.

Muhammad is gifted with the ability to speak with the voice of the richest poet. He has tones those around him wish to hear, even on subjects with which they lack familiarity. His ability to sell anything to anyone is no more than a merchant's skill, but the conviction with which he does so inspires fascination. He can turn a bolt of cloth into a cage of fowl through his art of the trade. Were he a denizen of lost Irem, he would be welcome among our guild.

Mecca is a morass of cultures. Christians, Jews, and the animists of the Bedouin all cluster here to trade and pay tribute to the sacred Ka'ba, a shrine of wood and cloth. Each clan in the territories surrounding my tomb has a different god or totem of wind, water, fire, or night. Idols relating to these deities are stored in the Ka'ba, some of which were created by the Tef-Aabhi and left under my watchful protection. The Jews maintain Abraham built the Ka'ba of Mecca centuries before now. I cannot claim to recollect when it appeared. It is said to hold a large black rock of importance to them. This rock is said to have fallen from the sky. I cannot help but wonder at some of the powers uttered by my peers when such imagery is invoked, and speculate at the source of this black rock.

I witnessed Muhammad arbitrate between conflicting tribesmen when the black rock was removed from the Ka'ba and none could agree on who deserved the great honor of replacing it. The tribesmen sought Muhammad, knowing him to be an orphan among the Bedouin yet possessing great ability when applying salve to raw conflicts. He arranged for each of the tribesmen with claims of such honor to hold a corner of a grand cloak, upon which the rock was transported to the Ka'ba. The tribesmen subsequently elected Muhammad as the rightful man to replace the rock. Through a simple act Muhammad facilitated equanimity between tribes, converting a state of potential war into one of peace. The more I contemplate its majesty, the more the alchemy this mortal works impresses me.



the Movement scour the world for the lore they seek, drawing increasing ire but not losing a single foot of ground to its enemies. The Crimson Pharaoh himself is suspected of consuming the Sekhem of almost all vessels that reach him, and some say the same of the Sekhem of his enemies. His personal cult, the Brotherhood of Ioudas, is comprised of a devoted Praetorian Guard willing to serve unto death and beyond.

PERSIAN (SASANIAN) EMPIRE

Artastanu of the Tef-Aabhi described it best when she spoke of Persia as “a realm founded and dedicated to the truth of all existence.” The Mason’s tomb and surrounding lands were invaded by the Persian Achaemenid Empire as it dominated Babylon in 540 BCE. She was summoned forth by her cult in an effort to drive away the aggressors, but rather than meet them in the field of battle she encountered their philosophers and scholars in temples. Artastanu found these satraps of Cyrus the Great declaring laws of religious tolerance and human rights. She watched as these Persians rebuilt and improved on temples destroyed in battle, the invaders wholly respecting the faiths of those they came to conquer. She found the Persians practicing the creed that all men should be able to perform the physical functions necessary for defending both family and realm. More importantly; they were decreed to speak only the truth.

Artastanu and her meret, the Pillars of Truth, have since that time pledged the same solemn decree to their guilds. In all things the truth must be sought. The Pillars of Truth is therefore a keen proponent in the recovery of Memory, but in their realm of Persia often come in to conflict with the Roman meret of similar outlook known as the Order of Ízft. The two have fuelled wars in their efforts to claim relics and lore pertaining to the Nameless Empire from the lands constantly under threat from both Byzantine and Sasanian forces. In their pursuit of truth, both sides are suspected to have cursed or destroyed countless vessels in efforts to spite the other meret.


Of particular importance to the mummies of Persia is the Naqsh-e Rastam, an ancient necropolis containing the remains of the greatest historic Persian leaders. Carved into a mountainside under the supervision of a forgotten Tef-Aabhi, the necropolis is fiercely guarded by cults of the Su-Menent, the tombs becoming a grand Arisen temple. During the reign of Alexander the Great the tombs of the sovereigns within were believed to have been looted by the Macedonian’s forces, but the Su-Menent know otherwise. The stench of the Shuankhsen is rife in the necropolis. The Lifeless desecrated bodies of deceased rulers and sleeping Arisen before stealing many

precious vessels. Some vessels remain, and tales hold that the Su-Menent are goading the Shuankhsen into a second attempt at thievery during the Third Turn.

Of the Sasanian kings, Khosrau is undoubtedly the most celebrated. As Justinian imposes new laws on the Byzantine Empire, Khosrau exemplifies why he is regarded as a philosopher king by Deathless and mortals alike. He opens his borders to those the Romans consider heretics, thereby winning favor with divergent religious groups; he engages in discourse with foreign kings and learns much in the way of diplomacy and gamesmanship; he exchanges medicinal practices and orders the construction of academies for their research. Khosrau’s reforms across the Sasanian Kingdom are similarly lauded. Taxes are altered to reflect water rights, creating areas of greater expense due to abundance of crops and general health. A new class of people is introduced between the nobles and the peasants, representing small landowners who could join government without the need to be a noble or magi. The cavalry of the Persian Empire is bolstered significantly by the removal of restrictions based on birth and lineage. Great infrastructure is introduced through roads, canal networks, and city fortifications across the entire empire. In short; Khosrau completely reinvents Persia within the Sothic Turn. Byzantine victory in their seven-century-long war seems all but an impossibility given the progressiveness of the Sasanians, provoking Arisen to construct their tombs within the apparent safety of Persian lands.

The dominant religion of the Sasanian Empire is Zoroastrianism — one of the first great monotheistic faiths, ruled over by the magi and upholding the virtues of moral choice. Several Deathless contemplate whether Zoroaster was tutored by a mummy, but no one recalls for sure. One of the central tenets of Zoroastrianism is the choice to take responsibility and duty for one’s purpose in the world of the living — the other choice being to relinquish this duty and so facilitate the work of *druj*, or deception. The connection between this principle, what the Judges have laid down in oblique terms for the Arisen and the sins of the Deceived, are coincidences too great for the guilds to just ignore. The eternal flame of Zoroastrianism itself is found carved inside a large number of Arisen tombs within the Sasanian Empire, with no mummies seeming to know from where the engravings came.


The Sasanian Empire would be a perfect nesting ground for Arisen who seek out important relics and defend against enemies such as the Shuankhsen and rogue cults, were it not for one particularly terrifying meret. The Revisionists are an exceptionally secret society, but a few Arisen seem to recognize this meret’s actions. Their intent seems to be to actively degrade the Memory of other mummies, although the reasons behind this goal are not



Observations (marked on the walls of the tomb of Asem Dedi, the Alchemist)

The Bedouin give Muhammad many parents, as he lacks his own. He is a child of every man, yet without parentage is ostracized. Being an outsider gives him singular concern. He develops passion for those removed from the tribal society; as a result he spends much time with Arab, Jewish, and Christian sages so he can learn more of their religions. He has quite the appetite for faith.

For a mortal such as he, Muhammad seems content to spend many months in isolation in the mountains surrounding this territory. I cannot discern his intentions, but those who know him claim that he meditates upon this existence, the existence of deities, and the possibility of an afterlife. The Bedouin despise the idea of Duat, so his actions greatly intrigue me.



widely known. The scant number of mummies who know of them claim varying theories. Some say the Revisionists seek to eliminate all thoughts of Apotheosis. Others claim their intentions relate to recent events in the Turn. A few maintain the Revisionists serve the Judge Bastu through removing all memorial distractions so mummies can focus solely on the truth. One mummy is adamant the meret is attempting to rewrite history. Whatever their aims, the Revisionists are feared.

VISIGOTH KINGDOM

In recent years Goth settlers migrated to the edges of Roman territory in an effort to flee the Huns and fall on the mercy of imperial might. The way the Goth scholars tell it, the Romans granted them leave to settle in only the most inhospitable regions: mountains, thick forests, and dead scrublands. These refugees claim to have been betrayed by their new Roman caretakers, being given no land healthy enough to till and inadequate protection against marauding barbarians. To contribute to their degradation, the Romans made them an offer; dog meat in exchange for their children. With starvation and death a certainty otherwise, many thousands of Goth children were delivered to Rome to be used as slaves. The eventual revolt of the aggrieved Goths happened for a multitude of reasons, with hunger and shame foremost among them. The attack they launched across all northern borders was


hubristically unexpected by the Romans, who incorrectly presumed these farmers and herders were pacified.

A grand conquest of Iberia ensued. The mass migration of Visigoths dominated the remnants of Roman civilization from Septimania to Spania. The Sessa-Hebsu and Sumenent active at the time mourned the loss of valuable Roman history, as the Goths tore apart much of the Empire's remnants in an effort to leave their own mark on the territory; but those Arisen with more foresight realized the displacement of these artifacts did not equal their destruction. The Imperial Cabal meret formed in response to the Gothic invasion. Its intent was to recover and entomb the mystically important Roman treasures spread across Iberia.

Through their conquest the Visigoths have achieved an act of reprisal against their former potentates. They rule in spite of hostile Frankish and Germanic tribes to the north and the machinations of the Byzantines in the east. Germanic paganism spreads with the nascent Visigoths, but with the conversion of the Ostrogoths to Arianism, the Visigoths and their Roman subjects follow suit. The decline in polytheistic and animistic cultures troubles those mummies with tombs in the region, but through the emulation of Arian Christian worship, some Arisen have taken advantage of this change in faith by acting as angelic patrons.

In the early years of the Third Turn, a presumptive Gothic ruler invites Byzantines to send representatives into his lands in order to mediate a series of dynastic disputes. Kings have died too old or too young in the previous decades, with generals taking on sovereignty, and civil conflict an outcome of the violent jockeying for power. Rather than endeavoring to resolve the succession issue, the Romans use their envoy as a vanguard for attack, carving Hispania Baetica out of the Visigothic Kingdom. As a consequence, the recently elevated King Liuvigild unites the kingdom for warfare, driving the Romans out of Cordoba and restricting the Byzantines' gained territory to the southeast coastline. This sound victory results in a cohesive kingdom for Liuvigild and his short-lived dynasty, the members of which begin the kingdom's century-long conversion to Roman Catholicism, much to the chagrin of mummies with newly formed Arian cults.

Successive rulers implement radical laws of social equality across genders and both Visigothic and Roman peoples. The lawmakers of the Closed Books are rumored to take a hand in some of the changes that favor their cults, although the claims of such interference are frankly decried by the Kenbet of Iberia, Athanasia. These rules of society are codified in 643 CE as the Visigothic Code of Law. This Code covers all aspects of life under Catholic Toledo and the surrounding territories, devoting pages to



everything from the rights of married women, the laws of trade, and the liberation of slaves, to punishment for murderers and harsh treatment for those who desecrate tombs. Still distinctly separate from the Byzantine Empire, the Visigoths remain barbarians in the eyes of their enemies despite their devotion to law and bureaucracy.

While many of the terms of the Code of Law persist for the next 1,461 years, it is hardly infallible or uniformly just. The Code makes special provision for the persecution of Jews, declaring their property rights void and their belief a heresy punishable by execution, if perpetrated openly and beyond fair warning. The Visigoths, through both Arian and Catholic dominance, indulge in wanton theft from Jews with minimal likelihood of reprisal. Despite all claims of the Code being a revolution in law, it is not hard to see the cracks in its foundation. Athanasia and her fellow guild members have stiffly waved off the accusations that they use their Catholic-dominated cults as a force against those Arisen who make use of Jewish followers, but it's apparent the Sessa-Hebsu have accumulated a wealth of influence in recent years, with members of other guilds on the wane in Iberia.

MEROVINGIAN KINGDOM

Occupying the former lands of Ancient Gaul and the surrounding territories of Austrasia, Swabia, and Burgundy, the Frankish Kingdom of the Merovingians styles itself as the only true successor to the Western Roman Empire.

The Merovingian dynasty presents an image of unity and progress to its neighbors. They claim that the lands of Francia are not only rich and fertile, but also populated evenly with a diverse array of peoples. They assert the Christian faith is not only upheld but also aggressively promoted, the missionaries within Francia's borders teaching the stories of Roman Catholicism with fervor. Most importantly of all, they affirm the Merovingian Kingdom is one of unanimity. From the farmers to the ruling elite; all will act for Francia.

The truth is somewhat different.

While the Merovingian Kingdom under Clovis successfully invaded great swaths of land and incorporated people from all over the former Western Roman Empire into its working stock, the Merovingians themselves — and the religious elite backing them — are now tearing the kingdom apart. When Clovis died, he split the land among his four sons. When they died, they split their territories among their sons. Francia is now utterly fractious, with internecine conflict reigning between the different Merovingians. Yet, when the outside realms and provinces are watching via envoys and merchants, each leader is willing to embrace his enemy and call him his brother. The Merovingians cling to the concept of the divine patronage

The testament of Kaariye, He Who Inflicts Pain (discovered in the Black Forest)

There is no mortal land like this one.

My meret exclaimed with joy at the lush bounty of this rich, green garden. They uniformly agreed how this place must be blessed by the Judges for its profusion of life. I disagreed on all points spoken in kindness regarding this untamed kingdom. This forest is naught but torment for all who dwell within. This nature is an ordeal for all who encounter it.

They argued and proclaimed that the wide-flowing river represents health. The thick emerald leaves grant respite from heat. The abundance of creatures provides succor. There is nothing a mortal could wish for in this place. They tell me we have traveled here so the Judges can show us the glorious lands we can receive through eternal service.

I told them the river is a pale shadow of the one in our homeland, and the only destination reached through traveling its dark, winding course is oblivion. I explained the thick leaves draw out death, where in our bountiful land Azar would with mercy reach you with his burning rays and snuff out your life. I explicated the creatures exist to prey upon one another, to live in an unending cycle of rapid mortality. Fast lives, slow deaths, with even the most beautiful beings in this place not exempt from a pained end.

My meret saw wisdom and agreed to move on.

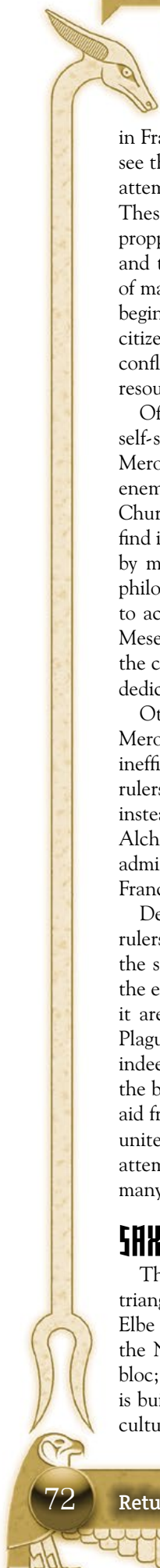

I see the nightmare of this place. The prolific spread of death starts here. The lessons of torture come from these ensnaring roots and hanging branches. There is no true beauty in nature. I have seen this place before, with its veiled barbs and clutching thorns. I recognize the truth of the hatred and fire hidden by every sweet fruit and cool resting place.

I visit this place whenever I Descend.

It is Duat.

of their legendary founder, Merovech. They will not betray his cause or principles when faced with external threat.

Great lovers of wealth and tribute, the Merovingian kings have a vast quantity of coins minted, making Francia one of the keystones of currency in Europe. Also found



in Francia is an abundance of monasteries. Cynical Arisen see the rabid embrace of the Christian faith as yet another attempt by the Merovingians to emulate the Romans. These immortals see the abbots as mere tax collectors, propping up the established rule with the words of God and threats of damnation. Such words are effective ways of making the peasantry pay tribute. As the Merovingians begin their decline due to being out of touch with their citizenry and the constant losses associated with civil conflict, the Church stands ready in both power and resources to take the reins.

Of particular interest to the Mesen-Nebu is the royal self-sufficiency practiced by the Merovingians. When the Merovingians receive taxes or wealth pillaged from an enemy, they redistribute much of it among their followers, Church and magnates included, of course. The Alchemists find it intriguing as they have rarely seen the like practiced by mortal rulers before, yet it holds with the Alchemist philosophy of spending as much as necessary in order to achieve a desired result. In the eyes of many of these Mesen-Nebu, the Merovingians are wise, as they know the cost of loyalty and are prepared to pay it. Currency for dedication, no matter the price.

Other Arisen are quick to point out how the Merovingians distribute their wealth so readily due to inefficient laws, bureaucracy, or administration. The rulers don't know where expenditure is required, and instead delegate responsibility to the common people. The Alchemists shrug at this criticism of a dynasty they greatly admire, and remind the detractors that Merovingian Francia is the most powerful empire in Western Europe.

Despite the Mesen-Nebu's love of this land and its rulers, Deathless interests are to some degree stymied by the surge in monotheism, with many losing their cults to the embrace of Christianity. Su-Menent present to witness it are also astonished to see the way the victims of the Plague of Justinian are treated with little reverence, or indeed, reference. While Francia is just as harshly hit by the bubonic plague as other kingdoms, there is no plea for aid from other lands. In its need to present a permanently united and fortified front, the kingdom makes several attempts to prevent the spread of news regarding how many victims fall to pestilence.

SAXONY AND THURINGIA

The greatest of the Germanic tribal duchies, the lush triangle of Saxony stretches from the Rhine to the rivers Elbe and Saale, its uppermost border on the coastline of the North Sea. The Saxon people are far from a unified bloc; they are comprised of multiple tribes, each of which is built up from several smaller clans of kinsmen. A great culture surrounding fine crafts and physical prowess is

prevalent here. When not trading or clashing with each other, little inspires the people of the region more than the possibilities of war with the Franks.

The Saxons uphold a pagan religion a number of the resident mummies find quite fascinating. Their worship seems based around an entity known as Irminsul to the natives; Irminsul is a divine tree or great pillar reaching from the Earth up to the heavens. A region of Saxony where this Irminsul was said to have physically existed is held in reverence by the natives. All Deathless who visit this area can feel their Sekhem waxing as drastically as their Memory drains away here, but they have yet to discern the reason behind this phenomenon. Attempts to form cults from these pagans have been arduous, but the rich knowledge the tribal holy men seem to possess makes the challenge incredibly tempting.

Due to an abiding respect growing between the Arisen and the pagans with their strange faith, it comes as an unwelcome surprise when two priests from Britain named Ewald the Fair and Ewald the Black appear in Saxony. The priests attempt to convert the Saxons to Christianity but their efforts are in vain. The Saxons put Ewald the Fair to the sword, ending his life swiftly by cutting straight through his chest. Ewald the Black suffers a worse fate, being tortured at length before his limbs are torn free. It is said that when he is thrown into the Rhine, his blood is still flowing and his lips still move in prayer to his god. This punishment is carried out under the subtle direction of a Maa-Kep known as the Bronze Heart. Through these actions the Bronze Heart seeks to divert the faith of the pagans to Osiris-Who-is-Azar, given the similar sacrifice spoken of in legend. The Bronze Heart does not uphold the aims of the Azar Devoted, but would undoubtedly be interested to hear of them given the similar ethos he has adopted in subverting both Christian and Osiran beliefs.

The number of Arisen in the lands surrounding Thuringia and Angeln is low, though this is not due to their lack of interest in the region. Forested Thuringia holds a wonder of history beneath its soil. The prize most keenly discussed by Arisen with a mind for excavation is within a grand earth mound layered with thick stone slabs. According to one cultist who discovered and dug into the mound, within rests a burial chamber supported by oak beams and rocks. This chamber contains gold jewelry, weaponry, finely crafted tools, and the skeleton of a child sacrifice. In pride of place at the foot of the burial dais is a large anvil. All these artifacts are suspected to be vessels of some kind. Additional verification has been lacking, since after meeting with his master to report his findings the cultist's skin erupted with boils that burst with enough ferocity to make him painfully bleed to death within minutes.



The tomb of Thuringia is ritually and fanatically guarded by the mortal populace for miles around its location. This is despite the fact that the mortals responsible for its protection do not know what they safeguard. Indeed, the subject of the burial has been missing from the tomb for over a century. The tomb is believed to be several thousand years old, although there is no clue to the identity of its intended occupant or whether he is even one of the Arisen. According to the lore of the local Tef-Aabhi, the entity whose burial chamber rests in the heart of the forests of Thuringia protects his followers and poisons the land against their enemies, but this has not stopped a couple of merets from attempting to “liberate” the relics from within. These gestures have been met with repeated failure as the location of the tomb seems hard to pin down, and the mortals guarding it are surprisingly adept at combating mummies and their servants.

BRITANNIA

When the barbarians sacked Rome and Constantine III withdrew his armies from the British Isles, the Britons complained they were being abandoned by their protectors. Picts from the north frequently raided the eastern coastlines, the Welsh were never far from launching invading forays, and the Britons themselves were prone to infighting and tribal war without the stabilizing influence of Roman occupation.

The Roman response was to grant their former Germanic mercenaries stewardship of the British Isles. This peaceful stewardship lasted for a brief time, as it wasn't long before the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians became aware that they weren't being paid by their Roman masters. Rather than acting as the guards of Roman Britain, the former soldiers-for-hire decided they would rule in their own names.

As the Third Turn reaches its zenith, the Germanic tribes form the Heptarchy of British provinces. Split between the different tribes of Germanic settlers, these provinces war with one another at length. The mixture of pagan faith, Celtic Christianity, and Roman Catholicism helps to exacerbate matters between the disparate peoples, even after the Anglo-Saxon rulers nominally adopt the Christian faith shared by the Briton priests. Signs of the conflicting faiths existing throughout the Third Turn are present in the building of churches holding both pagan and Christian symbology throughout.

The verdant land of Britannia is by no means inhabited by a great populace of mummies. A few merets comprising members of all guilds and decrees find themselves based there. For these Arisen, the greatest mystery is how they got there. When each of these merets awakens to the rise of Sothis, most find themselves climbing free from great

barrows of earth, while others are entombed in stone edifices from which they are forced to break free. Not one of the Arisen can recall having traveled here, and none have cults surrounding them.

Despite the profound loss of memory at work in Britannia, the merets on the island find themselves in a land riddled with ancient vessels filled with Sekhem, some left behind by former settlers (including the Romans), others apparently native to the area. These treasures would occupy all of the newly awoken mummies' time, were it not for the terrifyingly high number of Shuankhsen emerging from within the rebellious Cornish and Welsh forces. Led by one of the Lifeless named Neriasek, who currently occupies the form of a Welsh warlord, these Shuankhsen seem to revel in a great game of hunting the amnesiac mummies across the body of Britannia. The Lifeless monsters from the west appear to have been waiting centuries for these merets to wake, just so they can make their eternal existences one of infinite torment.

AVAR KHAGANATE

The Avars of the Third Turn are new players upon the world map, forming their Khaganate in 567 CE. A confederacy of Turkic peoples holding territory primarily in the Carpathian Basin, their massive forces and trained horsemen numbering over 20,000 act as a threat to the Roman Empire and the Germanic tribes. The political situation sees each opposing territory concerned with where the Khaganate intends to invade, and with whom it intends to ally.

The first alliance formed by this nomadic people is with Constantinople, as they are paid in gold to conquer the Bulgars, Sabits, and Antes. Through fleet action and unparalleled coordination on the battlefield, the Avars swiftly control the steppes north of the Black Sea and much of the Balkans.

The subsequent Khaganate alliance with the Lombards destroys all hope of a Byzantine-Avar union's reformation. The Avars raid the Roman Balkan territories, sever the Byzantine land connection with the Franks through the invasion of Dalmatia, and form another alliance with the Sasanian Persians. By the peak of the Sothic Turn, an impressive concerted siege is launched against Constantinople. The Romans barely weather the attack, but are afforded some respite as the Avars, due to the sheer number of wars in which they have partaken and losses they have incurred, begin to weaken.

Such a surge of dynamism in warfare makes the Arisen in the Carpathians reminisce about the way the Nameless Empire fearlessly rolled over all enemies, accepting tributes and slaves when they were offered, forcibly taking them when they were not. While it is by no means accepted or





normal for mummies to propagate war or take an active hand in such things, no few Maa-Kep and Sessa-Hebsu, nostalgic and flush with memory, head to the battlefield alongside the Khaganate. Other, more cautious Deathless are content to ride the coattails of the marauding Turks and pick up the remains of vestiges and relics from the wreckage left in their wake.

A high number of Deathless rise in Khaganate territory by the Third Turn, finding their existing cults destroyed by the plague sweeping from east to west. The Avars make more than adequate replacements for many such cults, being largely of a warrior culture. While this makes them inclined to operate in a tribal structure, the population is widely spread, making them less susceptible to the ravages of the bubonic plague. Several Arisen form enterprise cults out of the same peoples, forming guilds of mercenaries within the Khaganate operating for whichever warlord pays the highest fee.

LAKHMID KINGDOM

Ever since the assassination of their ruler Aus ibn-Qallam, the Lakhmids have, in the fields of religion, politics, and commerce, almost single-mindedly opposed the movements of the Ghassanids. An abiding distrust and dislike for their Ghassanid neighbors drives

the Lakhmids in much of what they do, resulting in their alliance with Persia due to the Ghassanid alliance with Constantinople.

It paints a sad picture of a once-great kingdom, yet this is not to imply the Lakhmids are incapable. Within their own borders the Lakhmid tribes are educated and healthy, narrowly avoiding the worst of the Plague of Justinian. They uphold the Nestorian form of Christianity in the face of pressure from their northern borders to adopt the Orthodox Christian religion, and the expectation from their Sasanian allies that they convert to Zoroastrianism.

Despite this, they are the inheritors of Mesopotamia, the Seleucid Empire, and remains of the Parthians; the weight of this history on a tribal system results in a cultural expectation of dominance. Arisen within Lakhmid lands can only shake their heads. Those traditionalists of the Maa-Kep and Su-Menent see the acts of the Lakhmids as desperate and pathetic; a hollow echo of the former greatness of Mesopotamia. It brings to mind the gradual weakness of Egypt — a memory few mummies choose to remember.

Unfortunately for the Lakhmids, their alliance with the Persians is tenuous at best. In 602 CE the Persians imprison, starve, and finally put to death the last Lakhmid king, Nu'man III, due to a false account of treason. The Persians

swiftly follow up the regicide by formally confirming the Lakhmids as vassals.

Arisen speak openly of this being a new opportunity for the Lakhmids. Now that they are oppressed, the Lakhmids have a real enemy to fight and a new empire to found. Sure enough, this movement by the Sasanian Empire contributes directly to its fall. Long downtrodden by their neighbors, frequently oppressed by larger empires, the Lakhmids agree to act as spies against the Persians. As the Islamic Empire sweeps across the Levant and brings low the Sasanians, the Lakhmids achieve their glory and freedom.

Whether the Deathless are involved in this event or not, rumors of their extensive presence in Lakhmid territories do not go unheard. Groups antagonistic to the Arisen, the Shuankhsen among them, begin to travel to the Lakhmid Kingdom in order to hunt that which they hate. Perhaps more disconcerting than the actions of the Lifeless are the tales of one meret of mummies being attacked by a cabal of mortals, not affiliated with any known supernatural entities yet capable of bringing low several powerful Arisen. These Lakhmid men and women seem dedicated to being free of the yoke of the Deathless.

SAO CIVILIZATION

Unaffected by the waves of monotheism or the spread of plague pervading so many other kingdoms, the aggressively expansive Sao have, by the ascent of Sothis, surrounded the Chari River and Lake Chad with their civilization. The Sao have integrated or eliminated any tribes offering opposition to their aims, yet according to the Deathless who know of them, they are far more than just a war-driven people.

The Arisen first began to pay attention to talk of the Sao in the last few hundred years, but reaching their territories has been difficult due to the vastness of the Sahara Desert and the short duration a temporary awakening can yield. While the merciless temperatures of the Sahara are no great obstacles for the Deathless, their cults have found it near-impossible to transport sleeping immortals to these intriguing people. Those cultists who attempt to cross the desert invariably meet harsh ends as a result of the elements. Others who endeavor to take their masters via sea occasionally arrive ashore, but navigating to Sao territories from the coastline is similarly difficult. Time and again Arisen have compelled their cults to try, citing a wondrous pilgrimage the Judges have commanded in visions and dreams. These mummies believe the Sao have a culture of potentially tremendous importance to the restoration of the Nameless Empire.

With the turn of the Sothic Wheel, many Arisen are willing to challenge the elements and risk the journey to the Sao civilization once again. Time is now on their side.

Talk of Allah (cast in stone by Asem Dedi of the First Alchemists)

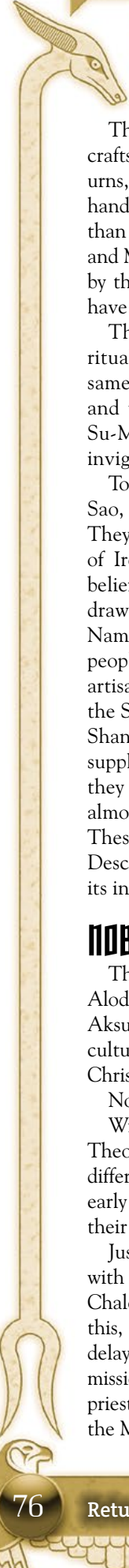

I have heard Muhammad speak of experiencing extraordinary visions. In a cave above Mecca he claims to speak with angels. I would typically classify such talk as an attempt at charlatany, yet he fears the words while finding them profound. Frauds assert their beneficence when claiming to speak for any god, yet here is a man who is afraid of what he says while holding the conviction to state it. Months in solitude living in this desert would make anyone see angels, but many within Mecca seem to ardently listen to his prophetic diatribe. Above all, he bears one message to his people, and to my ears albeit without intention. He speaks a simple, yet radical proclamation when considering his audience. He claims there is only one god.

Muhammad preaches that the mortals of Mecca and the rest of the world should only think of one divine unity. To be thinking of possessions, reputation, or power is akin to creating intellectual idols. The implications, should his message be understood and accepted, are incredible. One deity equals one people. His words would eradicate tribal divisions. To the poor and unprotected, the prospects stemming from his proclamation are revolutionary. I am forced into admiration of this man, who could unseat tradition with the mere power of words. The Dedwen flows from his mouth in powerful words of a lyrical quality; more gorgeous than the most exquisite Bedouin poetry. Muhammad is representation of change.

While I ascribed to him the abilities of a gifted poet, Muhammad is not such a man. Poets speak through desire. His is not the voice of desire; it is the voice of God. It is a heresy for me to write this on these sacred walls, yet the way his words could change society cannot help but make even an immortal wonder.

Those mummies who have reached that land have found wonder awaiting them.

The Sao have built a wide network of city states. The Tef-Aabhi aware of this network can't help but examine and re-examine it, for the geometric pattern these cities form produces a resonance that can only be interpreted as sorcery. When mapped, the cities appear to be set apart in a shape strongly resembling the pincers, body, and tail of a scorpion.



The Sao show themselves to be incredibly proficient craftspeople with terra cotta, creating finely honed effigies, urns, tools, and weapons. They have also turned their hands to the crafting of bronze, their workmanship better than any similar metalwork in the region. The Maa-Kep and Mesen-Nebu in the area cannot help but be impressed by the artisan's ability with which these people appear to have been blessed.

The Sao are not a literate people, reciting history and ritual purely through oral tradition; yet all speak the same words verbatim. All know the legends, the myths, and the history of their people. The Sesha-Hebsu and Su-Menent who have encountered these Sao are equally invigorated.

To the Arisen who dwell among and examine the Sao, echoes of memory seem to ring out constantly. They are certainly not ethnically identical to the people of Irem, yet they are familiar through their practices, beliefs, crafts, and rituals; the mummies are inextricably drawn to the idea of the Sao civilization being a sort of Nameless Empire. The Sao are a dedicated and ruthless people, already forming guild-like organizations for their artisans. The Deathless see shadows of their own past in the Sao, and many who visit identify themselves as proxy Shan'iatu, in a position to bestow great gifts upon these supplicants. These Arisen have created a cult of which they are the members, surrounding the Sao and placing almost cosmic importance on the progress of this culture. These fanatical Arisen cultists feel forced to stave off the Descent so they can preserve and nurture this culture to its intended grandeur.

NOBATIA, MAKURIA, AND ALODIA

The three Nubian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia trace the course of the Nile south and into the Aksumite Empire. While entirely distinct from one another culturally, the three kingdoms share one commonality: Christianity.

Not the same form of Christianity, however.

With the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora both being religiously zealous and holding two different faiths between them, talk of the Nubians in the early 6th century CE provokes the two of them to dispatch their own missionaries to the southern Nile regions.

Justinian arranges to bribe Silko, king of the Nobatae, with opulent gifts to make Nobatia more amenable to Chalcedonian Christianity. When Theodora discovers this, she arranges for Justinian's missionaries to be delayed in their travel, ensuring the Miaphysite Christian missionaries arrive first. By the time Justinian's monks and priests reach Nobatia, the Nobatae have already adopted the Miaphysite creed of Theodosius.

Not to be outdone, Justinian's missionaries go on to convert the Makurian Nubians to Chalcedonian Christianity. This so angers Theodora that she demands her husband prevent the movement of further missionaries, while she agrees to the same. The result of their impasse is the eventual conversion of Alodia to Monophysite Christianity.

To the observing Arisen this all seems quite farcical, as the Nubians — a people who were once a part of the Nameless Empire — are fought over for a faith not even their own. The comedy ceases when the three kingdoms begin to battle over which form of Christianity is correct, bloody warfare ringing out as heretics on each side meet grisly ends through impalement, burning, and crucifixion. The Deathless make the best of an awful situation through the formation of conspiracy cults, including the immense Protectorate of the Hunted. Even some cells of the Azar Devoted take hold of the newly Christian Nubians, under the calculating survey of their mentors.

Of greater concern to the Deathless, many of whom maintain tombs in the Nubian kingdoms, are the actions of another cult, one known as the Loyalists of the Final Dynasty. While in small numbers here and under the control of a relatively unknown Arisen, they are not without power and they certainly wield more knowledge of the Nameless Empire and the Judges than do most common cultists. This cult perpetrates brazen yet often highly successful robberies of Arisen tombs, using the Third Turn as a particularly fine time to do so, as the occupants of said tombs are quite often out and pursuing their own machinations. No Deathless seem to know exactly what the Loyalists seek for their mistress, but rumor holds they pursue Maa-Kep vessels in this region. The Loyalists allow this tale to take hold, as they use it as a cover for hunting the secrets behind the Rite of Return.

BLEMMYES

Of late many of the Blemmyes Nubians have become something wholly different from the mortals loosely remembered by the Deathless. The Arisen who rise in the eastern Nubian territories are terrified of what they behold in these former subjects.

Long gone are the days when the Arisen could admire the magnificent temples of Kalabsha and Philae. The nights where a Tef-Aabhi might advise on the state of Nubian architecture whilst planning another grand shrine have gone. The Lion-Headed used to make pilgrimage to this land out of respect for the Nubian deity Mandulis, who they associated with the Judge Hepet-Khet. The Deathless had a firm respect for the Nubians of Blemmyes, and it was one returned by the few native Witnesses who knew the truth of the Arisen. Due to reasons quite terrible, this is no longer possible.



When night falls, many of these Blemmyes become something inhuman. The necks of these Nubians become stumps, as their heads shrink and descend through their throats. Acephalous and shrieking, the Blemmyes monsters appear with their eyes and mouths in their chests. These mewing monstrosities have a burning hunger for Sekhem.

The reaction to this horrifying change has been one of shock among the Deathless, who are convinced powerful Shuankhsen or foul mortal sorcerers have corrupted an entire people in order to reach the mummies' valuable vessels. Whether this is true or not has yet to be determined, but the mummies of Blemmyes are not retreating from this land. Most have had tombs here for centuries, if not longer. They are determined to heal the supernatural ill infecting these Nubians and retain their nome of tombs and temples even if they are forced to Descend once again in the attempt.

AKSUMITE EMPIRE

The world may be subject to war, famine, and pestilence, but this has not killed the desire for exploration and commerce among both mortals and Arisen. The Kingdom of Aksum is one of the greatest gateways to eastern lands, making it in the words of some scholars an empire of immense importance and power comparable to Rome, Persia, and far-off China.

In its position on the east coast of Africa, and with territories in the Levant, the Aksumites have a long history of trade with the nations across the dangerous ocean. A vibrant economy exists in Aksum's wide bazaars and marketplaces. The worth of a man is exceedingly defined by the value of his possessions and the number of slaves at his disposal rather than the ability to wield a sword or craft something beautiful. Through their wealth and the ability to hire and pay off their enemies, the Aksumites have successfully forced hegemony over the Cushitic, Himyarite, and many Nubian peoples.

The Aksumites are not without faith; epic steles of granite constructed in ancient times stand across their empire in silent testament to their ancient beliefs. Christianity now holds sway over the kingdom; its power over the people is reflected in the Aksumite currency minted with a symbol of the cross. Along with the Persians, who use the Zoroastrian eternal flame on coinage, they are one of the only empires to proudly stamp their holy icon on currency.

It would perhaps be natural to expect the Mesen-Nebu to have some respect or acclaim for the Aksumite peoples, but surprisingly to those who stereotype the Alchemists, many turn their noses up at those hoarding wealth. By the standards of those Born of Gold, there is no worth to money if it is simply retained and not used to implement change. A few feel differently; recognizing

that by emblazoning something as small as a coin with the iconography of a powerful religion, alterations to the beliefs of people far and wide can be implemented. If those tribesmen of surrounding lands or even those natives of the far off Gupta Empire come to associate Christianity with prosperity, a subtle yet pervasive change may yet be seen.

When the Plague of Justinian arrives, the Aksumites suffer terrible losses. No amount of coin can protect a mortal from the bubonic plague. With population numbers greatly reduced and the health of the nation on a precipice, the Islamic request for sanctuary in the closing years of the Third Turn is quickly granted. The declining Kingdom of Aksum finds itself dramatically diversified, with persecution of any religion within its borders harshly punished. While the dominant religion remains Christianity, the surviving people of Aksum form a nation of religious tolerance prominent for many centuries to come.


VALABHI

On the western edge of the Indian subcontinent stands the city of Valabhi, the capital of the Maitraka dynasty. Founded by the elite caste of Kshatriya, Valabhi has become a valuable center for spiritual learning and an important port for traders from the west.

Far from being predominantly Hindu, like many of its neighbors, Valabhi's role as a trading port has resulted in a cultural mix of Hindus, Buddhists, and Catholics, with even a Jewish enclave in existence within its borders. The prime religion practiced in Valabhi is Jaina Dharma, which espouses non-hostility among all living things. The Arisen traveling as far east as Valabhi have expressed fascination with this religion of non-judgment and peace. With the ascendance of Sothis, one such mummy has even proclaimed himself to be the twenty-fifth tirthankara of Jainism. He claims to be capable of protecting those who follow him into nirvana, bestowing upon them great agriculture, health, wealth, and wisdom. This Su-Menent goes by the arrogant title of Baraja and draws a distressingly loyal following. While his followers have yet to raise a hand against his foes, he himself has not been so kind. He feels that because he is not truly alive, the tenets of Jainism do not apply to him and somehow make his actions irreproachable.

The great concentration of faith in Valabhi and the transient nature of many of its visitors sees a welcomingly high number of vessels created or moved through here. The only issue is the iron hold Baraja somehow maintains over the region. His actions bring shame upon any Su-Menent who chooses not to oppose them. Some Shepherds of the Chamber have begun to form a large meret in Sindh to the north, from where they intend to launch a devastating attack. Were this attack to be





successful, it could result in the accumulated vessels of Valabhi being reappropriated at best and scattered at worst. Consequently, all Deathless in the region watch with great interest to see what may unfold.

GUPTA EMPIRE

To the sadness of any Deathless aware of it, the Gupta Empire has waned and will soon be no more. Existing for a mere two centuries, yet accomplishing perhaps more than any other civilization in that short time in the fields of science, art, invention, technology, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and countless other intellectual pursuits, the fall of the Gupta Empire comes as a harsh blow to all its admirers.

Perhaps of greatest importance to the Arisen of the Gupta Empire are the great temples, sculptures, statues, paintings, and literature they fear will be destroyed or dispersed when the next dynasty of rulers decides to leave its own mark on the massive number of conquered kingdoms within Gupta borders. To each guild there is something of importance in this empire.

Nothing emanating from the Gupta Empire comes with more significance than the theories of the mathematician-astronomer Aryabhata, who postulates the heliocentric theory of the Earth orbiting the sun. This theory has been put forward before in Greece, but never during one of the Sothic Turns when so many mummies have been around to hear it. To many Arisen this theory solidifies a view that all on Earth are beholden to the temporal whims of Fate. Others are forced to recalculate their beliefs, as they begin to study the solar and lunar eclipses alongside this great man. They begin to theorize there may be more to existence than their eternal service to a solar entity. This heretical epiphany sends shockwaves across the Deathless in the Gupta Empire as Arisen begin to preach of its possibility. These actions subsequently draw the attention of the Revisionists and Loyalists of the Final Dynasty, who seem keen to remove all thoughts of such flagrant rebellion.

The Gupta Empire is responsible for the creation of caturanga, a precursor to chess involving pieces resembling infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots. The rules to this game of skill and tactics are lost to the mortal world when the Gupta Empire falls, but Arisen devotees of the game mark the strategies and piece movements on the insides of sarcophagi, on the sides of urns, and in ancient scrolls. The love of this game is abiding in the Deathless, the Sessa-Hebsu in particular keen to locate players whenever they rise and wherever they travel. Merets form rivalries with one another over the importance of different pieces — a meret favoring the chariots perhaps naturally being formed predominantly by Falcon-Headed, while the Elephant Rajas meret is known for their particularly

heated gamesmanship. While seeming inconsequential to some Arisen and offensive to those, especially among the Maa-Kep, who feel that there should be no rest for the immortals, the respite offered, peaces brokered, and skills learned by mummies over a game of caturanga are of the utmost importance to ongoing Arisen relationships.

The *Kamasutra* is compiled and first issued in the Gupta Empire, finding its audience around the Turn of Dusk. More than just a sex manual, the *sutra* is a thread holding life, sensuality, family, and pleasure together. No few mummies spend their waking periods pursuing their lusts and loves, many of whom are touched, warmed, and heartened by the aphorisms of the collection. The Tef-Aabhi within the Gupta Empire even go so far as to identify a new geometry encompassing the human form, connecting nerves, senses, and erogenous zones. These Seekers of the Core, as they call themselves, come to the realization that power does not have to come from thousands of slaves at work. Power can instead come from the simple stroke of the fingertip upon a human's skin. Tantra is similarly lauded by Deathless who are fortunate enough to experience the spiritual path it awakens within the sahu and the spirit of its practitioners. Energy flows through the Arisen, the refinement of the use of Sekhem through Tantra becoming highly sought. A number of Arisen, and even a few among the Sadikh, adopt the status of guru.

BEYOND

The Gupta Empire marks the farthest point east to which an Arisen has traveled and subsequently returned. Others have gone farther without reappearing to their brethren. Some have launched expeditions in search of fabled relics of the Pyu City-States or the Kingdom of Funan. More have gone to seek the answers to the darkness that spills across the sky and makes Fate silent for a year or more. It is known the shadow coating sun, stars, and sky came from beyond the Gupta Empire, but the cause is still unknown. It is suspected the bubonic plague perhaps originated from the same location, around the time the darkness began.

So why don't all Deathless seek to locate and destroy the entities who caused these dreadful events? Why have only a few Arisen sought the answers? The darkness left Arisen society shaken, and the plague smashed many a cult. Why have the guilds not united against their hidden foe, who for all they know may unleash a greater wave of destruction in years to come?

Consider the following two ideas by way of explanation.

First, even immortals fear the unknown. The expeditions sent were formed of the strongest cultists the guilds could throw together. Not one returned. Their complete absence panics the Arisen who know of their expeditions, not just for what they may have faced, but also because guild has



lost highly regarded followers and even Sadikh through their disappearance.

Second, immortals forget. Not every mummy was awake during the dark period. Those who slept could not be roused. Those who were awake found their powers unbridled. Some have succumbed to rapid Descents of both Sekhem and Memory as the sins of that time came back to punish them through the will of the Judges. Others have somehow evaded such judgment, a feeling of immunity and impunity filling their spirits. The rest seem to have actively forgotten the occurrence of the events of the dark time — permanently. A force at work, not yet widely understood by the guilds, is destroying these memories through a fanatical loyalty to what is deemed as the Judges' wills. These Revisionists are determined no mummies shall remember a time when they were free of their Judges' yoke or when Azar was weak. They have roles to perform, and thoughts of liberty and freedom interfere with those roles.

THE ARISEN GUILDS

Where historically the guildhalls would be formed and maintained in distinct regions containing Arisen presence, the world now grows more accessible to exploration. Deathless from each guild seek permission to leave their bastions and visit exotic lands, discover new vessels, seek fresh lore, and pursue different paths. These loyal and occasionally fanatical members of the guilds diligently report findings of their travels by sending cultists back as messengers and deliver relics to their chapterhouses via the trading networks established by the Tef-Aabhi. Even during this period of relative grace from fear of Descent, such mummies act as servants of their guilds' aims. Practicing the rites and rituals of their extended family is a form of reassurance to Deathless who know little else and fear the changes mortals are imposing on the world.

More mummies do not seek this permission, and travel without the support of their guilds. Some launch expeditions due to a compelling sense of wanderlust, others flee known lands due to the destruction wrought by constant war and the arrival of plague. Such Arisen are often accompanied by companions in the form of a meret or by a cult of devoted followers. These wanderers gain much as individuals, often acting in the service of their Judges' purviews, but by operating independently contribute to the dissolution of the calcified guilds. The hardline guild members are less impressed with the actions of these mummies, but absence has never before resulted in ejection from a guild. Their positions remain safe, albeit void of their presence, with only a small number of these independently driven Deathless being actively hunted by their peers for transgressing against guild obligations. The

majority are left to wander, their erstwhile peers confident that once the mummies have settled they will continue to work in the best interests of their guildhalls and may even establish new nomes.

MAA-KEP

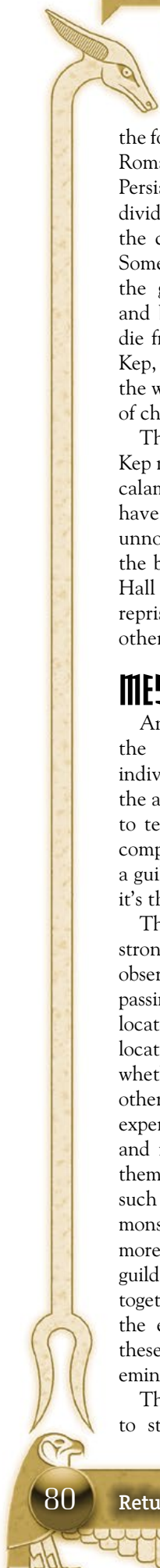

The Bearers of the Engraved are among the most unified in the face of the maleficent elements of this Turn; this is hardly surprising to the Maa-Kep, for who else would or could shoulder the burden of ensuring all other guilds are kept in order during these tempestuous times? The other guilds are either too wrapped up in their own promulgations of individualism or peculiar obsessions with mortal goings-on. The Maa-Kep remain constant — the iron rod holding steady the creaking backbone of Irem's legacy.

Through their drive to support the other guilds, examine their practices, identify weaknesses, and remedy corruptions, the Maa-Kep stand out as being less prone to the itinerant wanderings of other Arisen. This is not to imply the Maa-Kep are sedentary. While concentrated primarily in the Nubian kingdoms of East Africa, many Engravers are sent by their artisans and masters to accompany the merets of other Deathless, as a means of studying precisely what it is the other guilds aim to gain through dispersal. Where other mummies take to flights of fancy in the Third Turn, the Maa-Kep follow with purpose. Communication, as regular as it can be, is frequent between the members of this guild. The spread of information is key to their workings.

Not every Maa-Kep is loyal unto Descent however. There are few Bearers of the Engraved who rebelliously decide to strike out alone or in the company of companions from other guilds, yet such mummies do exist. Among the guild there is a certain level of benefit of the doubt given to these Arisen, but this is more a matter of the Maa-Kep convincing themselves no wrongdoing is being perpetrated through the actions of such independent thinkers. In truth, some of the wickedest Deathless criminals are produced from the vigilant journeymen of the Maa-Kep. The dangerous meret known as the Revisionists is said to contain at least one of their number, and it is believed this particular Maa-Kep willfully seeks to degrade and perhaps alter the memories of other Arisen. Most troubling about these rumors is the tacit consent some Bearers of the Engraved believe the Maa-Kep have bestowed upon this group. This shame upon the guild is kept utterly silent as the Maa-Kep believe such issues are internal matters.

Where the Maa-Kep are hit hardest is their cults. Sometimes known as the Masters of Servants, few can both figuratively and literally whip a cult into shape as swiftly as one of the Maa-Kep. Yet as the Third Turn crests, an epoch of devastation begins to hit mortals worldwide in





the form of bubonic plague, the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire, the emancipation of Jewish slaves by the Persians, and the wave of Islam eliminating social class divides wherever it goes. These events are destructive to the close-knit cult structures favored by the Maa-Kep. Some cultists find themselves freed from lives spent at the grindstone; others experience epiphanies of faith and break free from their Arisen masters. More simply die from exposure to the Plague of Justinian. The Maa-Kep, as the guild most acquainted with rearing cults in the ways of ancient Irem, can do nothing to stop this tide of change.

The loss of status as slave-lords would hurt the Maa-Kep more if they weren't already focusing their ire for this calamity on another guild. The Bearers of the Engraved have watched closely the other guilds, and it has not gone unnoticed that the Su-Menent have managed to bear the brunt of disaster with their cults largely intact. The Hall of the Scorpion Dawn's guildmaster has demanded reprisal for what she has announced as a betrayal of all other guilds.

MESEN-NEBU

Among the victims of the Age of the One God, the Mesen-Nebu rank highly. Philosophically an individualistic guild at the best of times, the afflictions of the age contribute further to the migration of Alchemists to territories far and wide. Those Born of Gold do not complain of this to the other guilds, of course. If there's a guild capable of making the best out of a bad situation, it's the Mesen-Nebu.

Those Born of Gold who remain in their ancient strongholds benefit in the Third Turn by being able to observe and influence the flow of invention and innovation passing through the Byzantine Empire. Their citadels are located in Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople — all locations blessed with a prevalence of mortal modernism, whether from the native inhabitants or envoys representing other lands. The Alchemists desire nothing more than to experiment with the embryonic thoughts of philosophers and inventors in these locations, pushing and prodding them in to developing, whether towards wondrous ends such as the pendentive dome of the Hagia Sophia or more monstrous results such as Greek Fire. These creations and more feel the benefit of Mesen-Nebu interference. The guild members remaining in their home territories work together feverishly in an effort to channel Dedwen through the endeavors of humanity, occasionally even bringing these mortal receptacles of change into their service as eminent cultists.

The Plague of Justinian is possibly the worst event to strike the Mesen-Nebu powerbase, since the guild

takes much of its inspiration for alchemy from mortal discoveries. The massive death toll resulting from the pandemic cuts down even the most talented humans indiscriminately, provoking those Born of Gold to attempt to build sanctuaries for precious artists and artisans. While the initial examination of how humans come to cope in the face of such a pestilence is fascinating and worthy of study, the novelty of watching entire town populations die soon wears off for even the most cold-hearted Alchemist. The fact that the gifted are not saved from this arbitrary blight shakes many a Mesen-Nebu who previously believed Dedwen would protect the worthy.

With wards in tow, the Mesen-Nebu are forced to travel farther afield than the Byzantine Empire in pursuit of lands untouched by plague, seeking the Subtle Bazaar as far east as Sindh and as far northward as the wastes occupied by the Tchuds. The shackles of guild propriety are thrown off as the mummies desperately hunt down healthy realms where the greatest craftsmen are less liable to fall afoul of disease.

The Turn of Dusk does not see the Alchemists exempt from persecution by their fellows. The town of Mecca sees the ancient Ka'ba and its holding of sacred Tef-Aabhi vessels desecrated by the faithful of Islam. This is initially seen as an issue for the Father of Idols, until it's theorized the practices of Muhammad and his followers were perhaps encouraged by one of the Mesen-Nebu. A rift between the two guilds begins to grow, only losing its ferocity in areas where both factions can agree the responsibility would surely be on one Alchemist and not his fellows. Such reason is accepted by most, but the Lion-Headed of the Tef-Aabhi have demanded suitable recompense from the Hesmen and Asem of the Mesen-Nebu. Unfortunately for guild relations, an olive branch from the Alchemists has not been forthcoming.

The Mesen-Nebu, even in their dissolved state, are the first guild to volunteer its mummies for an expedition traveling to the far east in pursuit of the cause behind the disruptive darkness that befell the world at the Third Turn's commencement. This act has seen the guild win some converts, many seeing the Alchemists as a guild truly built of entrepreneurs and seekers of the unknown. It's believed the Mesen-Nebu are looking to find the truth, and for some Alchemists this is very much the case. Others among the Mesen-Nebu have more sinister motives in launching this trek. Simply put — whatever was capable of causing the dusk was powerful enough to blot out the power of Azar and the Judges for a lengthy stretch of time. Whatever holds that power first needs to be discovered, then applauded for its enterprise, before finally being cut open so whatever gifts it possesses can be put to better use by those Born of Gold.



SESHA-HEBSU

The Third Turn is one of mixed feelings for the Closed Books. With so many of their number awake and describing to one another by scroll and messenger the changes flourishing across the surface of the world, a ripple of excitement travels from province to province; guildhalls of Scribes are buoyant with the knowledge of faraway lands. With the constancy of war and the dogmatic perseverance of the monotheists however, much of the disseminated knowledge is jaded by religious zeal. The present is simple enough to analyze and judge in most cases, but history? Memory is hard enough to trust during a regular awakening, but with history being purposefully altered to serve faiths infecting people in all civilized lands, what intelligence can truly be trusted?

The Age of the One God pushes the Sessa-Hebsu into new realms and alliances. Always a guild intrigued by the workings of the world, the Scroll of Ages is never as apparent as during this period. Never before has there been so much knowledge lacing different peoples, yet the wheat needs to be sorted from the chaff. Not all information is good information, and those Scribes with vast cults and networks of contacts seek to remedy much of the poisonous word seeming to have spread in the last 500 years. The Bull-Headed and Falcon-Headed of the guild are commonly put to use in this task, their particular focuses assisting in separating truths from falsehoods for the sake of mortals and Arisen alike.

It's the Arisen "falsehoods" the Sessa-Hebsu hunt down more than any other. Chapterhouses of the guild are dissolved from on high by the Kenbet of the region without reason being given, should word spread regarding information that should not be examined. Tablets relating to the Deceived were uncovered in the riverbed of the Aous as it passes through the abandoned Greek town of Apollonia, with the Scribe responsible for their discovery reporting these findings to the Seru of the Attican nome. Unfortunately for the Closed Books, once further Scribes arrived in the town they found blasted earth and no remains of their companion. It is strongly suspected, albeit unvoiced, that a rogue Scribe may be operating within the Sessa-Hebsu of Greece and has delivered the tablets to the Apotheotic Movement of Jove in Rome. The suspicion encourages dread in those Sessa-Hebsu who style themselves as judges over the other guilds due to their supposedly incorruptible natures.

Not restricted to dispersal due to internal corruptions, the Scribes also travel to new lands in search of fresh bureaucratic methods and philosophies of law. The guild is the first to admit its unwavering stance on the Diasporic Code will never change, yet there is much to be both

learned and admonished in the performance of mortal law. Of particular interest is the Visigothic Code of Law and the *sumnah* of Muhammad so readily practiced by his followers. The messages of each and the fervor with which such laws of equality are accepted by the people trouble several Sessa-Hebsu. Other more inventive Scribes make efforts to create amalgams of their own laws with the localized rules set by these influential sovereigns and religious leaders. These Sessa-Hebsu know that to adapt is to survive.


SU-MENENT

Defiant in the face of death and unwavering in service to the Judges, the Su-Menent find themselves at their highest point during the Third Turn. Their loyalty not only to one another but also their deific masters is a trait for which the Shepherds of the Chamber are justly proud. They watch as even the typically stalwart Maa-Kep suffer under the harshness of elements and cannot help but feel the glow of delight in their bosoms. No other guild is able to protect its interests so well.

This begs the question: How? Many guilds wish to know, but the Su-Menent aren't telling. If they revealed their ways, they would likely become victims to aggression the likes of which has not been directed at a guild since the Deceived earned their name.

The truth is many Su-Menent were awoken by their cults several years prior to the rise of Sothis. The Su-Menent used the extra time to plant their agents inside the Orthodox Christian Church, the magi of the Zoroastrians, the papacy of Ostrogothic Rome, and even the priesthoods of the Arians and surviving Gnostics. Come the rise of Muhammad, they even take action to bolster the strength of Islam. These endeavors, while seemingly antithetical to Arisen beliefs, are the desperate yet controlled maneuverings of a guild conscious of the rise of monotheism and keen to benefit from its ascendancy. The Su-Menent offer the faithful blessings, protection, sanctuary from harm, and promotion of their doctrine. They feel they can ride the wave of these new beliefs and come out the other side with a firm influence over each of them.

The Shepherds of the Chamber don't realize their actions are only helping them in the short term, and seem blind to other guilds' interests suffering at the hands of the religions they're supporting. Their exertion of control is working, with results to show for it as the guild claims more vessels than ever before and destroys the aims of Shuankhsen across North Africa; yet the monster they are helping to create is fast escaping their grasp. The Su-Menent hubristically see Islam as yet another cult of personality, identical in form if not in practice to every other grain of religious sand in their hands. Islam, among



others, runs through their fingers and out of their control — if indeed it was ever there in the first place.

Where the other guilds suffer losses due to the devastating events taking place in this era, the Su-Menent and their cults seem to emerge mostly unscathed. The immunity to plague exhibited by some Su-Menent cultists is due to the presence of a powerful relic taken from temple to temple by Wab priests in the years preceding the Third Turn. Transit of the relic was easy, due to the guild being predominantly based on the Nile. As a result of the uter's power, a robust health and freedom from disease lasting years is bestowed upon cultists exposed to it.

The Priests haven't advertised the existence of this relic of the shell for a simple reason; something Lifeless went into its creation. It reeks of the Devourer, yet seems to have been designed for the purpose of healing. Even if it's a Bane Relic the advantages from its use seem to outweigh any penalty. Many Su-Menent are worried about repercussions following the use of this relic on their cults, but the Judges have not punished any who touch the vessel with Descent or madness. The Priests keep its existence a secret from all, despite pressures from other guilds to reveal how they preserved their cults.

The relic has since been buried in a vast Su-Menent tomb beneath desolate Amarna. Disturbingly, by the close of the Third Turn this tomb is emptied and the Arisen guardian gone without a trace or sign of conflict. The guild is left reeling from the possibility of exposure and the lack of an obvious perpetrator, resulting in Shemsu and Sadikh being used en masse to locate the missing vessels and mummy. Only by the close of the Third Turn is a clue located, pointing towards a rogue cult known as the Loyalists of the Final Dynasty.

TEF-ABHI

As the other guilds struggle with internal dissolution and external threats, the Hall of Masons finds itself in a fortuitous place come the arrival of the Third Turn. Opening their eyes for the first time in centuries, Tef-Aabhi say the Lifeweb has never been clearer. Flowing through bodies, buildings, and roads is the precious heka they strive to claim; in this age more visible than ever before.

While an exciting time for the guild, it is not one in which the Masons act with unity or clear purpose. The Tef-Aabhi have never spread farther than in this era, paying little heed to the long-term effects this outward migration may have on guild structure. Commonly found in the Sasanian Empire prior to the Third Turn, several guildmasters among the Father of Idols see Persia as being in the center of the vast patterns lining the world. It is now their task to walk the roads these patterns carve across land and sea. The result is the rapid movement of mummies in all directions,

few paying much care to their weakened cults or the state of vessels left in home territories when confronted with the possibility of new research.

The dividends of such bold actions pay off for many Arisen. Exploration of the world via the collapsed Roman roads reveals exciting new cultures, minds, architecture, and magic worked through the wills of unknowing mortals. Expedition via the Silk Road east leads to even greater understanding and harnessing of heka; the peoples of the City-States of Xiyu and the Gupta Empire know far more about the importance of mathematics and geometry, and its raw effect on the workings of the world than even the Egyptians. Vessels are discovered, along with clues from the Nameless Empire's past, excavated from areas that would have never been touched had the Tef-Aabhi not been so intrepid. Some Masons suspect this trail of history stretching east to be the work of the Deceived, but such theories are not widely espoused.

The Tef-Aabhi are quick to remember their decrees as they pursue these migrant paths, establishing temples to Judges and establishing new and exotic cults from the fascinating people they encounter on their journeys. Some of the shrines erected are things of staggering beauty, but few are simply places of worship. Many double as reservoirs, the hearts of aqueducts, bazaars, workshops, and hospices. The mummies responsible for planning or constructing these temples are genuinely grateful to the humans from whom they learn during this Turn, and so build centers of faith doubling as something of practical purpose.

Not exempt from the punishments of the time, the Tef-Aabhi concede in retrospect having lost much in the wake of the Turn of Dusk. They half-heartedly pursue a similar vendetta to the other guilds against the Su-Menent, but in truth they are more concerned with new ventures and new cults than punishment for the loss of a few mortal lives. This callous attitude leaves them with few new converts from the other guilds or indeed stable cults come the close of the Third Turn. It only occurs to some Masons in the final few minutes of Descent that they no longer have the dedicated consortium of cultists they had of old to wake and keep them abreast of future human developments. For many of these Arisen, the next sleep is long indeed.

THE REVISIONISTS

"He thought each memory recalled must do some violence to its origins. As in a party game. Say the words and pass it on. So be sparing. What you alter in the remembering has yet a reality, known or not."

— Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

As Sothis begins to rise a pall of shade fills the sky. The Sheut-decreed mummies at first consider this a blessing



of the Judges, as both day and night are filled with deep and cloying shadow. Mummies of the other decrees are less convinced, as it becomes known that their great deity's power is stifled by this unnatural darkness. Rather than this waning of Azar weakening his immortal servants, Arisen find their powers uncannily unhindered. The call of the Descent is lessened. The voices of the Judges are quietened. Sekhem pulsates in the sahu of these awake Arisen, yet their god is more distant than ever before.

For a time, some say as long as seven years, this phenomenon persists, the effects far-reaching and destructive to mortals as well as Arisen society. Mummies pursue matters of personal interest unshackled, falling in love in rare instances, seeking ancient enemies in others. While their cults stagnate and suffer under the effects of starvation, war and plague, the Deathless revel freely as never before.

When Earth emerges from the gloom, the limitations on the powers of the Deathless reappear. The majority of those mummies celebrating the dusk succumb to a rapid Descent, but in the hearts of those who remain the inclination to go on in devoted service weakens. A small contingent begins feeling doubt in the omnipotence of their god. The Judges


remain silent on the actions of these mummies, but some merets aggressively take exception to these heretics.

One fanatical faction of Deathless decides that to restore faith in Azar, other mummies must be rid of the memory of Azar's weakness. The faction claims every remembrance of such is like a dagger to the heart of the Arisen and an obstacle to all hopes of rebuilding Irem. Doubt can only serve to fill an eternity of service with a poison of uncertainty. This meret becomes known by its detractors as the Revisionists.

A MEMORY BEST FORGOTTEN

The mortal cultists in service to the Revisionists are used to seek legendary artifacts, fabled to be capable of clearing the mind and redesigning memory. The forcible removal of specific remembrances has only been practiced in myth, yet it is hypothesized that some relics must be capable of the task. One cult finds itself blessedly fortunate in the hunt for such artifacts. The Loyalists of the Final Dynasty, known as such in reference to the relationship its Seshu-Hebsu mistress had with the Ptolemaic Pharaohs of Egypt, discover with great triumph a small cache of engraved slates buried deep within a derelict temple to Har-pa-khered. These stones, seemingly without owners or





protectors to reclaim them, become integral in the practice of memory removal.

Later in the Third Turn the Loyalists own further relics of great power and historical import, albeit not of interest to their solipsistic masters. No few members of the Loyalists take action in interpreting ancient scrolls found at sites similar to the fallen temple. They beseech their mistress to lend her eyes to reading over ancient texts and revealing their secrets. She has done so gladly, understanding that an educated and enlightened cult of followers is far more useful to the aims of the Revisionists than would be a gang of dullards.

Through the wielding of the discovered slates the Revisionists excavate their own minds, leaving certain members of the meret addled. Nevertheless, the experiments show signs of success. They are now intent on selectively amending the memories of those who would seek to spread word of Azar being weak, the Judges being fallible, or Irem being a lost cause. The Revisionists do not advertise their actions for clear reasons, although they know others would thank them if they could see the bigger picture. They're certain that it is remembrance of historical failures holding the Arisen back; in the same breath they justify why the Judges go to such extents to make memories disappear. The Revisionists see themselves as merely assisting their masters.

A MEMORY BEST CREATED

The Revisionists are not idle. Their cults continue to steal artifacts that could either assist the meret in their ambitions of Memory removal or indicate the locations of Arisen involved in the celebration of Azar's perceived weakness. Many of these unknowing Arisen targets are untroubled by their actions during the darkness, but the Revisionists care. They care not to be reminded of the truth, and they are the only ones who can ensure the truth is obliterated over time. In the Third Turn all Arisen are active, and the ritual to remove these memories is both subtle and swift.

The Revisionists have a number of obstacles, one of which is their small number; only seven Revisionists exist with the full knowledge of their intent still intact. The others became sacrifices to experiments with the *Cleared Mind Slates*, but a few of those others remain connected to the meret in more unwitting and perfunctory roles. Additionally, the members of the meret can't agree on which Arisen fit their definition of heretic. This has resulted in the Revisionists sometimes hunting mummies wholly innocent of wrongdoing. After knowingly operating on false information, the Revisionists are still determined to wipe away the memories of the previous decades no matter the target. Better to be safe: They sometimes extending

the Memory removal to centuries, for who knows when the seed of dissent was first planted?

Atop the immortal issues is the free rein given to the Loyalists of the Final Dynasty. These cultists are growing more accustomed to the benevolence of their mistress, in both stealing vessels from other mummies and having more secrets taught to them than perhaps any other cult in history. Their mistress is both wise and gifted, and with a compulsive hunger the Loyalists devour whatever Iremite lore is thrown their way. The cult is now steering their immortal mistress towards Arisen who have never once spoken out against Azar simply because their research has shown these mummies to have great caches of vessels. The cultists gradually accumulate their own sizeable trove of information pointing in the direction of immortality.

The seven active Arisen of the Revisionists are all outwardly seeking the same goal, yet one, Bastuhirkopshef of the Maa-Kep, has more lofty aims. The Artisan uses his Cleared Mind Slate to change more than the memories of Azar's silence. When he explores the minds of others, he finds himself capable of seemingly walking through a forest of memories, each tree with a tale to tell, knowledge to learn, and alliances and rivalries to arbitrarily destroy. He recognizes the true potential in altering memories and slowly drifts from the core tenets of the Revisionists. The meret is now widely dispersed, making the other Revisionists unaware of his schemes.

CLEARED MIND SLATES (TEXT ----)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4

A dozen thin sheaves of slate, each carved with intricate displays of Iremite hieroglyphics. The hieroglyphics are inlaid with a thin layer of tin. The delicate symbols illustrate a pharaoh passing through scenes of farmland, battle, and family to conclude in a temple, where he appears on his knees with a circular object in his hands. The object is then held between two priests.

The illustration is interpreted by the bearers of these slates as a sovereign wishing to forget all aspects of his life, therefore removing his memories and placing them in the protection of his clerics. The Revisionists regularly have their cults attempt to trace more of these relics, but have so far been met with failure, despite the Loyalists of the Final Dynasty eagerly raiding tombs. There is an ongoing assumption that the Sesha-Hebsu once created these for members of the Maa-Kep, so Revisionist cultists are said to be targeting the resting places and caches of Bearers of the Engraved.

Use of the Slates is not looked upon kindly by any Arisen outside of the Revisionists, for the simple reason that it is difficult to control what the user alters or removes of the target's Memory. With that said, it is known that

only those of ironclad willpower and Sekhem can wield the Slates with any proficiency, reducing its effectiveness for the majority.

The Slates have been shown not to work on mortals or Shuankhsen, nor have they appeared capable of revealing, affecting, or altering thoughts regarding anything relating to the Nameless Empire. This does not mean such truths will not eventually become open to manipulation.

To a much lesser extent, the Slates can be used by the bearer to manipulate her own memories. The Revisionists only intend to do so once they are assured all faith in Azar is recovered. They will be the only beings left to enforce this edict, of course.

A rumored opposing relic constructed by the Maa-Kep for the Sessa-Hebsu capable of reversing the effects of the Cleared Mind Slates exists, but to date this artifact has not been discovered.

Power: The Slate must be read aloud by the bearer and then read silently by the target, in that order. The first reading activates the power, with the second reading triggering the effect. Any period of time can have passed between activation and trigger. The user activating the Slate must have a Sekhem rating of at least 6. When the second user triggers the effect, the first user's sahu will collapse to the ground as if truly dead while his spirit inhabits the memories of the target. If the first user is Descended, the effect will take place shortly after next awakening.

The target is unaware of the inhabitation but may involuntarily expel the intruder with a contested Memory roll for every minute inhabited, starting with the moment of initial intrusion. The inhabitation lasts a number of minutes equal to the intruder's maximum Willpower rating. During this time, the intruder finds himself in a surreal landscape composed of the target's memories, most of which are indecipherable. In order to destroy memories of the previous years, a Brawl-based Skill roll is required, as the thoughts are literally destroyed through a metaphysical bludgeoning.

Memories can be viewed and altered through a Crafts-based Skill roll, with only Maa-Kep and Sessa-Hebsu being able to use this particular power. The manipulation of memories requires foreknowledge of the memories with which to interact, but when successful, it allows the intruder to examine and interpret memories the victim may not even recall.

Curse: Whoever created the Cleared Mind Slates had no intention of easily rewarding the mummy activating them. The torment of losing one's spirit in the course of inhabiting the memories of another requires a Sekhem roll, losing one point on a failure or two on a dramatic failure.

The Forming of the Qur'an (as dutifully carved by Asem Dedi, Born of Gold)

Muhammad's followers state they surrender to God and now seek to preserve his words in written form. This Qur'an says the most cosmic things with a sense of intimacy so that power and tenderness come together constantly. It conjures a picture of the afterlife resonating with the traditions of Arabic poetry. There are elements not dissimilar to our beliefs and history. I do however hesitate before crediting any Sessa-Hebsu with involvement in its creation. I am sure their Scroll of Ages would be enriched with this masterwork, but I do not credit those among the Closed Books with such foresight as to have had any manipulative effect on its assembly.

As Muhammad draws support he also draws enemies. The tribesmen of the Bedouin claim that he is no Prophet. They wish to know why he performs no miracles. Moses who is Set performed miracles, they say. The Nazarene who is Osiris performed miracles, they say. Muhammad responds with clarity that the Qur'an is his miracle. It is the embodiment of God, if such a thing could exist. He erects no statues, no murals are made, no idols constructed. The Qur'an is the word and all a man should need. The Bedouin have been affronted by this claim as it does great disgrace to their ancestor worship and idolatry. I understand their frustration. Muhammad's claims are an insult to our faith. Where some among us believe the single deity of Hebrew mythology to be akin to Azar, never were we granted the freedom of expression Muhammad preaches.

The Qur'an is not enough to satisfy the needs of those who define themselves by the gods of their ancestors and totems of their tribe. In Mecca his followers are starved to death, and those without clan protection have been tortured and killed. Muhammad himself no longer has the protection of his tribe, and so leads his remaining caravan to the distant oasis town of Yathrib where he has been invited to act in a Solomonic role for a time. He is still called upon to mediate between tribes who would just as soon have him assassinated as allow him to pass on the street. Such paradox as this is something I must contemplate.

If the intruder is not one of the Maa-Kep or Sessa-Hebsu, he is guaranteed to lose one point of Memory upon using the Slate. The memories lost are not specific and will return naturally with the next awakening.



CULTS

It is difficult for even those mummies with prestigious memory to recall a time when their cults, whether ancient or newly founded, suffered as greatly as during the Turn of Dusk.

THE DARKEST AGE

The historical term “Dark Ages” is commonly used to refer to the latter half of the first millennium, specifically when examining the peoples of mainland Europe. The collapse in peace, communication, and trade following the displacement of the Roman power center leaves parts of the former Empire in a period of severe cultural regression. Those followers of the Arisen in former Roman provinces find themselves cut off from their mortal kin, and in the case of some conspiracies and enterprises, from their immortal lords and masters.

It is a different kind of dark age striking the Eastern Mediterranean region at this time, but not one any less devastating to the cults of the Deathless. In the year 541 CE, the scholars of Antioch vividly describe an event as “a black and bloody shroud wreathing the people of Byzantium.” The first pandemic of a dire illness known as bubonic plague ravages the people of the Byzantine Empire and all those who share its borders. The outbreak slaughters just under half of the inhabitants of Constantinople. Within a year it goes on to kill a full quarter of the human population in all lands surrounding the Mediterranean, not hesitating as it encroaches farther inland, traveling on the backs of the infected and the vermin traveling with them. This merciless contagion spares neither high nor low born, striking in indiscriminate equality as it brings millions of lives to painful ends.

As the Deathless commence their waking, many find their cults completely destroyed and their tombs unprotected. Some Arisen open their eyes for the first time in centuries to find the remains of loyal servants at their emaciated feet. Driven by fear of this unstoppable pandemic, cultists throw themselves into the sepulchers of their immortal masters, begging for some form of protection from the pitiless disease. For reasons unknown to even the mightiest of guildmasters, few of these entreaties are successful. Tales of the Third Turn’s darkness preventing the waking of sleeping Arisen have yet to spread widely. Only those mummies fortunate enough to be awake when the plague first strikes are capable of offering a meager security to their loyal servants. The majority remain oblivious to the cure for this apparently worldwide pestilence, although it is widely spoken by the other guilds how the Su-Menent consistently show ability to protect their cultists despite the lethality of the disease.

Tribal cults are the hardest hit due to the need the disease has for proximity. Few Deathless benefit from having widespread organizations capable of operating autonomously. With the arrival of the Third Turn and the years that follow, conspiracies and enterprises appear with increasing frequency, in response to the severity of what befalls those struck by the eastern malady. The Plague of Justinian shows no sign of slowing in the decades following its arrival, making interdependent cults of traditional structure unfeasible to maintain and far less reliable to the Arisen.

ENLIGHTENED MORTALITY

While each of the three Abrahamic religions has its own path dictated by holy texts and influential mortal representatives, it’s fair to say each has borrowed heavily from historical faiths. The oldest of these recent religions is just over a thousand years old, the newest barely existing as a seedling of a philosophy, yet the stories are the same. The heroes, idols, and prophets are figures similar to those pharaohs of ancient Irem, the Judges, the Shan’iatu, and Azar. For this reason the Deathless have started to pay a substantial amount of attention to monitoring and, where possible, shaping these burgeoning faiths in a world now embracing monotheism.

Religions with one god benefit from organized structures, and in the view of many mummies are perfect for cult emulation. The individual followers of these faiths are already familiar with the tribal configuration of totalitarian rule, which is a form of leadership particularly favored by the Maa-Kep and Mesen-Nebu. The Su-Menent are less drawn to the hierarchy and more intrigued by the wealth of ritual methodology practiced by these faiths.

While surprised by the prevalence of these faiths, the mummies view the followers much as they do the devotees of polytheism. The mortals subscribing to these religions are slaves who appear to willingly adopt the chains of their seemingly benevolent masters with the possibility of reward or damnation always at hand, all so long as they are assured their master prescribes and judges their actions. This method is one the Deathless have been using for millennia.

“Tribal” is not the only cult foundation adopted from Christianity; such a widespread ecclesiastical structure is ripe for conspiracies. The numerous factions within the Christian Church produce perfect secret societies and shadow organizations for the accumulation and dissemination of vessels and information, which of course attracts the Sessa-Hebsu. The Byzantine Empire is also blessed with its ability to provide boltholes across regions inhabited with Christian priests, these becoming indispensable when an Arisen needs to relocate.



Where once an Arisen could pose as an idol and be worshiped as a deity, in a world where only one god exists the power of their master becomes more difficult for cultists to rationalize. This is even the case for some of the most conditioned of cults, who aren't blind to the changes going on in the world. Having a cult convert en masse to a faith with more reward, and importantly, equality, has given several Arisen pause. One conclave of mummies asks: "Rather than hide in the tombs of waning pagan cities, why not ride the wave of monotheism and reap the rewards?"

ONLY ONE JUDGE: AZAR

The Azar Devoted attempt to emulate the dominant monotheistic religions in action as well as verse. This has resulted in less focus on the arcane ways of the guilds and Judges and more attempts to resemble the teachings of the Abrahamic faiths in the name of Azar, eschewing the ideals of the Judges in place of God.

The cult is broad enough to encompass groups of tribal, conspiracy, and enterprise structures. It has many sponsors spread across a wide array of lands and empires, occasionally drawn from closely-bound priesthoods and monastic traditions, sometimes formed from the subtle yet charismatic preachers charged with spreading the faith in pagan lands. The Azar Devoted chop and change the words spoken by true followers of the Abrahamic faiths, keeping them similar enough in tone and feel but referring to God, Muhammad, and Jesus as embodiments of Azar. By the words of the Devoted it is Azar who brought light and life to the world; it is Azar who created laws and morals; it is Azar who holds purview over mortality and immortality. The truly devoted servants of Azar are permitted the gift of life eternal and a world of heavenly respite.

That the Azar Devoted are branches of three different yet powerful religions allows them a certain degree of credibility in their oral and written sermons. Many Devoted have reach that allows them to pull on the resources and goodwill surrounding their parent faith. They divert any accusations of heresy by claiming to be just a minor offshoot of the parent group, almost identical but for some changes here and there due to difference in cultural backgrounds. When pressed, they fall in line with the larger religious body until it is convenient to start speaking the words of Azar once more.

Cults comprising Azar Devoted benefit as if being established as a cross between a conspiracy and an enterprise, with +2 Grasp and +1 Reach. The disadvantage for the Azar Devoted is the immediate aggravated persecution such cultists face when operating openly and meeting those who consider the group antithetical. Such people can largely be summarized as anyone not among the Azar Devoted.

ON THE BACKS OF SLAVES RIDE MASTERS

With the tentative geographical growth of trade and diplomacy to the east, conspiracies, and to a lesser extent enterprises, are represented by Arisen intrigued by the discovery of new lands, peoples, and most importantly, vessels. These Deathless are eager to augment their existing caches and pay tribute to the Judges through the accumulation of artifacts from far-off cultures. Through enterprises such as those used by the Closed Books, ancient Iremite artifacts have been traded back to Arisen from lands as distant as the Gupta Empire on roads and paths perfectly aligned by the workings of the Tef-Aabhi. How these relics reached such faraway territories is a mystery to most Deathless, yet rare is the mummy who does not crave an enigma to explore. An exodus of intrigued Arisen awakening in the Third Turn commences, forming sprawling cults as they spend the following years traveling to exotic destinations.

TRIBAL


The traditional tribal structure is falling out of favor with the onset of the Plague of Justinian. Familial cults are prone to implosion in the face of such horrendous disease, and few Arisen are in any position to protect their mortal followers from the pandemic. Nothing comparable within memory has swept through multiple civilizations with such swift destruction in its wake. It is a dangerous time to have an inwardly-facing cult based near the Mediterranean.

Those Arisen who spend the time forming and maintaining their cults around the tribal peoples of the Bedouin suffer to a lesser degree than others; the climate in which the Bedouin live and the extent to which the desert tribes travel forms a measure of resilience in the face of the plague. The same cannot be said for the strict familial cultures found among the Jewish tribes. Quite often acting as artisans for and traders with people of all cultures, the extent to which the Jewish tribes come into contact with the disease results in a significant erosion of their numbers.

While the Byzantine Empire is severely weakened in population terms by the bubonic plague, the Christian faith remains strong in Europe and across parts of North Africa. Christianity is admired by many Arisen for the grip it's taken on the heart and spirit of so many, but it's far from the traditional religious practice of most cults. The Arisen are more familiar with the polytheistic systems of the past; blending in as idols within these societies was a matter of flexing one's Sekhem and demonstrating a godlike Utterance to the prospective followers. Instant converts would be won, bound to grovel, scrape, and ultimately serve in the presence of such supremacy.

Monotheism presents fresh possibilities but brings new





challenges. Christianity is held in greatest reverence for the ease with which it can be used to control others. This kind of manipulation is a wonderful goal to achieve, but carries difficulties in its attainment. In a faith such as Christianity, playing God is liable to draw the wrong kind of attention. Despite the dangers, a few Arisen with tombs in Egypt attempt to imitate the Christ and successfully draw to their locations huge cults of adoring worshipers. These acts do not escape the notice of the ever-present Shuankhsen, who often shadow the pilgrims journeying in hopes of meeting their maker. The Deathless responsible for these cults are among those to experience the quickest Descents, falling victim to the assorted enemies drawn to their messianic beacons. Many of these mummies do not wake again until the Fourth Turn.

Several Deathless have grasped the idea of representing angelic servitors to the Christian God or pagan deities, this method of tribal structure being a particular niche of Arisen escaped from the Byzantine Empire in the wake of both the plague and the Persians. In strongly pagan regions where sovereigns and priests often proclaim themselves to be the living embodiments of deities, the subterfuge becomes a nigh-perfect cover. The demigod status of an angel is something these particular Arisen feel quite comfortable adopting, as the will of the Judges is being channeled through their actions in the guise of these celestial beings.

As the Third Turn draws on, no few Deathless responsible for these tribal cults appear to be blind to the persecution their followers are often suffering at the hands of Orthodox Christianity. While they undergo great bursts of power and support in the short term, by the time the Descent begins its call, few have strong cults extant.

CONSPIRACY

The Christian Church is far from a unified organization, having expended much in effort and resources over the last five centuries in attempts to crush various heresies. While brutal in their efforts at purging such elements, not all such endeavors have been successful. Both extinct and ongoing heresies intrigue those Arisen who hear of them, inspiring them to seek out Sessa-Hebsu who may have chronicled the appearances, locations, and traditions of such movements. A sect-within-a-sect is a powerful tool to an Arisen who favors cults being built on the foundations of an existing conspiracy.

The Gnostics and pagans have experienced active and relentless attempts at extermination in recent centuries. Through their many splinter groups, the Gnostics help secrete Arisen and their cults without even knowing who their sometime benefactors and other time wards are. The Deathless, in turn, have helped to propagate Gnostic faiths such as that of the Manichaeans in Persia and the Arians in

the Visigothic Kingdom, seeing in these fragmented groups existing societies increasingly being driven underground by the expansive aims of Byzantium. The faithful of these groups ignorantly treat the Deathless as just more wayward followers of a victimized religion, providing a useful conspiracy within which an Arisen could act, and where possible, control the members.

Conspiracies are not restricted to hiding within religious institutions. Sovereignities are constantly imperiled due to the actions of deposed and aspiring dynasties of rulers stimulating rebellions. No kingdom, not even those empires of the Romans and Persians, are so absolute as to prevent monarchs being assassinated, manipulated, or otherwise vanished. Arisen ingratiate themselves within these conspiracies, less intent on removing the targeted ruler or government and more concerned with finding a bulwark of conspirators within which a mummy can shield herself. Many of these rebellions are deliberately set to repeatedly fail due to the workings of the Arisen and the more knowledgeable members of these groups. A conspiracy is less useful when it comes into power, as the motives of the conspirators become more concerned with the running of a city, empire, or faith and less about maintaining the conspiracy.

Ascending to sit a throne or even lurk behind one is not an objective set down by the Judges. While a powerful empire could be used to corral vessels and put down Shuankhsen, it also draws the types of enemies one of the Deathless would rather avoid. Some mummies are arrogant enough to try or perhaps lack the memory of what, due to their interventionist actions, befell Egypt. Feeling a sense of loyalty to the conspiracy surrounding them, these mummies push their cults to succeed and reap the rewards and punishments that follow, no matter how transient those spoils may be.

ENTERPRISE

According to Justinian, Pax Romana is still in force. Trade is still encouraged among the former principalities of the Roman Empire; peace and Roman culture is endorsed across all regions. These days, Pax Romana is largely ignored by the splintered kingdoms of Europe. There are few outposts or armies remaining to enforce the concept of freedom to trade; merchant caravans benefit little from the guarantee of safety anywhere west of the empire's borders. This leaves the last five centuries' main foundation for enterprise cults nearly shattered, the Mesen-Nebu and Tef-Aabhi suffering the most.

Those Born of Gold cultists bore fruitful and extravagant enterprises of great renown during the height of the Roman Empire, trafficking and appropriating artifacts as far as Gaul and the British Isles in the pursuit of precious



Dedwen. These men and women were seen as pioneers and entrepreneurs in dangerous lands, being much lauded for their bravery and intellect.

The Father of Idols meanwhile built prominent artisan cults permeating great towns across the empire. The guild received immense strength from the placement of its servants and their manipulation of both vessels and the trading roads. If a mummy didn't want a tomb robber to escape into another province, a message sent to a Tef-Aabhi cult was a guarantee the mummy's possessions would be secured and the thief punished — all for a price, of course.

With the collapse of Pax Romana, both guilds commence the extraction of their most useful followers, redirecting them to the Silk Road. While some segments of these cults remain in Europe and others travel south into Africa, the majority are positioned to take advantage of the increase in trades of silk, spices, and more exotic wares from the east.

Under the reign of Justinian, the Jews continue to experience persecution. The Justinian Code decrees Jews are not to be represented as citizens of equal measure to Christians. The Jews are forbidden from owning slaves under penalty of death, but some still do. They suffer the lot of a subordinate religion in an empire controlled by Christians, but the persistence with which the Jews circumvent these laws and flourish in Byzantine lands and those farther afield astonishes those Arisen who pay close attention. These Deathless convert many of their former cults comprised of Jewish families and tribes into an enterprise structure, using the shared faith and cultural customs of the cultists as a way of communicating wealth and trade across multiple empires. By spreading their cultists far and wide yet keeping them dependent on one another due to societal ostracism and persecution, a tribal-enterprise hybrid of a cult structure becomes appealing to those Arisen with the capacity to maintain such a sprawling beast.

The constant tumult of war would seem to be crippling to an enterprise cult, but this is not necessarily the case. All armies require feeding, clothing, entertainment, weapons, and armor. An enterprise can be constructed in response to any of these needs if the right cultists exist and there's an Arisen with sufficient interest in traveling in the wake of soldiers. As many armies pillage the towns they besiege, no small number of Arisen have formed cults in an effort to protect and deliver any vessels discovered by the mortal raiders. The Su-Menent, in typically morbid fashion, command cults to rob the tombs of mortal rulers and scholars while operating as a part of the invading armies. It is not unknown for cults to clash with one another, as a result of one Arisen sponsor being based in Persepolis while another dwells in Constantinople.

THE ISLAMIC EFFECT

Not one of the Deathless awakening for the Third Turn anticipates the rise of Islam and the extraordinary effects following its founding.

A man who is both merchant and shepherd in the caravan town of Mecca becomes known as al-Amin “the faithful” and al-Sadiq “the trustworthy” due to his fascination with the religions of the region and his skill in mediating tribal conflicts. During a pilgrimage to the mountains he is visited by a being he believes to be an angel. The man listens to all the angel has to say, reciting what he is told as the word of God, to ultimately be recorded in writing as the holy Qur'an. The words of Allah, spoken by this man and recorded by scribes, go on to form the religion of Islam.

This man is Muhammad.


The actions for which Muhammad is most widely known don't take place until near the tail end of the Sothic Turn, yet in historical terms the foundation of Islam and its rapid growth are both revolutionary and unparalleled, astounding and drawing the ire of those Deathless still awake to witness it. Islam can be regarded as one of humanity's grandest achievements in size and impact. It becomes a worldwide power founded simply on faith and spiritual revolution that goes on to shake three continents and launch an empire.

It would be easy for the Deathless to strongly identify with the rapidly expanding wave of Islam and recall the similar growth of the Nameless Empire. Islam, however, does this at a quicker pace and with less subjugation of the conquered. Many among the Jewish and Christian faith welcome the liberation from tribal and Sasanian rule, being given the right by Islam to practice their faiths without persecution. Muhammad spreads a message of social justice at a time of increasing separation of classes, claiming all are equal no matter their heritage, race, or gender.

This talk of equality greatly upsets many among the Maa-Kep and the Mesen-Nebu who have historically been great supporters of the class divide. There are those who lead and those who follow. Someone must drive the slaves and put order to lesser peoples. These guilds find themselves driving cultists within the Bedouin into acts of violence and dominance against the Muslims. If anything, these actions serve to make martyrs of the fallen and make the point apparent to those Arabs of Islamic persuasion that hierarchical culture is a form of tyranny from which they wish to escape.

The words of Muhammad have the suppleness and great depth of the pre-Islamic poems responsible for giving the people of Arabia such an ear for this expression, resulting in their rapid spread. Many among the Sesha-Hebsu are envious of Muhammad's gift with words and conviction





to back them, they along with their peers recalling the subjugation of those who would not bend to the tyranny of the Judges and the Shan'iatu. Equally, the Closed Books look with unguarded jealousy upon the power of the Qur'an and the words written within. This book seems to sit apart of the Scroll of Ages, yet it has a power to drive many people. A small number of the Closed Books take action to have cultists infiltrate the budding Islamic faith with intent to bastardize the Qur'an with their own litany, with few attempts meeting any kind of fruition.

Each Bedouin clan has different gods, with totems kept in the caravan town of Mecca. Many such effigies are created or claimed by the Tef-Aabhi and placed under the stewardship of the resident Arisen of Mecca, only to be destroyed under the orders of Muhammad once he and his forces take the town from the various animist tribes. This infuriates a great number of the Father of Idols, yet the Masons waste no time in destroying the Amkhata that appear in and around Mecca in the following days. They take no direct action against the followers of Islam,

The Power of the Word (as inscribed by Asem Dedi, Hesmen of Mecca)

Muhammad's words work still, as the intractably warring tribes have called a great peace in Yathrib. His great task of bringing together those divergent groups has succeeded in creating a harmonious people. Muhammad has offered a vision of solidarity, and did not challenge the beliefs of other faiths. This is the first time in my lengthy existence that I have seen a religion act so.

Islam, for that is the name the faith has been given, treats Jews and Christians as people of the Book. They say God has revealed his work to mankind many times, to Moses who is Set and the Nazarene, for example, but each time people went astray. In Yathrib the multiple faiths pray together as a community. The result is something powerful, even watching as a non-believer.

The war between the Bedouin and the Muslims commenced. Though Muhammad's people prepared, they were outnumbered and outmatched. Their force totaled 313 by the most optimistic of accounts. The warriors and soldiers they needed were instead old men and young boys with improvised weaponry. The tribes assembled in Mecca were over a thousand strong.

The Muslims faced their own tribes; brother fighting brother, son fighting father. Yet they came armed with a powerful weapon: faith. They fought with the confidence that they were guided by God's will. They fought three bloody battles, and at one point Muhammad's faithful were on the edge of annihilation. As word of the fighting spread, other Bedouin tribes saw the divine providence in the Prophet's scant victories. One by one the people of the desert joined his side, the tide turning against the Bedouins in Mecca. Mecca fell to siege after one horrendous month of constant bloodshed. I observed all as the terrified people braced for the onslaught. The vanquished knew the terrible fate awaiting them. Men would be killed, the women and children sold into slavery. This has been the way of war since ancient Irem, the repercussions of such conflict being a rare memory that I wish could be removed from my mind.

When Muhammad arrived in Mecca he did not carry out a bloody revenge. He instead embraced the Meccans who had been attempting to destroy him. Within the founding of this religion one finds episodes of great munificence and extraordinary acts of compassion and mercy. Not all of Mecca escaped his wrath however; his troops circled the Ka'ba seven times before Muhammad raised his staff, signaling to all the end of pagan worship. The tribal gods of his peoples' ancestors were smashed into dust through a grand act of iconoclasm. I could have interceded on behalf of the Father of Idols and their precious sculptures, yet I chose not to do so, bearing the repercussions instantly.

I suspect this is just the beginning. Islam represents a breaking from the past and the creation of a powerful new force. One after another, the tribes will be united under its banner. There will be created a worldwide community of faith, united under an extraordinary force of history, personality, and conviction.

As my Descent commences I realize my cult is no more. I am aware I recovered no vessels, and perhaps saw some destroyed without attempting to intervene. I know I have spent an entire Turn of the Sothic Wheel in examination of one mortal man and his equally mortal followers.

I have examined every memory of every time I have had the joy to put my feet upon this bountiful land the Judges have provided. This Turn, spent in quiet observation of this one man, is without doubt the one most well spent.



deciding on the long view typically adopted by this guild. Popular Tef-Aabhi thought is that with the erosion of the Bedouin and their trade routes, the Levant will become geometrically weaker and the Muslims will naturally be replaced with a resurgence of their predecessors. If not, then perhaps the Muslims will offer something more similar to the Nameless Empire than what was produced by the disparate tribes of the desert.

The Su-Menent suffer due to the rise of Islam. The guild has always found it is difficult to discuss gods without reifying them in some way. This is how the Shepherds of the Shell have often drawn cults to their banner and indeed coerced Arisen to convert to their guild. As Priests they advertize a channel of communication with spirits and the Judges, the appearances of these figures being spoken through prayer and ritual. The Qur'an avoids this conceit by never providing a consistent image of God. As more people turn to Islam and start to believe the word of the Qur'an, listening to the idea of direct communion rather than requiring a priest in order to reach God, the Su-Menent find their ceremonial daggers blunted.

The rise of Christianity is bad enough for the priesthood of Irem, but at least the emerging Christians operate with an (at times) parasitic priesthood into which adept mummies can ingratiate themselves. The idea of Islam being a religion essentially free from clergy may hold appeal to the mortals, but puts the Su-Menent on the back foot.

The ideas espoused by Islam are enough to make many Arisen form merets with intent to destroy the religion before it gains ground, intending to hammer it into nothing if its mortal enemies do not do so beforehand. Ultimately, though, Islam spreads faster than the Deathless can anticipate. Muhammad dies and the religion seems inclined to civil war, yet still expands dramatically within the course of decades. For beings capable of operating only as long as their Judges require, each awakening has the mummies seeing the Muslims with more ground and more faithful.

Islam also sees some protection from members of the guilds who identify certain similarities to their own belief structures. These Arisen seek to undermine their more destructive brethren. The proclamation by Muhammad of an afterlife of reward for the just and eternal damnation for the unjust appalls the Bedouin but strikes a chord with several Deathless. The apocalyptic imagery evoked by the Qur'an — of mountains crumbling and the skies being rolled up like scrolls — brings to mind dark memories for the Arisen. They understand the call for responsibility spoken by this mortal and his god.

The patience of the Tef-Aabhi pays off. In many cases the Muslims transform or improve their conquered lands. They build upon Roman ruins in the land that becomes Tunisia, constructing water purification systems to separate fresh water from sediments. The clean, fresh water flows into larger basins where it's distributed by pipes to the city. Even to the Deathless, this is something wholly innovative. All over the Arab Empire the Father of Idols see schemes for bringing water from the mountains to the plains, resurrecting old stone aqueducts to irrigate fields. Agriculture flourishes and wheat grows in the Mediterranean region for the first time in centuries.

To their peers the Tef-Aabhi say Islam is the future of the region and should not be contested, but the truth is even they are shaken by the speed at which Islam is conveyed. Empires fall. Cultures change. People diversify. Wars begin with new foes and new borders. Trade burgeons once more. All this within the course of one century.

The realization that this type of revolution could happen anywhere at any time provokes great change in the Arisen who take heed. From this point on, cults are called upon to summon their masters and mistresses with greater frequency than ever before, and changes in mortal civilization are studied more acutely by the Deathless.

Mummies have realized by the conclusion of the Third Turn that this is no longer their world.





CHAPTER FOUR

REMINISCING THE WHEEL

I watched the spinning stars, grateful, sad and proud, as only a man who has outlived his destiny and realizes he might yet forge himself another, can be.

— Roger Zelazny, *Isle of the Dead*

Time marches endlessly on, its currents dragging the Arisen ever forward, briefly depositing them on isles of Descents before overwhelming them once more, never pausing, except for the brief interludes that are the Sothic Turns.

These periods of time, governed by the brightest star in the night sky, Sirius, govern the flooding of the eternal river of time, just as the star, once known as Sothis, helped the priests of ancient Egypt predict the floods of the Nile. The Sothic Turn marks the flood of life, the rebirth of souls, and the beginning and end of each cycle of the Rite of Return.

As a Storyteller, ultimately the significance of the Sothic Turn lies in your hands. You decide what is myth and legend among the Arisen and their cults, and what is inexorable truth. The potential power of the Sothic Turn has no limits — even time and space, the reality of existence, can be changed.

THE SOTHIC WHEEL

Akhenet clutched the shoulder of the high priestess. What was her name? Tamera? Talisa? Galina? With each step, her words changed from Aramaic to Greek to English and back. How long had he known her?

“Wise One, you spoke to us of this event, and we have kept your message dutifully.”

She pressed an envelope into his hand, sealed with a wax scarab.

His hand trembled. “What does it say?”

She smiled across multiple centuries. “I don’t know. The envelope has survived well enough that I haven’t opened it. You instructed us to never read or copy it unless absolutely necessary. My grandmother was the last one to copy the message. All I know is that you should open it here, in your tomb, upon your rise at this Sothic Turn.”

Sothis.

The word blazed in Akhenet’s mind, burning as brightly as the star which shone in the night skies of Irem so long ago. Dim memories filtered through the haze in his mind. The cycle had completed once more. Everything had changed, and nothing had changed.

This was the time of the Rite of Return. Again.

There was so much more that he needed to know, so much more that he needed to remember, but it was all lost and forgotten.

He looked down at the envelope.

It weighed so little. What did it contain? Perhaps a single scrap of paper. How could that help?

“Please open it,” the priestess asked, just as her predecessors had in the times before.

He opened the envelope and drew out a single sheet of folded vellum. Carefully unfolding it, he saw two words written in Iremite.

“Look up.”

He gazed up at the ceiling of his tomb, uncertain of what he would see. The arches and curves of the ceiling held inlaid jewels. They were the stars.

Memories flooded back as the patterns spoke to him. The stars sang of his memories and of times lost. His vision cleared and he knew that the past, the present, and the future were as one.

Now it was time to act, just as it had been before and would be again.

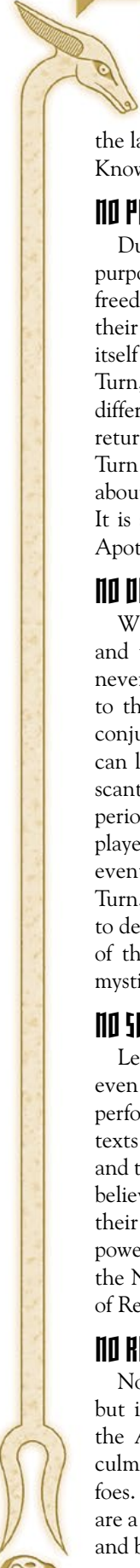

If the fabric of a mummy’s existence were a landscape, it would be like the shifting sands of the desert; never the same, always moving and shifting, with few constants, such as the sun and the sand, the dryness, but never the same shape and form. While the Arisen spend most of their Descents caught in their purposes, serving the will of the Judges, the Sothic Turns provide them with the one time that everything is different.

KEYS TO THE TURN

All Descents are unique in some form or fashion, but five aspects make the Sothic Turns in particular different from all other periods of Descent.

NO EXCEPTIONS

During a Sothic Turn, all Deathless rise, separated only by a short arc of years. For good or ill, this is the only time that the Arisen can gather reliably with large numbers of their peers. They may reminisce about lost Irem, renew old friendships, or settle disagreements, assuming Memory returns in time. Guilds summon their members from across



the lands to plan for the next cycle, and the time between. Knowledge is shared, goals are set, and vanities inflamed.

NO PURPOSE

During Sothic Descent, the Arisen are not tied to a first purpose, as they are when summoned. This is a time of freedom from cultic duties, when mummies may pursue their own agendas and the theme of self-discovery explores itself most readily. When a mummy rises during a Sothic Turn, she quickly becomes aware that this life cycle is different from others. As the first twinges of Memory return, the absence of a purpose strikes her. The Sothic Turn is a time of clarity, when the Arisen can think clearly about their own desires without the conflict of purpose. It is also the time when the Arisen most often dream of Apotheosis, whether acting on it or not.

NO DEADLINE

While it's true that a Sothic Descent is still a Descent, and thus, there is still a "countdown," that countdown never reaches zero. The no-deadline rule applies also to the arc of the Turn, itself; the sweep of the mystical conjunction that causes all mummies to rise unsummoned can last as long as the Storyteller requires, whether it's a scant handful of years or, as assumed by way of default, a period of a handful of decades. In the latter case, this gives players and Storytellers the freedom to stage scenes and events on either side of the date given as the date of the Turn. Indeed, it's even largely up to Storyteller discretion to determine whether that given date represents the onset of the Turn's multi-year period or its midway-point and mystical zenith.

NO SUBSTITUTE

Legends among the Arisen hold that certain rituals, and even Affinities and Utterances, can only be performed (or performed to peak effect) during the Sothic Turns. Ancient texts claim that the doors between the worlds of the living and the dead swing open during convergence, while others believe that the watchful eyes of the gods of Irem turn their attention back to the world. There is an undeniable power in the cycle of the stars, and certainly the lords of the Nameless Empire could only have performed the Rite of Return during the ascension of Sothis.

NO RESPITE

Not only do the Arisen return during a Sothic Turn, but it's a time of activity for their enemies, too. Just as the Arisen have the opportunity to gather and see the culmination of over a millennium of planning, so do their foes. Even among the mummies who believe the Deceived are a myth, there is a sense of dread that they may still exist and be plotting something on a grand and cosmic scale. As

for the Shuankhsen, there is no doubt as to their existence or their ever-growing numbers. No mummy or her cult is safe during the Sothic Turn. In truth, this is perhaps the most dangerous of all Descents for one of the Arisen.

THE DISCIPLES OF THE WHEEL

In an existence where each awakening brings a different world and a different purpose, where memories are fleeting and ephemeral, the one certainty is that the Sothic Turn will come. This has become a pillar of faith, a creed and a mantra for some Arisen. It is their absolute among lifetimes of uncertainties.

The Sessa-Hebsu claim to have been the first to understand the cycle of the Sothic Turns. They say that the secrets of the cosmic cycles were revealed to them in Babylonia and Assyria. The Tef-Aabhi make claims to discovering the secrets of the Sothic Turns through ancient observatories. The Su-Menent point out that the Sothic Turns were known in Irem, long before the Rite of Return.

Regardless of guild, those who have chosen to study and dedicate themselves to the Sothic cycles call themselves the Disciples of the Wheel. The Disciples of the Wheel strive to use the power of the Sothic cycle to effectively master the Rite of Return. Some also believe that the path to Apotheosis can only be found in the study of the cycle. All Disciples believe the magic of the Rite is inherently tied to the movement of the heavens and the progression of the stars.

They have succeeded.

By using their knowledge, they have found ways to retain their Sekhem and even increase their Memory. Some are able to predict the future and see the past. They comprehend the patterns of their Descents better than others. They come to see themselves no longer as pawns or mere servants of the Judges, but as voyagers through time, with destinies controlled by the stars.

Such heretical beliefs have a price, naturally. Other Arisen, particularly the Su-Menent, hunt down Disciples of the Wheel and try to put an end to their heresies, believing that doing so serves Duat's will. Because of this, the Disciples of the Wheel have become secretive, preferring as a whole to avoid guild politics or dealing with other Arisen who do not share their beliefs.

The Disciples have another problem they must overcome: how to retain their knowledge through the fog of many Descents. Many Disciples of the Wheel place their trust in their cults. High priests and priestesses keep the secret lore and pass it on from generation to generation. Humans, however, are eminently fallible. Some decide on their own that the secret knowledge must be destroyed, as it does not serve the Judges. Some die before they pass it on, causing precious lore to be lost. Still others reinterpret elements, and upon rising, it becomes impossible for a



mummy to discern truth from fiction. Finally, there are the most dangerous cult members, who seek to use the knowledge for themselves, some even going so far as to blackmail or extort the Arisen, or barter away secrets without realizing their significance.

Fortunately, the Arisen have other ways to preserve information than to trust the leaders of their cults. The Tef-Aabhi hide secrets in the very structure of their tombs. What may appear to the unenlightened as a ceiling painted as the night sky often holds messages, portents, and reminders for a newly awakened Arisen. Mathematical formulae may be hidden in the measurements of the tomb, both in its dimensions and its angles.

The Sessa-Hebsu who learn of their Tef-Aabhi brethren's work choose to hide cartouches, glyphs, and symbols in tomb art and architecture. Mesen-Nebu do the same, using beautiful works of art and precisely counted ancient coins, which most would view only as symbols of their past wealth, not realizing that the true significance lay in the years the coins were minted. The Maa-Kep have an easier time than most, as they may forge amulets containing secret messages. There are few Disciples of the Wheel among the Su-Menent, but it is believed that those among them who study the cycles hide their secrets in the bones of the dead.

Beyond these methods, some Disciples of the Wheel possess Affinities that allow them to send visions into the future.

Dedication to the Sothic Wheel varies. Some Arisen merely dabble in the study, seeing it more as a mystically substantive hobby. Others believe there is true power in the study of the heavens, and try to tap into it to increase their own might or perhaps even seek Apotheosis. Finally, a few have turned to actively worshiping the stars, believing that their movements connect them to Fate itself, or to gods and powers beyond those of Duat.

MERIT: DISCIPLE OF THE WHEEL

Prerequisite: Arisen. This Merit is available to the Deceived, as well, but they can never acquire more than three dots (●●●) in it.

Effect: Any Deathless can choose to be a Disciple of the Wheel. Buying the first dot represents having made a true connection with both the cycle of Sothis and at least one other Disciple.

- Your character may use her connection to receive aid from or access to the Disciples in a manner similar to Guild Status, with her rating in this Merit serving as the degree of that status. This may include having an Arisen perform an Affinity on her behalf, or impart knowledge about the past or the future, or the like. Note that this relationship is a two-way street.

- As one dot, but your character may use experience to learn the Eye of Radiance Utterance (and any additional Utterances the Storyteller decides are the shared purview of the Disciples).
- Your character has learned much through her connection to the Disciples. After she spends a minute (two turns minimum) contemplating the stars, you may roll her rating in this Merit. If the roll is successful, you can turn one success into an exceptional success (or add two dice to any roll that tallies points of success) any time during the rest of the scene or scene to follow. Should you fail the Merit roll, there is a 50/50 chance that the next roll you fail will become a dramatic failure, instead. (Roll one die or flip a coin.) If your first failure does not become a dramatic failure, your character is safe from it for the rest of the scene. A Disciple can only call upon this ability once per chapter, and if she can't actually look at the sky at any point during the scene (through a window is acceptable), the Merit roll suffers a -1 penalty.
- As above, but your character is a well-respected member of the Disciples. She may call in favors from other believers and, at the Storyteller's discretion, receive random visions of the past. Additionally, she is able to remember specific details of her lives from all four Sothic Turns, regardless of her Memory score.
- Your character is a high priest in the Disciples of the Wheel. She gains all prior benefits listed under this Merit. In addition, you may now use her rating in this Merit instead of her Memory rating whenever you make a Memory roll. You may do this once per chapter.

NEW UTTERANCE: EYE OF RADIANCE

Prerequisite: Disciple of the Wheel (●●+)

Tier 1: Sheut (●, Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ab (●●●, Subtle); **Tier 3:** Ren (●●●●●, Cosmic, Curse, Epic)

Tier 1: The Disciple of the Wheel has learned to study subtle signs, noting traits that correlate with the stars, actions which match the predictions of the heavens. By observing one of the Arisen for three full turns, he is able to accurately assess that Arisen's defining Pillar, without need for a roll. In addition, if his player further succeeds on a Wits + (Empathy or Occult) + Sheut roll (resisted by the target's Sekhem), he also discerns both the number of dots in that defining Pillar and the amount/level of Sekhem that the target Arisen possesses in that moment.

Tier 2: By contemplating the movements of the stars, the Disciple of the Wheel can envision the past of an Arisen he can see. This Utterance can reveal actions the





Cosmic Utterances

As seen in the Eye of Radiance Utterance, this book introduces a new Utterance keyword into the game: **Cosmic**. In setting terms, cosmic Utterances are where things get *really* weird, particularly with regard to messing with such trivial concerns as that which sci-fi fans like to call the “space-time continuum.” To be clear, **Mummy** isn't a game *about* time travel and related issues, but its themes and metaphysics certainly do allow for those issues to be used as narrative devices, and that is most often where the Cosmic keyword comes in.

For starters, cosmic Utterances are pretty much always **third-tier** unleashings. Messing with things like space and time isn't just dangerous, but difficult to do. (Most cosmic Utterances will also carry the Epic keyword, but that rightly varies from Utterance to Utterance.) Any tier with the Cosmic keyword can be accessed by mummies who have attained Apotheosis, regardless of the fact that it's a third-tier spell, provided their Memory doesn't fall so low that it couldn't access a tier as Sekhem (i.e., Memory 3 or 4, depending on the Utterance). Cosmic Utterances tend not to play well together, which means trying to unleash additional cosmic Utterances amid the effects of an existing one is bound to lead to interesting and often destructive consequences.

In the world of **Mummy**, time travel and related events effectively rewrite the Scroll of Ages. Such magic is possible, but Storytellers must be careful in adjudicating it in-game: As a rule, assume a form of *laissez faire* nodification, where something that might have been changed by actions taken in the past won't come into play until referred to directly *in* play. Targets will gradually recall the changes but remember the old ones. Mortals will eventually forget the way things were, and the Arisen might remember, but the contradictions might constitute a direct assault on Memory – one of the few things capable of doing so. Finally, as general rules: No cosmic Utterance messes with the pace of Sekhem, and any cosmic Utterance in effect ends when the user's Descent does.

subject took during the last Sothic Turn, and possibly even more distant Sothic Turns. To the Disciple, this may give insights into that Arisen's actions or motivations, but to the subject, it can provide the fuel necessary to help regain lost Memory. A Disciple may not use this spell on himself, and he may only unleash it after one of the two mummies involved (himself or his target) loses Sekhem during a Descent. The Disciple rolls the higher of his Memory or Ab rating. If the subject Arisen has ever lost Memory, and presently sits at a rating lower than his experience-bought normal rating, success on the roll allows the subject to roll the higher of his *own* Memory or Ab. Success on the second roll restores one dot of lost Memory. If the subject currently holds unspent Sebayt experience, that mummy's player (or Storyteller, if an NPC) can roll both Memory *and* Ab; if either roll results in success, the Memory dot is restored. If the subject Arisen wouldn't benefit from such a recovery (usually by being at maximum normal Memory), success on the first roll instead bestows one Sebayt experience point that lasts until the end of the subject's current Descent; if unspent when the subject returns to death, it vanishes. This tier does not work on Shuankhsen or Deceived at all, and it can only affect a given Arisen, for good or ill, once per Descent.

Tier 3: This tier allows the Arisen to not just see beyond the veil of time to other Sothic Turns, but to step *through* it. She may return to the past and re-experience one of her Sothic Descents again, although it seems to her as if her decisions are new. She may take as many Arisen (only) with her as she has dots of Ren. When the Arisen return to a previous Sothic Turn, they seem to fade from the present day, reappearing at a random point in the near future; perhaps a minute, perhaps a day or more after fading. Theoretically, this spell can be used as an escape method, if a dangerous one. The Arisen do seem to be able to change and affect the past, but whether this is real or simply perception is the subject of debate (and Storyteller discretion; see sidebar).

THE FOURTH TURN

The First Sothic Turn gave the Arisen their first chance to realize what they had become. It was a time when guilds formed and mummy society began in earnest. The Second Turn allowed the Arisen to realize the power that they wielded, to be like unto gods upon the earth. The Third Sothic Turn brought them back down, as the enemies they faced wielded more knowledge.

With the current Sothic Turn, the ascension of humanity is unmistakable. The descendants of the ancient world now fly through the heavens and have the power to destroy cities. The secrets of life have given themselves up and new

Sothic Stages of Grief

The universally recognized stages of grief from Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' *On Death and Dying* (published in 1969), are Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Thematically, these can be taken and applied to the Sothic Turns:

In the First Sothic Turn, the Arisen are still coming to grips with what they've become. For most, the change in the nature of their existences, the realization that they have become eternal servants of the Judges, has not struck them.

By the Second Turn, they can see the decline of Egypt and the weaknesses and failures of humanity. They are also aware of how the great monuments of the First Sothic Turn have fallen into ruin. Anger is an appropriate response to the direction of the world.


When the Third Turn comes to pass, the balance of power has shifted again. The world population has grown and humans are starting to reshape the landscape. The works of the mummies, the careful plans that they may have made, have been disrupted. The time for Bargaining with the Judges and one another to find ways to preserve what they can between Descents takes place.

The Fourth Turn, then, becomes the time of Depression. Nothing changed for the good. The cycles continue ever onward. The mummies lose their memories, regain their memories as they fulfill their purposes and lose their Sekhem, to sleep again until the cycle returns. Apotheosis is a distant dream, and now, as technology and population increase at a rate that seems unimaginable, the mighty Arisen find their powers to be far less effective to direct change on a grand scale. Events happen at speeds never before seen in history, and the sleep between Descents seems longer and longer compared to the change.

Perhaps the Fifth Turn will mark a time of Acceptance, but some Arisen may achieve that even in the Fourth Turn. Regardless, the stages of grief make a good thematic structure on which to base stories and chronicles, and even character development among NPCs.

mechanical creations obey the will of their creators. In a first-world city, people have libraries of knowledge at their fingertips. They live in homes with amenities that would make the mightiest of kings sick with desire.

Some Arisen fear that there may be a finite number of Sothic Turns, with the most common guess being seven of



them. If this is so, the Fourth Turn is the middle Turn, when the power of mummies is balanced by the power of humanity. As technology increases, the Arisen may find themselves helpless to even defend themselves against humans and their mechanical servants. It is possible that they may yet be enslaved not just in the Duat, but in the world of the living.

THEMES

A number of themes find themselves at work (or potentially at work, depending on the needs of a chronicle) during the Fourth and currently-ongoing Sothic Turn.

DESPAIR

One of the major themes of the latest Sothic Turn is the sense that mummies are losing their power. Modern technology allows ordinary people in first-world countries to perform actions that would have been considered magic in the last Sothic Turn. The global population is at a scale unlike anything that the Arisen can comprehend. The great cities of the past are insignificant in comparison to the present day. Even with the vast power of their Utterances and Affinities, mummies awaken only to wonder how they can survive in the shifting world. Will anything that they knew last through the ages? As even the pyramids of Egypt crumble from the effects of modern pollution, it seems that nothing they have known will survive.

HOPE

This Sothic Turn is a time of enlightenment and knowledge. Crimes and corruption that would have been commonplace in the past are ferreted out and revealed to millions of people. Knowledge that was lost is rediscovered and shared. Even as those who serve the Judges despair, many Arisen believe that in an age of human rights concerns, the path to Apotheosis must be closer than ever.

SELF-REALIZATION

Four times the Sothic Cycle has occurred, and it will surely come again. As the Arisen regain their Memory, they must realize that this is their existence. They are bound to serve the Judges through all eternity. No matter how they try, they never manage to change their station. They are doomed to continue to cycle through Descents. Knowing that they cannot deny what they are, how do they move toward accepting their fates? How do they preserve their individuality and keep a connection to the people that they once were? How do they find meaning when they will not remember themselves when they wake? (In many ways, there are parallels between the lives of mummies and the experiences of Alzheimer's patients. For some real-world horror, study up on *those* experiences.)

THE GUILDS

How do the Five Guilds interact with the rising of the Sothic eye and the permutations of Fate coming to the fore? The following section provides some possible answers.

SESHA-HEBSU

The Information Age has come. The power of the Word is undeniable during this period, with words traveling across the entire world within hours or even minutes, instead of centuries. The power of words has been unleashed on a scale that only the most imaginative of the Sessa-Hebsu could have dreamt of. Only the creation of the printing press has impacted the Sessa-Hebsu so profoundly, and this is the first Sothic Turn since that event.

Guild leaders across the world are struggling to adjust and adapt. There has been no time to prepare. Mummies who hoped to discuss mass printing with their peers in previous Descents now find their own notes to themselves hopelessly dated. Other Sessa-Hebsu are taking full advantage of the opportunity to scan ancient documents and publish secret lore. Imagine a single word infused with Sekhem duplicated a million times and sent around the world in mere moments. What could be achieved?

As awareness dawns among the members of the Sessa-Hebsu of the implications that the Internet age has for them, guild members have become torn between excitement and fear. Some are embracing the new technology while others prepare to defend against it, keeping their lore offline where it cannot be seen by the wrong eyes.

Conversations and chat rooms are allowing groups of guild members to come together outside the structure of the guild and engage in planned or impromptu conversations about words and relics. With the collected lore of an entire world at the fingertips of their cult members, many of the Sessa-Hebsu believe that it is possible for the first time to collect the knowledge and memory needed to unravel many of the secrets of the Rite of Return and their own existences in a single Descent, this Descent, this Sothic Turn.

The mysteries are unraveling, and the race against time has begun.

TEF-ABHI

The Tef-Aabhi recognize advances in engineering that have occurred, but unlike the Sessa-Hebsu, they don't share quite the enthusiasm about the technological advances. All the geomantic architecture that they have tried to create continually has its flows altered by the speed of human construction. New skyscrapers alter the flow of Sekhem, along with monuments and rerouted streets. Neighborhoods keep changing, and historical sites become sites of new construction.



The dream of creating a new Irem seems closest to fruition in Washington, D.C., but if that should fail, many of the Tef-Aabhi aren't certain in what direction they should turn their talents. Pollution has begun to ruin even the eternal pyramids of Egypt. Humanity's insatiable expansion transforms the landscape faster than the Tef-Aabhi can react.

Some Tef-Aabhi have hope that they can take advantage of the opportunities of the modern world. A number have decided to divulge more secrets to their cultists to better exert their will upon an ever-changing world. With recording devices, their plans can be preserved and carried out while they are in the Duat. Other Tef-Aabhi openly wonder if they need to plan on a greater scale, possibly to prepare for travel into space. A few see hope in historical preservation societies and intend to cling to the wonders of the past.

Unfortunately, depression and frustration have gripped a number of guild members. After so many plans have been destroyed, after the work of dozens of Descents is changed in a decade by humans, why should they continue to try? It has been millennia since the Rite of Return, and what have they achieved? They have now lived long enough to realize that even the greatest of their works will crumble. What can be built that can last for eternity?

MESEN-NEBU

The world of the latest Sothic Turn is constantly changing, and the Alchemists are the masters of change. In the past, status in mortal society largely depended on bloodlines. This is the first Sothic Turn where prestige can be purchased, and that suits the Mesen-Nebu. They are able to use their collected resources to emerge as movers and shakers in the modern economy. With the changes technology is bringing to every aspect of human life, they find their adaptability a greater asset than ever.

While their fellow Arisen struggle to understand how ordinary humans increasingly have access to devices that can do things which would have been considered magic in the last century, much less the last Sothic Turn, the constant change only piques the interest of the Alchemists.

Mesen-Nebu cultists have arranged meetings for the Arisen to discuss how to move forward and take advantage of the current state of the world economy and plan for the future. Many of these meetings are more like corporate planning seminars than gatherings of ancient allies. However, while many guilds have seen their influence wane, the Mesen-Nebu, much like the Sessa-Hebsu, see themselves as ascendant. They are gaining more influence and power than ever before, which is impressive considering their pedigree.

As with all the guilds, there is a contingent that disagrees with the guild leadership. They believe that the power of money lures their fellow guild members into a false sense of security and even distracts them from what truly matters. The Mesen-Nebu are about change, but they need to remain focused on what actually matters. Money may not be able to buy their view of success, but it should be used to uncover any items or information that can help them, whether it be sponsoring archaeological digs or purchasing collections of rare artifacts.

MAA-KEP

Perhaps of all the guilds, the Maa-Kep remain unfazed by the power of technology and the burgeoning population of the planet. What they are acutely aware of is a greater need among the Arisen to use judgment. No longer can a mummy raise his hand, intone an ancient syllable and destroy an army without repercussions. The living have been growing in power, and they deserve a commensurate quantity of caution and wary regard.

It is an age where judgment and negotiation are needed, and a time where now, more than ever, the Maa-Kep must serve as ambassadors and emissaries between the other guilds and even the mortal world. But that ideal is far easier said than made reality.

For those who recall the Laborers' secret purpose, to ensure the ideological purity of their own civilization, the modern age is a curious paradox. What does globalization mean for those who would preserve such a singular vision of ordered life? As one might imagine, the spread of GPS and 24-hour surveillance could affect the workings of the world's first secret police in broad and unforeseen ways, altering the manner in which the Maa-Kep pursue the rigors of their purpose. With so many of their charges up and about at the same time, this Turn, now, will prove the greatest test of the internal fortitude of the Laborers guild in the entirety of its long existence.


SU-MENENT

How many Sothic Turns will there be? Five? Seven? And when the end comes, does the cycle simply begin again, like the barge of Re drifting ever westward?

The world pulls the Arisen away from their purposes, away from the Judges. Many mummies see the Sothic Turns as a release, a time of freedom to try to recapture their past, a time to serve their own personal needs. These actions disgust the Su-Menent.

Many of the Shepherds hear the call to preach to the other Arisen, reminding them of their duties to the Judges. Attempts are being made to codify service to the Judges and to pass this knowledge on to others. Fear has gripped many of the Su-Menent who worry that mummies have





forgotten what they must do. They see the wonders of the modern world distracting the Arisen even as the living in countries with more luxuries move away from religion.

Although many of the Su-Menent are united in reminding the Deathless whom they serve, others choose to walk the paths of heresy. They believe that the only way to strengthen their faith and battle the foes of the Judges is to understand their enemies, such as the Shuankhsen and the Deceived. This means that they must learn about them, even observe them and document their abilities. Such paths have led many to their destruction, but those who emerge with an understanding of their foes gain many admirers throughout the Guild.

For more information on all of these guilds, see **Guildhalls of the Deathless**.

ANTAGONISTS

Although the setting's primary antagonists are covered in **Mummy: The Curse**, this section focuses on the Fourth Sothic Turn and on the specific goals and strategies for each group.

THE DECEIVED

As with the other Arisen, the Deceived arise en masse during the Sothic Turn. More than ever before, this is the time for vengeance against their reviled foes. While the Arisen are torn among personal goals, working with their guilds, and planning for the next cycle, the Deceived have a frightening degree of unity of general purpose in this time.

They want to make the Arisen pay.

Some believe that the Deceived have given themselves over to forces of oblivion. Whether those forces are called demons or devils or dark gods, it doesn't change the fact that the Deceived are rumored to have access to forces that the Arisen don't fully understand, and that by all accounts, the Deceived and their fanatical cultists will stop at nothing to carry out the will of their masters.

This is correct. The Sothic Turn gives the Deceived a chance to unite and concentrate their might against a single city or meret. They also intend to use the alignment of the stars to perform their own rituals and curse their brethren or draw their masters into the world of the living.

A few mummies, especially Sessa-Hebsu, think that the Sothic Turn may give the Deceived a Descent to reawaken and remember who they are. It may even be possible for a member of the Deceived to find redemption or achieve Apotheosis.

This is also correct. Some Deceived fight to be redeemed and to rediscover their lost humanity. Should some of them be brought back from the darkness, they would be a tremendous resource. The knowledge that they possess would not only help to defend against other Deceived, but

may offer a perspective that might reveal how a mummy could become the master of his own fate and no longer the pawn of the Judges.

For more information about the Deceived, please see **Book of the Deceived**, but feel free to add your own touches.

THE SHUANKHSEN

Compelled by the Sothic Turn, the Shuankhsen have returned as well. Unlike the Arisen, they do not lack their memories. They know the significance of the Sothic Turn and recognize the opportunity that it presents to cause suffering for the mummies that they have stalked through the millennia.

Although most of the Shuankhsen began their existences as slaves sacrificed to the Devourer, they have changed over time. Those who have devoured their foes and built cults now possess far greater abilities than their peers who have experienced defeat. The differences are so great that the husk-like Fasad of the more powerful Shuankhsen have abilities which rival the lesser Shuankhsen.

Weaker Shuankhsen have flocked to serve their more powerful brethren. While they lack the organization of the Arisen — there are no guilds — these “tribes” of Shuankhsen pose a much greater threat to mummies than ever before. They have planned how to ambush and destroy their foes. In some cases, they have obtained relics related to their enemies in an attempt to manipulate them, luring them to their own destruction as if they were lighting a flame to attract moths.

A few among the original slave Shuankhsen dare to hope that the Devourer will set them free once they have taken revenge on their slaughterers. If there are no more Arisen to Descend, perhaps the price for the Rite of Return will have been fully paid. To this end, there is no better time to attempt to destroy large numbers of mummies than the Sothic Turn.

The final kind of Shuankhsen poses an even greater threat — former Arisen. These mummies have been corrupted by their encounters with other Shuankhsen or fallen from the service of the Judges. They understand the Arisen even better than the others of their kind, but fortunately, they are not welcome in the councils of the slave Shuankhsen. Still, those who have survived and retained knowledge of their Utterances and Affinities can be terrifyingly destructive until their Sekhem is depleted. They even know the locations of the tombs of their former friends. Even more so than the other Shuankhsen, they seem to have a predilection for stalking, taunting, and tormenting others. Some prey upon their past relationships, apparently breaking the power of the Silence to try to reach out — however, they reveal no information and the intent is fully to harm and bring suffering. The worst of the



corrupted Arisen have become so deranged that they only seethe with nihilistic hate and rage for all creation.

Although they rarely speak of such things, the years have worn down the hate in some of the Shuankhsen. They have witnessed wars, famine, and plagues. They have watched men die and kill for lifetimes. They have seen genocidal horrors that echo their own fates. Although they have resigned themselves to suffering and understand that failure and punishment will be the likely fruit of their labors, they wish to break the Silence. It is the Information Age, and perhaps a single message, reposted or resent, will bring freedom from the Devourer. Surely, the Arisen wish to free themselves from their own bondage to the Judges?

To make such a sacrifice and risk the wrath of the Devourer means that the message must be perfect. It must be the key that the Arisen need. To this end, some have attempted to discover everything the Arisen know, even reaching out to the Sessa-Hebsu through the anonymous world of the Net. So far, none of the attempts to break the Silence have met with any lasting impact. However, this is the time to make such an attempt, when all of the mummies have risen: They can all learn about the Devourer and the truth behind the crimes they all committed.

STORYTELLING THE TURN

Mummies are always struggling to regain their memory. Without a connection to the past, the horror of the eternal cycle of rising and returning to the grave is lost. By evoking memories and running scenes and even stories set in the past, the Storyteller adds depth to the chronicle. It can be made to feel as if it is the second or third series of books set in a larger world. Although characters may not know of events, they will have the feeling that their characters have influenced the past and experienced and forgotten far more than the players could hope to remember.

HISTORICAL CHRONICLES

“Wait, we’re playing in a chronicle set in 910 BCE? Were there even people back in those days?”

There’s loads of information in the opening chapters about the First, Second, and Third Sothic Turns, but the challenge remains: how do you run a chronicle set in the past?

First, remember that times may change, but people don’t. There are rich and poor, corrupt politicians and noble priests (and corrupt priests and noble politicians). Gangs of criminals are found in every age. The stories about people that we tell in the modern world can be told in ancient times as well.

Secondly, you don’t have to worry about knowing all the information at once. Since mummies wake up with little to

no memory and faulty perceptions, they won’t be able to grasp all of the details of their world. They won’t notice the little details, so you don’t have to worry about them.

Take your time to learn about the setting. The small things, such as Egyptians using a barter system instead of coins, will be much more important to running a game set in the past than who was pharaoh or the latest in chariot warfare tactics (though both of those things can be important as well.)

The most obvious difference between a chronicle set in the present and the past is technology. Communication is slower, travel more dangerous, and food scarcer. Mortal enemies won’t have access to as many weapons which could harm a mummy. Information is harder to gather and there are fewer reliable sources. An Arisen living in one kingdom may not know about another Arisen in a city-state only 30 miles away.

FRAMEWORKS IN A HISTORICAL CHRONICLE

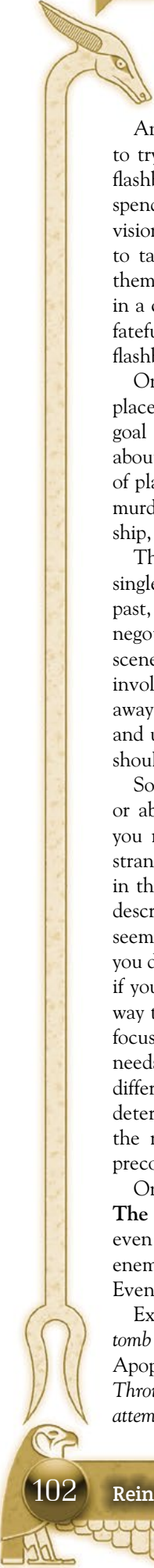

Fortunately whether your troupe has a Pyramid, Allied Dead, Rival Dead, or other structure, running a historical chronicle imposes little change to the framework. One important thing to consider is how to change certain skills to reflect past culture and technology. As with the Arisen, firearms may be replaced with archery, science may become alchemy or astrology. The roles of the characters and their interactions should be the same as in present day.

FLASHBACKS

As mummies receive points in Memory, it only stands to reason that they might relive significant events from their pasts. The most important part of running a flashback is to have a specific storytelling goal in mind for the flashback. Is this an opportunity for the meret to learn about their enemies or themselves? Does the flashback establish conflicts or help resolve them? How does the flashback emphasize the themes of the story and even the larger chronicle?

Flashbacks can simply be fast moments, part of setting a scene or a description. “You vaguely recall a cave much like this one, and entering with another Arisen. Although you can’t recall the details, you know that you were betrayed and your sahu was destroyed on that day.” The usual player reaction will be to ask more questions. If they don’t get answers, they will either become intrigued and ask similar questions later (or upon entering another cave in the above example), or frustrated and discount the moment. Despite that, the quick flashback can help convey a theme or increase the suspense level of an encounter. If possible, having multiple characters experience similar flashbacks, a group sense of *déjà vu*, will enhance the moment and tend to elicit a more positive reaction.





An entire scene can be run as a flashback. If you want to try this, it's important to establish that the scene is a flashback — otherwise players may have their characters spend the entire scene spending Willpower to “resist the vision” or “disbelieve the illusion.” They could also choose to take actions that make little or no sense to prevent themselves from being manipulated. Blatantly tell them in a cool Storyteller way (“You remember the events that fateful night in Thebes...”) that the scene is running in flashback and avoid all of those issues.

Once the troupe has accepted that the scene is taking place in the past, they need to be able to focus on the goal of the scene without getting distracted by worrying about history. Some players may want to take advantage of playing in the past to alter the past, like attempting to murder the Emperor of Rome or destroying Columbus' ship, *The Santa Maria*.

The best way to keep the troupe focused is to have a single goal in mind for the scene. A fight set in the ancient past, a meeting where secrets are disclosed, a clandestine negotiation, all are events that work well for a single-scene flashback. Ideally, the scene should have some risk involved; but regardless, the characters should come away from the scene with some additional knowledge and understanding. At the very least, the flashback scene should drive home the theme of the story.

Some players may grow concerned about what attributes or abilities their characters had in the past. If you can, you may want to run the scene diceless. This may feel strange at first, but remind the players that the events in the flashback have already taken place. Have a player describe her character's action and determine whether it seems plausible. Changing to a diceless resolution also lets you do things like run the session with the lights out. Even if you don't want to indulge in any theatrics, shifting the way the game mechanics are handled will help the troupe focus more on the story and less on the dice. If your troupe needs to roll dice, have them roll a handful of results with different pools before the scene and use those results to determine successes (although you probably should write the results down and randomly reorder them to avoid precognizant, or maybe it's postcognizant, players).

One of the fun things about a flashback in **Mummy: The Curse** is that a character doesn't have to win or even survive. She could be defeated or entombed by her enemies. Her sahu can be destroyed. Relics can be stolen. Even her secrets can be taken.

Example: A *Su-Menent* character has a secret door in his tomb which conceals a canopic jar containing the Heart of Apophis, a relic rumored to be the heart of a great serpent. Throughout the chronicle, his rival, another *Su-Menent*, has attempted to persuade, trick, and even force him into revealing

the location of the item. The rival suspects that the relic is in his tomb, and although he may have even entered the tomb, he has not found the secret door.

During the flashback scene, one of the player's cultists tells his adversary where the Heart is hidden, and also the incantation needed to open the secret door. After the flashback ends, the player realizes his rival remembers that he knows the secret. Once his enemy's memory returns, he'll try to steal the Heart once more.

An entire story can be run in flashback. This is a good way to take source material, such as this book, and use it in your chronicle. If you have a great ongoing chronicle set in a modern city, but you really want to have an adventure in ancient Egypt, you can take an entire story and do so.

You want to spend more time preparing, as in some ways, the story preparation may feel like you are creating an entirely new chronicle (more on that later). Establishing the time frame and the setting is important. The setting for the flashback story will dictate the level of research that you need to do.

If you place the flashback story in an isolated location, for example, a small island in the Aegean Sea with no permanent settlements around 910 BCE, the amount of work that you have to do in creating NPCs and researching the historical cultures is minimal. The characters could just as well be investigating an island at almost any point in history — only the items that they carry will be different. While the prep work will be a positive, the negative with this approach is that if you are running a flashback story, the troupe will want to experience a sense of the past.

Using a Sothic Turn as the setting will assist in creating the flashback story, but a little research on the Internet targeted at the specific location will help. In particular, paying attention to little details, such as food, leisure activities, or customs will bring history to life in a way that lists of kings or battles will not (unless perhaps you are running a battle).

Consider carefully before using well-known places like ancient Rome or sites like Stonehenge. While this may seem counter to trying to help players envision the past, if a location appears a great deal on television and movies, players will have pre-conceived notions of what it might look like and what should be there. You don't want to have a game session turn into a debate on when wooden posts around Stonehenge might have rotted away or whether the Circus Maximus was being used for gladiatorial bouts after the Colosseum was built. Also, you avoid the issue with interference with major historical figures. That doesn't mean you can't use those personages, but having your story take place in the port of Brundisium instead of ancient Rome still could place characters where they can hear about or even see

It Was All a Dream

What if the meret isn't experiencing actual flashbacks, but rather experiencing broken and fractured memories? Could the entire flashback experience be an illusion, a chimera, or a nightmare, maybe a symptom of an ongoing derangement? Perhaps the characters are trapped in their tombs unable to rise, and the historical experiences are a conjuration of their trapped minds.

Whenever you are storytelling, you make certain promises to your players. First and foremost, they expect to be entertained. Second, if they create a character with certain high attributes or abilities, they expect that character to have a chance to use those abilities. Finally, if a plotline begins, the players expect to have a chance to see it resolved. They work to breathe life into the world the Storyteller creates through their characters. If that world is a dream or an illusion, then everything that they've done seems pointless.

In other words, to successfully make a historical chronicle or a flashback be a dream sequence, it needs to still have a point in the story. Decisions made in the dream have to have an impact, positive or negative, on the "real" world. The experience gained from the time in the dream needs to aid the characters in their conflicts in the waking world.

Some examples of how to do this include: have NPCs from the flashback actually exist in the modern chronicle, and retain their personalities and schemes; or have some of the material in the historical timeline be true, and have the characters gain clues to their adversary's weaknesses through discovering the falsehoods. In any event, the historical chronicle has to hold some meaning or else your players will wonder why you put them through it, instead of running more real sessions.

a Roman Emperor, but where you don't have to explain why Emperor Galba was murdered by an Arisen.

If you do choose to use Rome, Pompeii, Alexandria, Thebes, or somewhere equally significant, you can learn about any preconceived notions by going around the room before the game session and asking your players what they know about the location and the time period. Be prepared for at least one player to try to look up what she can on her phone. Once the players are done, you may want to establish a few facts for your story — for example, letting the players know that the Lighthouse of Alexandria hasn't

been built, or that the Temple of Solomon remains the most important building in Jerusalem.

Including Arisen who are in the modern chronicle will lend a feel of authenticity and give the players something that they know to raise their comfort levels. The flashback provides a great opportunity to feature an Arisen who lives in another location, or an old ally or friend who has gone missing. Don't fail to take advantage of the flashback to place plot hooks and story seeds for your chronicle.

Unlike a flashback scene, you will probably want to use regular game mechanics rather than trying to experiment and go diceless for a full story. As far as the character sheets, translate any modern skills into their ancient equivalents. Additionally, you could give the players five free dots (or three, or ten) to have temporarily, as long as you make sure they are written down and don't end up remaining on a character sheet. You want to at least hint or suggest what abilities would come into play during the flashback. If you know that the flashback will take place in the Third Sothic Turn and involve the Arisen attempting to lead their cults safely out of a walled city, advise them appropriately.

As for experience after the conclusion of the story, you should allow the characters to have the opportunity to improve their Memory and possibly give them a bonus toward purchasing skills that they used during the flashback story.


PARALLEL CHRONICLES

If running a flashback story seems fun, and you feel like you're going to do enough work building NPCs and bringing a setting to life, the next step is to run a parallel chronicle. In this case, you have two chronicles ongoing at the same time, alternating stories between them (or sometimes even scenes). Both build toward their own climaxes, but they are related. The chronicle set in the past provides revelations to aid the characters in the future chronicle.

One example would be a modern game where the meret is trying to obtain a relic. The parallel chronicle set in the past could be about when the relic was created, or how the relic was lost. The climax of the parallel chronicle should dovetail with the climax of the modern chronicle. As the characters gain Memory, they recall more about what happened in the past — and that's when you run the historical stories.

To run a parallel chronicle, first decide what time period in the past you want to use. Familiarize yourself with the period. Using the material for the other Sothic Turns will allow all of the Arisen in the modern chronicle to be present in the past, building a connection between the two.

Once that is done, develop your modern-day chronicle as you normally would, with a plot outline, setting, overarching themes, and antagonists. Afterward, review your vision and consider what kind of chronicle could



carry the same themes and work as a prequel to the one you intend to run. (If you have a great idea for a historical chronicle, you can reverse this process and start by designing the past chronicle and then build the modern one in its image). In the parallel historical chronicle, you set the stage for your present-day conflict.

On the bookkeeping side, you want to make sure that the players keep separate Sekhem tracks for both chronicles. It doesn't hurt for the Storyteller to record the Sekhem levels each time the chronicle shifts from the past to the present and vice versa to prevent players from getting confused.

With the parallel chronicles ongoing, one of your concerns will be when to shift settings. The recommendation is to start and end with present-day stories, and introduce the historical side of your chronicle in the second story and no later than the third story. Going forward, you may wish to alternate, but consider the enjoyment of the players. If the sessions in one era seem to be working better than the other, go ahead and shift the balance toward the more enjoyable stories while you work out the issues in the other setting. The speed at which the players deplete their Sekhem may also change how you handle the two settings.

While you can have the setting switch at certain intervals (after this present-day story, we'll go back to the Constantinople for the next story and then revert back again when that's done), a more story-driven way to handle it would be to have certain events or actions trigger the change in setting. These triggers could be gaining a point of Memory, having an encounter with a major adversary, or losing a point of Sekhem. It could also involve discovering secrets about a relic or completing a task as part of a ritual. Reaching a destination could also trigger the next story.

Depending on the meret's tolerance level for such things, you can change settings during a story and run both settings as part of the same story, where the characters must achieve similar goals or face similar challenges in both time frames. In this case, the triggers could be a good switching point, as above. For something extremely risky, you could try to run a conflict in the past and the present nearly simultaneously.

While all of this may sound like a fun challenge, it can go badly in a hurry if players start getting confused. If that happens, pull the plug on the past. If they were in a battle in the past, have something dramatic happen, such as an earthquake (unless you are in Pompeii, in that case, go for the volcanic eruption). As their memories of the past go dark, the tension should increase in the present-day battle while the confusion lessens. Just have an explanation of the aftermath of the earthquake (or whatever disaster befell them) in mind.

If the modern era is one in a series of battles between the meret and a rival meret, then the parallel chronicle can be one in which the conflict originally began. In this case, the members of the meret may find themselves allies or even friends of their modern enemies. As the stories progress, the conflict should escalate in both time periods, but the characters should also gain more knowledge about and understanding of the conflict.

Another possibility would be to have the Deceived or the Shuankhsen destroy a stronghold of the Arisen in the distant past. As the troupe plays through those stories, their characters may realize that the same events are taking place in the modern world.

Using the Memory mechanic, the characters will live through their returning memories about the past, with each story set in the parallel chronicle becoming the regained memories of the current chronicle.

Pyramids in Parallel

Running a Pyramid game with a parallel chronicle brings up one very big and obvious question: What do I do with all the human beings? If a player has a mortal character in the present day, how can she interact with her Arisen 1,400 years or more in the past?

The simplest way is to have the player make up multiple characters, playing one in the past and one in the present. The drawback to this is that the player may end up feeling like she's in two different games, loosely connected by the active Arisen.

Another idea is to have the mortals related to other characters in the past. While the player still has two different characters, having a character in a historical setting be the ancestor of the modern character helps the player feel a connection. As the chronicle progresses, you can give the player an item which has been passed down through the generations. They may even encounter the item in the modern world before having it presented to them in the past.

Finally, the characters may have reincarnated or been otherwise connected (see the Interwoven Chronicle below) to the past, just as the mummy is. Maybe they remember walking along the Nile or staring up at the white walls of Memphis. Perhaps they experienced the eruption of Vesuvius or the sacking of Constantinople. If so, the storyteller may want to allow the player to use a single character sheet with the understanding that experience gained in the past can only be used for abilities available during that time, and that modern abilities (e.g., Driving and Firearms) would not be available for the historical character.



Another way to use a parallel chronicle would be to shift frameworks. For example, the characters may be in an Allied Dead chronicle in the present, but a Rival Dead game in the parallel chronicle. The parallel chronicle could tell the story of how the characters came together, while the Allied Dead chronicle could threaten to tear those bonds apart and test them in the climax.

Although usually it is easier for the players to only have one set of characters, you can run a parallel chronicle with a different set of characters. In this case, the modern characters should have a connection to the past group. In a pyramid campaign, the characters could be cultists who work with an NPC Arisen who appears in both chronicles. Modern characters could receive visions of the past chronicle through a relic or perhaps through a connection to an area. A common Judge could serve as a connection. It's even possible to make the past chronicle about a group fighting a common foe, and having pieces of ancient writing reveal the next story.

As with a flashback, in the world of **Mummy: The Curse**, the characters may not necessarily succeed. They can die and the chronicle will continue. Don't be afraid as a Storyteller to have the characters face dire consequences.

If the parallel chronicle becomes too complicated for either you as the Storyteller or the players, remember that you have the ability to end the past chronicle at any time. "And then, the city sank beneath the waves, only remembered in the legend of Atlantis." Also, if the parallel chronicle has served its purpose, you can end the stories set in that time.

THE QUEST

In this parallel chronicle, the meret must find a relic or perform a specific task to avert a disaster. During the chronicle in the past, the meret may struggle against their adversaries, only to fail. Perhaps the meret attempts to save Atlantis from sinking, only to fail. In the modern chronicle, they may see images of Atlantis and discover that the same Deceived cult which destroyed Atlantis is at work in their modern coastal city. The events from the parallel chronicle, where they struggle to survive as catastrophe strikes, may lend them the knowledge that they need to prevent the same disaster from occurring again.

THE BEGINNING AND END

In this parallel chronicle, the players have two different characters, mortals in the time of the Nameless Empire and mummies in the modern world. The historical chronicle is a tragedy in which the characters struggle against or assist with the coming Rite of Return, including sacrificing the slaves who will become the Shuankhsen. This will parallel with the Arisen searching for Apotheosis in the modern

chronicle. Each time they move closer to Apotheosis, they will experience a story about their pasts showing the mistakes they made and the challenges they faced, before having to find a way to face similar challenges and redeem themselves in the modern chronicle. Ultimately, they may end up trying to save a Shuankhsen that they betrayed, as well as coming to an acceptance of what happened to them.

THE ADVERSARY

In this parallel chronicle, the characters face an old foe, possibly a Deceived or Shuankhsen. As they regain their memories, they recall the last battle against the enemy, which they may have won or lost. The Shuankhsen in the modern chronicle will recall everything and use this knowledge to taunt the characters. Ultimately, the historical chronicle should provide the clues needed for the meret to emerge victorious in the present day.

THE CORRUPTED

The taint of corruption twists an Arisen into a Shuankhsen. This parallel chronicle starts with a group of Shuankhsen and parallels with the chronicle of their time as an Arisen meret. They must choose in the present-day chronicle whether to fight to undo the taint on their souls or to embrace their existence as Shuankhsen. In the historical chronicle, they will experience the tale of their corruption. Did they fall willingly, or sacrifice themselves to save their allies from the Shuankhsen? Will friends from the past try to help them overcome the Silence, or treat them as traitors to the Judges and the mortal enemies of the Arisen?

INTERWOVEN CHRONICLES

Thoth-hotep's vision swam. One moment he had been trying to escape the Shuankhsen in a van driven by his high priest, and now...

"Revered One, what shall we do?"

Thoth-hotep looked around. He was lying beside a dirt track on a rocky hill sparsely covered with trees. The sun was in the afternoon sky, though it had been night mere moments before. The high priest stared down at him with a different face, though he knew this was his high priest.

"Where am I? What happened?" Thoth-hotep asked. His words were no longer English but a dialect of Ionian.

"We are on the road to Athens. Your encounter with the Shuankhsen went poorly."

"We were in a van. We failed to retrieve the relic. You looked different."

"You have experienced another of the oracle's visions. You have lived a day in your future life. I cannot speak of such mysteries, but I can assure you that we were successful in retrieving the Staff of Hecate."





The high priest held out the Staff of Hecate, the same relic that they had tried to recover in Washington, D.C. Thoth-hotep stood. His wounds were the same as he had suffered in the future. Everything the oracle had said was true. He was experiencing all of his Sothic Turns at once.

“There is a small shrine to Athena ahead, I believe,” said Thoth-hotep. “We will stop and bury it behind the shrine.”

“Why Revered One?”

Thoth-hotep did not answer, but he thought to himself, “So when the shrine is excavated and my cult purchases the artifacts for its private collection, I shall be able to use the staff against the Shuankhsen.”

Time is not linear. Parallel chronicles are ones where the present affects the past and the past directly imprints the present — a struggle throughout time, possibly into the future. When we think of time, we think of it as a river moving forward. The progression of the seasons. An arrow in flight streaking into the future. But what if we are wrong? What if time is an illusion? What if all things in all times are occurring right now? This is the premise of the interwoven chronicle.

In an interwoven chronicle, the events of the past occur in parallel with the events of the future and the present. In other words, a story set in the present may have a goal that impacts the success of a story in the past. The sequence of events happens in the order in which they occur in the stories in the chronicle, not in chronological order. So, if you run a story set in 2014, followed by a story set in 910 BCE, the events of 2014 take place in the experience of the characters before the story in 910 BCE. However, there may be relics from 910 BCE found in 2014, while there won't be items from 2014 in 910 BCE. Knowledge and experience for the characters should develop as the chronicle moves forward.

The greatest challenge in running this style of game is that the players may have difficulty adjusting as this sort of chronicle goes against our natural understanding of cause and effect. If the meret defeats an Amkhat in the present it may give them the understanding to defeat a greater Amkhat in the Third Sothic Turn. They may find historical records of their battle with the Amkhat in a story before they face it, because it happened in the past.

Again, running a chronicle like this may cause some terrible headaches if the players think about it too much, but it also can result in an epic game that crosses the millennia.

HOW IT WORKS

Numerous possible justifications exist for the device that allows for chronicle interweaving, but the simplest answer is that the Arisen have always interacted with the entirety of time. Duat does not follow the living world's





rules of time or place. The perception that we exist in a single time is an illusion. Once they have removed that illusion, they perceive everything at once.

Here are some ways to explain how this could happen:

The Sothic Turns — Sekhem has its greatest flow during the Sothic Turns. The magic of the Rite of Return is inherently connected to the Sothic Turns. Although time continues to progress, when the Arisen reach the Sothic Turn, they are able to interact with all of the other Sothic Turns. Only during this time are they able to perceive the past and the future.

The Disciples of the Wheel — The study of the Sothic Turns has laid bare the underpinnings of reality to the mummies. They have carefully collected their lore and knowledge and performed rituals that would enable them to interact with the past during this Sothic Turn, in hopes of even affecting the Rite of Return. However, they may not be the only Arisen who have done so.

Geomancy — Much like the plans of the Khent-henu in Washington, D.C. to create a new Irem on Earth using geomancy, the meret could have created tombs that focused Sekhem and Pillars as they slept. This energy surges during the Sothic Turn, and they awake, able to act in multiple ages. They may even remember vaguely that they experienced the stories that they haven't lived through, because they are within history even as they act outside of it.

Relics, Naturally — The meret may retrieve a relic, particularly one related to ancient astrology or time-keeping, which enables them to become aware of different time flows. It may even be possible for the relic to allow the characters to dictate which age they experience next. For practical purposes, you should limit the number of Descents or time periods available for travel (the Sothic Turns are obvious candidates).

Besides player buy-in, this chronicle requires planning. In fact, it is absolutely essential. Decide what eras of history are the critical points for your chronicle. The easiest way to do this would be to create storylines in all of the Sothic Turns. Ideally, the characters should face similar challenges

and conflicts in each storyline. It is recommended the chronicle start in the modern world, and it should also end in the modern world. The interwoven chronicles also should have a beginning and an end. While you may use all of the Sothic Turns, having four distinct settings may prove overly difficult. Two additional settings seem to be the ideal number to capture the feel of an epic cross-time chronicle without being overwhelmed.

Although the settings will change, it's best to have the antagonist and the Arisen remain the same throughout all periods of time. In each chronicle, the characters' situations may be different, but their powers and abilities should remain the same in all time periods.

For example, a Shuankhsen called the Ravaging Skin could be the primary antagonist in all the time periods. However, during the Second Sothic Turn, an early Ionian city-state may worship the Ravaging Skin as a god. He may have priests with mystical powers ready to die for him, soldiers willing to march to the ends of the Earth in his name, and even vassal outfits ready to pledge resources to his cause. Yet, during the Third Sothic Turn, he may have to hide from Christian hunters wanting to destroy the last of the pagans and only use his cult to subtly manipulate events. In the modern world, he may be bereft of his cult, but have forged an alliance with other Shuankhsen and possess powerful relics that he may use to devastating effect.

In all three time periods, the Ravaging Skin may present a formidable foe for the characters. While his stats may remain the same, the challenges he presents will be different.

As a last thought — if all events in time occur simultaneously, then a character may be able to experience events in the far future or even in the distant past, long before the Nameless Empire. A chronicle could explore a time completely unknown to even the Arisen. Modern humans may have existed over a 100,000 years ago. What dark forces haunted those first people? Perhaps the Rite of Return is only the most recent event in a struggle that began millennia ago, and that may not end for another hundred millennia more....







CHAPTER FIVE

PEARL OF AVARICE

THE AVARICE CHRONICLE

PART III

*I went down into Egypt, and my companions parted from me.
I went straight to the serpent. I dwelt in his abode, waiting until he should
lumber and sleep, that I might take my pearl from him.*
— *Hymn of the Pearl, Anonymous*

Welcome to part three of *The Avarice Chronicle*, the final chapter of a story that began in **Guildhalls of the Deathless** and continued in **Book of the Deceived**.

While intended to serve primarily as the conclusion of an overarching plot, centered upon one of the most persistent and powerful legends among the Arisen, this adventure can also be used as a stand-alone story. Scenes and events from the adventure may be moved around, altered, or ignored entirely, as suits the needs of your ongoing **Mummy** chronicle. Ideas and characters can also be lifted out to fit into a story better suited to the group. To put it another way: Use as much or as little of this story as you like, to create the best chronicle for you and your players.

THE STORY SO FAR

A Grand Conclave of the Su-Menent was recently disrupted by parties at that time unknown. Sacmis, the leader of the Su-Menent in Tokyo, has been transformed into one of the dread Shuankhsen. Her copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, alleged to be a primer on the ins and outs of Apotheosis, penned by the very hand of the renegade Arisen commonly known as the Heretic, went missing at that time. Given that the attack on the Grand Conclave occurred in Washington, D.C., the event was labeled a possible terrorist act in the mortal world, and the Arisen have found that getting around and preserving anonymity has become commensurately more difficult.

Nevertheless, a meret set out to learn the identity of the one behind the attack, and discovered the existence of a Shuankhsen going simply by “the Roller,” master of an horrific circus sideshow known as Nightmare Alley.

These Arisen learned that the Roller was the thief who took Sacmis’ copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, which he consumed to gain the power and knowledge contained within. After doing so, he became obsessed with the wisdom of the Heretic and set his sights on a second copy of the book, this one owned by a Sessa-Hebsu named Akhomet, whom the Roller also believed to have some vital information about the current location of the Heretic himself.

The Roller was proven correct in his belief — Akhomet was a disciple of the Heretic and had actually met with him on a number of occasions. The Shuankhsen hunted Akhomet down, even as she attempted to go to ground in Sybaris, the hidden city of her sometime allies, the practitioners of name magic known in fearful whispers among the Arisen as the Deceived. Bypassing the wards concealing and protecting the place, he managed to find and destroy the Heretic’s student, consuming her essence and refining his unique ability to home in on the architect of Apotheosis.

In doing so, however, the Roller made an enemy of the Deceived — so much so, that many of them have proven willing to put aside their driving hatred of the Arisen to see the Shuankhsen punished for his trespass. The Roller now stretches out the tendrils of his considerable influence, sending cultists and Fasad to assemble the pieces for his endgame: surviving long enough to devour the Heretic and, in so doing — he believes — learning the final missing variables in his millennia-long quest to truly understand the entirety of the cosmos, and so gain mastery over it.



MOTIVATION

If you've already played through at least the second part of *The Avarice Chronicle*, the characters' motivations should be pretty simple to establish. Having arrived in Sybaris and encountered the Deceived, they have been given an ultimatum: Find the Roller and destroy him, or else risk being destroyed themselves.

If you are running Part III as a stand-alone story, then you may well end up doing some legwork to put pieces into place. Any characters who are interested in pursuing the elusive path to Apotheosis will find much to interest them in this scenario. Signs and portents (or even just rumors) may be employed to indicate that the fate of the so-called "Heretic," first (and, to date, only) among the Arisen to attain Apotheosis, hangs in the balance. Staunch guild loyalists could be dispatched to find the Heretic and end up on the trail of something much worse. Of course, if you want, it's also possible to begin "Pearl of Ascent" with only a minimum of adjustment, as a mysterious package comes into the meret's possession, sent by parties unknown.

PROLOGUE

If you have run the characters through at least the second chapter of *The Avarice Chronicle*, then they begin the third chapter having only just departed the legendary city of Sybaris, hidden fastness of the Lost Guild — the masters of nomenclature magic now known as the Deceived. Held in check from claiming vengeance upon the characters primarily by their newfound hatred for the Roller and a desire to see his blasphemous deed — the devouring and utter destruction of their idealistic ally, Akhomet — punished, the Deceived have proven willing to at least potentially lend resources to the meret for its final confrontation with the Shuankhsen. (Conversely, the mummies of the Lost Guild almost certainly expect the characters to deal with the Roller, or else be subject to their retribution.)

If you are running the third chapter of *The Avarice Chronicle* as a stand-alone story in your **Mummy: The Curse** chronicle, we recommend giving this SAS an extra thorough read-through, to see where and when you can tie events together for the best narrative flow. The characters need to be able to invest in the events of a story intended as the conclusion of a larger arc, so you will probably want to involve your own Storyteller characters, as well as plots and history from the characters' backgrounds. You may also need to scale back certain aspects of this final chapter, so as to prevent the story from becoming crowded with what are likely to be extraneous details for those who have not played through the preceding chapters of the chronicle.

About the Storytelling Adventure System

Even if this is your first experience with the Storytelling Adventure System (SAS), you should probably be able to figure things out pretty quickly and get underway. So as to leave as much room as possible for the story itself, we won't get into the fundamentals of the SAS here. If you're unfamiliar with the format (or just want some guidance as to how all of this is intended to work), however, please have a look at the free SAS guide, found at www.drivethrurpg.com

The first act of "Pearl of Ascent" begins with the characters being set on the journey that will lead them to a climactic confrontation with the Roller and the revelation of the renegade Arisen visionary known as the Heretic.

CHAPTER ONE—OLD FRIENDS AND NEW

The first act of "Pearl of Ascent" begins with the characters being set on the journey that will lead them to a climactic confrontation with the Roller and the revelation of the renegade Arisen visionary known as the Heretic.

CHAPTER TWO—FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

The second act of "Pearl of Ascent" sees the meret delving into secrets, both political and occult, which may shake the foundations of Arisen society. Everything from the hegemony of the guilds to the very ethics of the Judges themselves falls into question, and it soon becomes clear that nothing is truly sacred.

CHAPTER THREE—IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AZAR

The characters are now closing on their final confrontation with the Roller. They are aware that the Roller has taken steps to protect himself against the True Name magic of the Deceived. Soon, they also become aware that the Shuankhsen is after the Amulet of Two Fingers, as well as—apparently—as many copies of *Dreams of Avarice* as he can manage to find. At this point, it seems possible that the Roller is somehow attempting to devour his way to Apotheosis, or some twisted version thereof. The meret has badly damaged the Roller's resources, however, and he enters into the final steps of his mad design with only the ragged remnants of his once-expansive organization to call upon.

CHAPTER VIII

SCENE I:

A STRANGE DELIVERY

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

Shortly after returning from the hidden city of Sybaris (or, in the event that you have not run the previous chapters of *The Avarice Chronicle*, at a time convenient to your chronicle), while the meret is gathered together, a package arrives at the characters' current location. The deliveryman works for a private but well-known service, and knows nothing about the contents of the package.

DESCRIPTION

(THE PACKAGE ARRIVES)

The young man before you, attired in a uniform that could probably stand to be ironed, looks bored as he holds out a digital clipboard to no one, in particular. "Someone needs to sign for this." He barely suppresses a yawn. "Doesn't matter who."

Clutched in the courier's other hand is a small, carefully-wrapped package that resonates with some small measure of Sekhem, as well as a general sense of peace and wellbeing.

Regardless of whether one of you gives a name or just scrawls a few sloppy and illegible characters on the pad, he takes it back and hands over a small, carefully wrapped package. Mumbling something about "have a nice day" under his breath, he then departs.

(THE UNWRAPPING)


Inside the box, secured within a cushion of bubble wrap, is a framed photograph of a family — young parents, and a little girl. The Sekhem imbued into the object seems to dissipate of its own accord as the contents of the parcel are revealed, integrating itself into your spirits and refreshing you. (Storyteller's note: at this time, the characters all gain a point of Sekhem, up to a maximum of 10.)

Getting Things Started

If you haven't played through prior chapters of *The Avarice Chronicle*, you're going to need to adjust this scene, in particular, quite a bit, so as to make it make sense in the context of your story. Of course, you may want to dispense with this opening scene, entirely, if you're approaching this chapter as a stand-alone story. In such a case, you'll need to provide your own justification for setting the meret on the Roller's trail and putting the characters in the right place at the right time to meet the Heretic.

As the sorcerous power flows into you, the disembodied spirit of one of the dead manifests, and he is immediately identifiable as the man shown in the picture, though his shade appears to be thinner and at least a few years older than in the photograph. He bows his head respectfully and then looks up to regard all of you. "I've been sent by someone who's aware of the trouble you ran into regarding a book. I don't know this person's identity — all I know is what I've been sent here to say to you: You're moving in the right direction, and the book is more important than you know. What you've been told about it by your leaders is a lie. The Roller needs to be stopped before he kills anyone else who wants to learn the truth. If he succeeds, he will unleash a great darkness upon this world."

The ghost heaves an insubstantial sigh. "I'm sorry that I can't explain any of this to you any better than I already have. I know what I was supposed to say, but not why, or what it means." He manages a faint smile. "Hell, I don't even know how I knew what to tell you. All I know is that it's true and really important, and that I can lead you to where you have to go, next."



After a moment's pause, he adds, "My name is David. David Hwang." He then looks to the framed picture and back to all of you. "Would you...I mean, uh...would you mind keeping that safe? It's important to me. It's all I have left of them."

STORYTELLER GOALS

The objective of this scene is to get the characters on the right track, plain and simple. Whether they're coming out of the events of the previous chapter or just jumping into the story at this point, they're coming in without any kind of clear direction.

PLAYER GOALS

At this juncture, the players are going to need a hand just figuring out where to go from here. David serves to provide that jumping-off point. He can, if treated well, also make for a useful ally, and the meret may wish to cultivate a good relationship with him.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters now have at least some kind of a lead to follow.



CHAPTER VIII

SCENE II: GRAVE GOODS

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

The ghost of David Hwang leads the characters toward a destination that will make clear the next few steps of their journey. Through David's directions, the meret is guided to a warehouse (whether someplace nearby, or on another continent, according to the needs of your story), in which is stored a perfectly mundane Iremite artifact — a plain earthenware jug, suitable for burial with a person of modest means. This object, ordinary though it might be, is nevertheless of great sentimental value to one of the Arisen, and was stolen long ago by a rival — Hamunshere — for that very reason.

Hamunshere is currently far away and in the repose of henet, but her cultists continue to guard the warehouse. Before entering the sleep of death, she had no reason to suspect that anyone else, living or Deathless, would know where the jug was stored, and the cultist guards definitely aren't expecting company. When strangers show up and attempt to gain entry, however, they are almost certain to respond with violence, as the cult emulates its mistress' contentious nature. (Unless, of course, the characters are able to force compliance through supernatural methods.)

Ultimately, the guards are mortal and, while most of them will sell their lives as dear as possible to protect the jug (the only object in the building that would be of any interest whatsoever to the Arisen), it is not strictly necessary to kill them. Some may be persuaded to flee when the fight turns against them, and others may simply be knocked out or otherwise incapacitated if the characters so desire.

There is one guard per member of the meret, plus one. Whether or not he is asked to do so, and so long as he is not specifically told to stay out of it, David will help in the confrontation as best he can.

DESCRIPTION

(OUTSIDE)

David leads you toward a drab but sturdy-looking warehouse in a neighborhood almost entirely fallen into disrepair. From a distance you are able to see, just up against the side of the building, a couple of mangy dogs loudly quarreling over scraps from a toppled trash can.

The squabble continues until a small metal door in the side of the building opens and a man wielding a nightstick uses it to swat at the animals, shouting obscenities at them. Chastened, the dogs slink away, each with a half-mouthful of refuse. Shaking his head, the guard rights the can, kicks a bit of the trash on the ground up against it, looks around distractedly for just a moment, and then returns inside.

David speaks softly, "What you're looking for is in there. It's something that belongs to an old friend of yours. Once you recover it, you'll know where to go next."

(INSIDE)

Instantly, you identify this place as belonging to Hamunshere, a violent brute of a Maa-Kep with an equally brutish cult. Signs and sigils indicative of her ownership of the place are obvious to anyone who knows what to look for — she has clearly marked her territory to other Arisen. The entire warehouse looks as run-down and shabby on the inside as on the outside, though that's hardly surprising — the effort and resources needed to fix the place up would likely raise too many questions in this area.

David gestures to a dusty and utterly unremarkable crate in the corner. "There," he says. "What you're looking for is in there."

STORYTELLER GOALS

This is a chance for the characters to engage in some low-stakes combat and maybe throw around a few powers. The thugs guarding the warehouse are nothing special, so this scene can serve as a simple refresher course in the abilities, both mundane and supernatural, available to the Arisen, particularly if you are running "Pearl of Ascent" as a stand-alone story or if it's been a while since your troupe has gathered to play.

PLAYER GOALS

The meret's goal in this is to enter the warehouse, whether by guile, force, or whatever other means, and to recover Khenafsa's pitcher. Other goals may include destroying or converting the hostile cultists.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters are now in possession of an ancient Iremite beer jug, originally belonging to an Arisen friend whom they have not seen in some time, a man known as Khenafsaa. This is their sign as to where to go next. Whatever is going on, it seems that Khenafsaa has something to do with it, or can at least advise the characters as to what to do next.

If David was permitted to participate in the fight, the characters will also be aware that he is an unusually powerful ghost, given the relatively short amount of time since he died. If asked, he has no explanation for this, though perceptive characters may realize that his exceptional abilities may be part of why he was chosen to act as a courier for the mysterious party guiding the meret.



CHAPTER VIII

SCENE III: 1986

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••

OVERVIEW

This scene serves as an introduction to the Heretic's text, *Dreams of Avarice*. Khenafsaa, one of the Arisen friendly to the members of the meret, briefly possessed a copy of the book, and he has invited his friends to come and have a talk with him about its contents. For the time being, Khenafsaa still falls on the side of the guilds, but he is willing to concede that there may be wisdom in the Heretic's words, and he wants to have the counsel of those whom he trusts while he ponders these weighty matters.

From the get-go, Khenafsaa makes it clear — and honestly so — that he hasn't been swayed by the Heretic's arguments, so much as he wishes to consider the implications of a world in which what the Heretic says is true. He is aware that this line of thinking would go ill for him in most circles of the Deathless, but he believes that the meret will speak with him in good faith, and he sincerely believes that no ill can come of rational discussion, even upon dangerous subjects.

Other than being in a major city friendly to raucous nightlife, the precise location of Khenafsaa's club is unimportant. You are encouraged to set it in a place with some significance in your chronicle, or to your characters.

DESCRIPTION

The music is loud and the lighting exists solely in extremes of deep shadows and lurid neon. Affected decadence and desperate glamor hang heavy in the air, a perfume which has long since lost its savor for the majority of the Arisen. Your contact, here — in modern times, he goes by Sylvestre Djaoro, but he is known among the Deathless as Khenafsaa — smiles brightly at your approach and waves you over to his private booth.

A pretty server flits by, depositing a pitcher of beer on the table with a smile and a slight bow of her head. The drink is precisely the sort that would be brewed in the City of Pillars, rather than a modern libation. Khenafsaa pours, beaming with pride.

"This is one of my own brews. I hope you enjoy it."

Setting down the pitcher, he then lifts his own glass and offers all of you good health and good fortune, in the name of the gods. After downing half of his drink at a swallow, he chuckles.

"If you will hear me out, my friends, I wish to discuss a curious subject..."

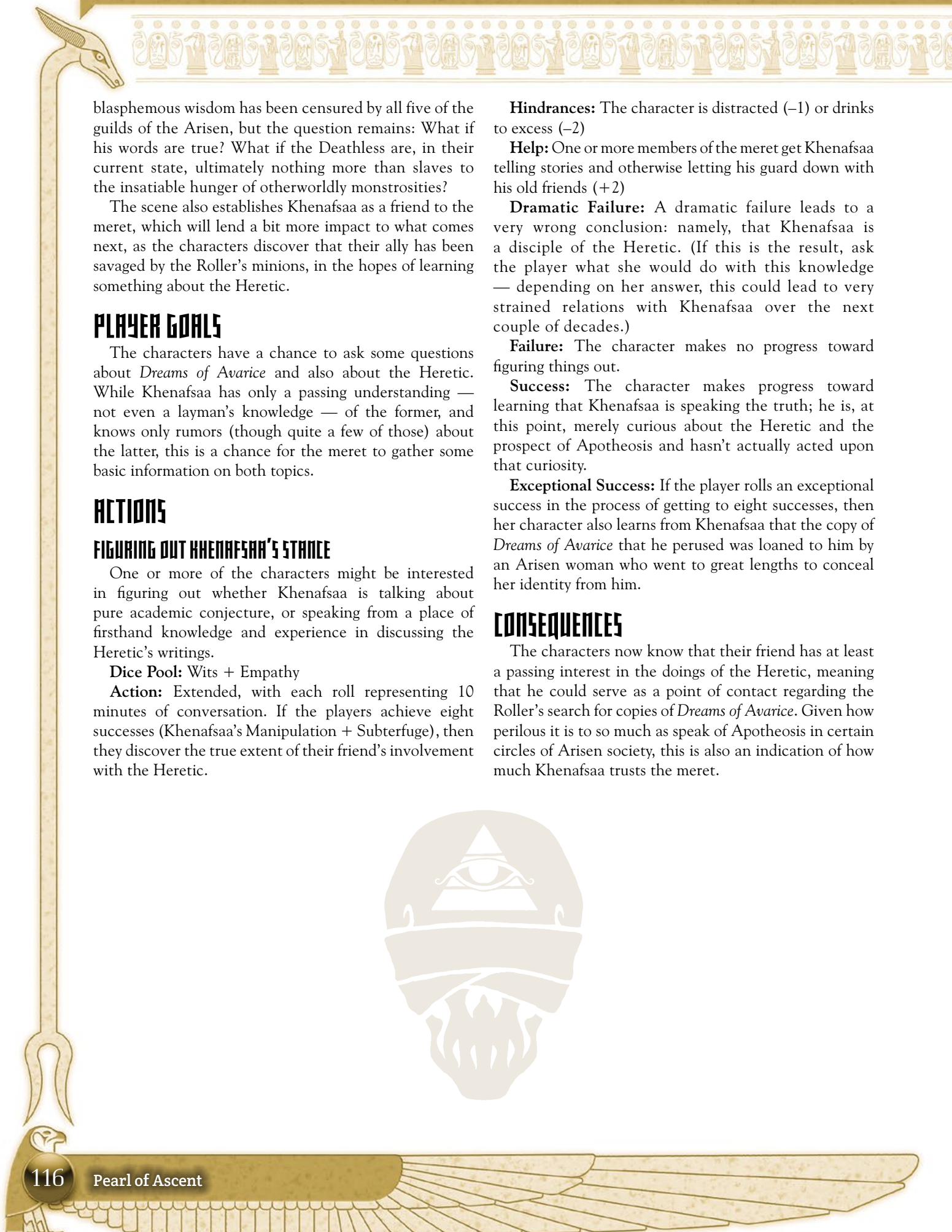
STORYTELLER GOALS

The most important thing to accomplish in this scene is to get the characters to ask, "What if?" The Heretic's

Memories of Things Yet to Be

Over the course of this scene, you are encouraged to drop hints to the characters about *Dreams of Avarice*. As the third chapter of *The Avarice Chronicle* continues to unfold, the meret will come to remember that its members ran across the proscribed tome over a century ago, through no deliberate action on their part, and that the experience caused some trouble for them with authorities within the guilds.

As Khenafsaa asks his questions and otherwise engages in conversation, you might recite to the characters of a random quote from *Dreams of Avarice*, informing them that the talk has jogged a memory of the relatively recent past; sometime within the past 200 years. Likewise, you could tell of a sudden flash of remembrance: a woman with hawkish features regarding the meret with a silently accusatory stare; or a glimpse of a papyrus written in the glyphs of ancient Irem, accompanied by the smell of freshly-brewed tea. Memory is the core theme of **Sothis Ascends**, and this is a good opportunity to play around with that.



blasphemous wisdom has been censured by all five of the guilds of the Arisen, but the question remains: What if his words are true? What if the Deathless are, in their current state, ultimately nothing more than slaves to the insatiable hunger of otherworldly monstrosities?

The scene also establishes Khenafsaa as a friend to the meret, which will lend a bit more impact to what comes next, as the characters discover that their ally has been savaged by the Roller's minions, in the hopes of learning something about the Heretic.

PLAYER GOALS

The characters have a chance to ask some questions about *Dreams of Avarice* and also about the Heretic. While Khenafsaa has only a passing understanding — not even a layman's knowledge — of the former, and knows only rumors (though quite a few of those) about the latter, this is a chance for the meret to gather some basic information on both topics.

ACTIONS

FIGURING OUT KHENAFSAA'S STANCE

One or more of the characters might be interested in figuring out whether Khenafsaa is talking about pure academic conjecture, or speaking from a place of firsthand knowledge and experience in discussing the Heretic's writings.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Action: Extended, with each roll representing 10 minutes of conversation. If the players achieve eight successes (Khenafsaa's Manipulation + Subterfuge), then they discover the true extent of their friend's involvement with the Heretic.

Hindrances: The character is distracted (-1) or drinks to excess (-2)

Help: One or more members of the meret get Khenafsaa telling stories and otherwise letting his guard down with his old friends (+2)

Dramatic Failure: A dramatic failure leads to a very wrong conclusion: namely, that Khenafsaa is a disciple of the Heretic. (If this is the result, ask the player what she would do with this knowledge — depending on her answer, this could lead to very strained relations with Khenafsaa over the next couple of decades.)

Failure: The character makes no progress toward figuring things out.

Success: The character makes progress toward learning that Khenafsaa is speaking the truth; he is, at this point, merely curious about the Heretic and the prospect of Apotheosis and hasn't actually acted upon that curiosity.

Exceptional Success: If the player rolls an exceptional success in the process of getting to eight successes, then her character also learns from Khenafsaa that the copy of *Dreams of Avarice* that he perused was loaned to him by an Arisen woman who went to great lengths to conceal her identity from him.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters now know that their friend has at least a passing interest in the doings of the Heretic, meaning that he could serve as a point of contact regarding the Roller's search for copies of *Dreams of Avarice*. Given how perilous it is to so much as speak of Apotheosis in certain circles of Arisen society, this is also an indication of how much Khenafsaa trusts the meret.



CHAPTER VIII

SCENE IV: SAVING A FRIEND

MENTAL • PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

The meret arrives at Khenafsaa's club, which is currently closed for remodeling, only to discover that something is amiss. Clearly, the characters aren't the only ones interested in learning if he knows any information of substance about the Heretic.

As long as they don't go out of their way to make a lot of noise on the way in, the characters are assumed to take the Roller's forces unawares — torture can be a noisy business, and these people are sufficiently monomaniacal when it comes to their master's wishes that the idea to post sentries just doesn't occur to them. They have a job to do, and that's all they're focused on right now.

A single Fasad oversees a large enough group of Nightmare Alley carnies to provide a good challenge to the meret, based on the number of characters and their combat abilities.

DESCRIPTION

<ARRIVING>

As you approach through the pouring rain, the back door of Khenafsaa's club (by which you customarily enter after hours or, in this case, on account of the place being closed to the public) has clearly been forced. It looks as though a pry-bar was used to break the lock. Muffled screams emanate from within the building, though at this late hour and in this part of town, it's highly unlikely that anyone other than you is hearing them. In the dry patch under the back awning, it's clear that numerous pairs of wet footprints entered the establishment.

<INSIDE>

Khenafsaa has clearly been tortured. He is duct-taped to a chair, surrounded by vicious-looking thugs, and one decomposing monstrosity that can only possibly be a Shuankhsen's Fasad. Your friend weakly lifts his head to stare into the husk's grotesque face with his one remaining eye, and mutters a vile oath under his breath, the intent of which the creature seems to understand. It glances over to a woman holding a bloody pair of pruning shears and hisses, "Again. The left hand, this time..."





STORYTELLER GOALS

With this scene, you should illustrate the depths to which the Roller is willing to sink in pursuit of his goals. Khenafsaa is a kindly, generous, friendly sort...and none of this dissuades the Shuankhsen in any way from sending minions to slice, crush, burn, and otherwise mutilate whatever parts of the man they need to in order to hear even a single syllable of information about the Heretic, his works, or his followers. The fact that he hasn't yet broken, even in the face of the savage treatment he's received, also drives home the point that Khenafsaa, despite his image as an easygoing bon vivant, can be trusted to protect even the most sensitive information.

CHARACTER GOALS

Obviously, the characters are going to want to save Khenafsaa — kindly Arisen will do so to keep their friend from further harm, while more mercenary ones will at least recognize that he likely possesses information that the meret needs. In all likelihood, the meret will also want to kill the

people who've been torturing him (though the characters might want to spare one or two of them for at least long enough to confirm who they work for), or otherwise prevent them from returning to whoever sent them.

CONSEQUENCES

After his rescue, Khenafsaa will answer any questions the characters might have to the best of his ability. The damage his body has sustained will mend in less than a day, but he is going to be in crippling pain for most of that time. Still, he manages to remain conscious and coherent. While he doesn't know much, he has at least one piece of information that will prove to be useful: contact information for one of the Heretic's students on the path of Apotheosis, someone who might be able to give the characters more information on what the Roller is up to.

In the long-term, Khenafsaa will also remember that the meret came to his aid in his hour of greatest need. Even after the events of *The Avarice Chronicle* have concluded, he will go very much out of his way to assist his rescuers, should they ever need him to do so.



CHAPTER VIII

SCENE V: FAR OFF VOICE

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ...

OVERVIEW

For reasons of personal safety, Khenafsaa's acquaintance does not communicate directly with other Arisen in her capacity as a student of the Heretic. She does, however, have a number at which she can be contacted, which reaches her via a labyrinthine series of international connections. Once she is convinced of the reality of the threat — that a Shuankhsen is hunting down people and objects touched by the Heretic — this contact will, if only reluctantly, offer some assistance to the meret. During the call, she speaks modern French, and Khenafsaa translates if no one else can.

This disciple does not know where the Heretic is, and further, she can confirm that he cannot be tracked by any magic known to her. She can also reveal that she has encountered him on several occasions, but has no more than a hazy recollection of those meetings. She believes this effect to be some kind of unknown protective spell that he has woven to keep himself safe from the guilds and the Judges. She is willing to speculate as to why the Roller is doing all of this, and her educated guess is that he has perhaps found a way to open the Sky Above the Sky to the Devourer, if only he can build her a bridge with enough Sekhem attuned to the mysteries of Apotheosis. Still, she will hasten to point out that this is just a supposition based on scant evidence.

Note that Khenafsaa's contact is, effectively, untraceable by the meret at this time. She is hiding behind layers of encryption that filter through the Internet security of at least a few First and Second World nations and multinational corporations. Even if they had a small army of cultist-hackers with cutting-edge computer technology at hand, they still wouldn't have enough resources to break through in the window of time allotted to them by the phone call. Following the Heretic is dangerous business — doubly so, if one chooses to act as a guide for others seeking his wisdom — and security of the highest caliber is a must.

The last thing the contact is willing to divulge is that, as part of her duties for the Heretic, she maintains a catalogue of certain known vessels and their various

locations. One of these, she believes, can help the characters to hunt down the Roller, though doing so is not without significant risks. She will tell the meret that the use of this one particular vessel is their best bet for finding their quarry. She doesn't know all of the specifics, since she's working from the reports of others, but she is given to understand that the vessel will get them close to their enemy. After a few moments, during which the faint clicking of a keyboard can be heard, she reads off a longitude and latitude, gives a password ("Djamun"), and then hangs up.

DESCRIPTION

Khenafsaa's office is surprisingly modest for a man of his voracious appetites. Tasteful accents, harkening back to Iremite artworks, are interspersed throughout. With some difficulty, the Mesen-Nebu retrieves his cellular phone from the inner pocket of a jacket hanging on the back of his swivel chair, punches in a series of numbers, dials, and then sets it to speakerphone and places it on his desk.


For approximately 30 seconds, the phone issues a series of clicks and various tones, and then a lightly distorted female voice abruptly answers, somewhat impatiently and in unaccented modern French. "This call is not according to schedule. Am I to understand, then, that you have some pressing news that concerns me?"

A scant moment afterward, the voice inquires, "Am I on speaker? What's going on? You have ten seconds to explain before I hang up and erase this number permanently."

Weakly, Khenafsaa replies, "Someone — a Shuankhsen — is hunting after *Dreams of Avarice*. He somehow knew that I had your copy, *thirty years ago*. He may come looking for you, and I think he could find you if he wanted. Please, I have others here. They will have questions. They can help. They are here to help..."

STORYTELLER GOALS

In addition to giving the characters a sense of where to turn next, this scene also serves to show that the Heretic's



influence is fairly far-reaching among the Arisen. The ranks of his disciples are clearly not just confined to the fringe elements of Deathless society, but also to those with power and influence within the guilds.

PLAYER GOALS

Having followed the current line of inquiry to its conclusion, the characters need a new direction in which to go. The Heretic's student can supply the meret with some guidance, enabling them to choose a course of action.

ACTIONS

GETTING A HEAD ON THE CONTACT

It is possible for incredibly astute and observant Arisen to attempt to figure out at least *some* clues as to the identity of Khenafsaa's contact, through listening for subtleties of inflect, identifying patterns of speech and specific word choice, and the like.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation versus 10 (the contact's Manipulation + Subterfuge + equipment bonuses)

Action: Extended and contested, with each roll representing one minute of uninterrupted conversation. If the players reach 10 successes first, then they are able to divine some information over the course of the call. If the contact is the first to 10 successes, then the meret is unable to figure anything out before she hangs up.

Hindrances: For the player, one or more other characters are regularly talking while the contact is speaking (-2); for the contact, the meret directly brings up the possibility that she may be targeted by the Roller, too (-3)

Help: For the player, the character speaks French (+1); for the contact, the characters pose no questions or otherwise keep her on the line any longer than absolutely necessary (+1)

Dramatic Failure: For the players, a dramatic failure means that no further rolls may be made, and a wildly erroneous (and potentially dangerous) conclusion is unhesitatingly drawn. For the contact, a dramatic failure costs her all successes rolled, so far.

Failure: Whichever side rolls the failure makes no progress toward its goal.

Success: The character and/or the contact makes progress. If the players are the first to 10 successes, then the meret begins to formulate some ideas on who the contact could be and has a chance to figure out the contact's identity later in the adventure. If the contact reaches 10 successes first, then her identity remains a mystery.


Exceptional Success: If one of the players is the first to score an exceptional success, then no further rolls need be made — the characters make significant strides toward

The Unknown Benefactor

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the mysterious individual who delivered David Hwang's anchor to the meret, thereby setting them on this path, is the Heretic. He has spent long millennia observing various Arisen from afar, attempting to gauge their potential for embarking upon the way of the Mentaar. He has also devoted resources to preserving and protecting the assets — living, material, and Deathless — which he has so painstakingly put into place as subtle markers along the way to Apotheosis. He is not, however, omniscient.

The Heretic's gesture to the meret is not intended to put them in the right place at the right time to save his life. At this point, he actually has no idea that the Roller is even on his heels. (Indeed, he doesn't yet understand that the Roller has stumbled upon a means, however unreliable, of tracking him.) As far as the Heretic can tell, the Shuankhsen is trying to gather up and consume as many artifacts of Apotheosis as possible (whether those are vessels or Arisen) in some horrid perversion of the idea of Apotheosis. The theory seems plausible, as Shuankhsen are twisted reflections of the Deathless.

With that in mind, the Heretic has placed the characters on this path in an attempt to protect some of the people, places, and things that he has seeded out into the world for the benefit of those who might become students of Apotheosis. To the Heretic's mind, their progress also serves as a good indicator of their openness (and worthiness) to begin the journey toward Mentaar, when and if he should have the opportunity to reveal himself to them directly.



figuring out the contact's true identity. If the contact is the first to score an exceptional success, then the players may make no further rolls.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters know exactly where they need to go next — a location near the city of Tataouine, Tunisia — though they do not yet understand how the uter can lead them to the Roller. Indeed, they do not even know what shape the vessel takes or what kind of protections are set upon it, save that a password is required.

Regardless of whether or not the meret has the resources to fly to Tunisia on a moment's notice, Khenafsaa makes a few calls and arranges for transportation (pickup and drop-off at airports, airfare, and vehicle rentals...the



works). He wishes to express a small measure of gratitude toward his saviors and he will hear no refusal of his offer. The characters travel in style on their ally's dime; no expense is spared to see that they make their journey in the lap of luxury.

For his part, Khenafsaa is going to go to ground for a little while. While his wounds will mend within a day, he remains concerned that more of the Shuankhsen's

minions could return to his club to finish the job that the first group started. Better, he figures, to clear out and lie low for at least a few weeks, though he makes certain before he does that the meret has contact information that can be used to get in touch with him, if need be. Further, if no one in the meret regularly carries a phone, Khenafsaa will provide one, so that he can call the characters in the event that he learns anything new.





CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER VIII:

THE HUNTSMAN'S AKHET

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL ••

OVERVIEW

Having received directions from Khenafsaa's mysterious contact, the meret heads to Tataouine, in Tunisia, where the strange *uter* is said to be located. The site is located approximately 20 kilometers outside of the city, away from the prying eyes of mortals and seemingly forgotten by most of the Deathless.

Through Khenafsaa's resources, the meret is provided with a driver, Skander, who will take the mummies out to the location specified. He is a pleasant but superstitious man, and holds the Arisen as a whole in a sort of religious awe. The prospect of driving out to an unknown artifact obviously gives him pause, but he is loyal and will serve to the best of his ability.

The vessel — known as the Huntsman's Akhet — exists within Twilight, though it is readily accessible by mummies, as it was designed partly for their use. It is guarded by ghosts of the Nameless Empire, soldier-shades that have long since forgotten all save duty. They will destroy any who come before them without the word of passage. Fortunately, the characters now have that word, and can pass into the Huntsman's Akhet in safety. What becomes of them after that, however, is a different matter, entirely.

DESCRIPTION

(ARRIVAL)

As you arrive at the coordinates specified by Khenafsaa's unknown contact, you can see, among the stones scattered in the sand, only a few remaining with any trace of human artifice about them. Whatever structure once stood here long ago lost its battle with time and the elements. Still, there is a subtle stirring of power in the air. Even your driver, Skander — one of Khenafsaa's cultists — seems to be able to feel it, and it makes him uneasy enough that he stays in his Humvee.

At your approach, the very dust at your feet seems to vibrate with pent-up energy. The wind curls around you, whipping up little dust devils that dance at your feet, and sparks of static electricity crackle in the air. All at once, the sun dims, and you can no longer hear the sound of Skander idling the engine. The familiar sight of Neter-Khertet resolves before your eyes. Standing before you are several dozen warriors of the ancient world, bearing the arms and attire of slave-soldiers of the Nameless Empire. Harnessed on chains — some portion of their protean forms inexplicably fixed in shape — are two chthonian beasts, which seem to serve these grim sentinels as something like guard dogs. Behind the ranks of the soldiery stands an archway, 10 feet or so in both height and width, seemingly rooted into the earth, which looks to be wrought entirely of the fused bones of well over a score of people. Ribs, spines, skulls, and other bones of all descriptions are flawlessly melded, one into the next, into a vessel of ghastly magnificence.

One of the warriors, perhaps an officer, steps forward. His features are withered with the passing of long years, until even his immaterial flesh seems halfway mummified. He gestures at you with a bone-tipped spear and addresses you in the tongue of your homeland, "The way is barred to all save the Shan'iatu and their loyal servants. You are not priest-kings of the City of Pillars. If you have been sent here by them, you will speak the word of passage. Otherwise," he growls, in the sepulchral tones of the dead, as the rest of the spectral host readies spears and the chthonic beasts strain at their leashes, "you will be destroyed."

(USING THE VESSEL)

Once you have spoken the word given to you, the ghostly soldier bows his head reverently and stands aside. As he does so, the rest of the warriors part rank to allow you access to the monstrous *uter*. Before you pass him by, however, the spokesman addresses you

The Huntsman's Akhet (Uter ●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 10, Structure 14

The strange relic known as the Huntsman's Akhet is a tall archway of fused bone, accessible only via Twilight, and then only from a single particular spot, into which it is permanently rooted. In the days of the Nameless Empire, it was used by certain among the Shan'iatu to hunt down murderers, and as a place of punishment in which to dispose of them. It is defended by a squadron of Iremite ghost-soldiers and a pair of chthonic beasts (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 135). Stepping through the Huntsman's Akhet (which requires either being one of the Shan'iatu, being a mummy and possessing a password created by them, or else defeating all of the gateway's guardians), sends the user into a nether-realm, neither Twilight nor Underworld, known as the Plain of Bones, and from there, back to the material world, hopefully significantly closer to the quarry.

Power: The user simply passes through the Huntsman's Akhet and, from there, into the Plain of Bones. For those who survive the journey through the Plain of Bones, the *uter* deposits them next to an anchor of the ghost of the murderer's most recent victim – specifically, the anchor currently physically closest to the murderer. This effect occurs even if the ghost has not yet had an opportunity to coalesce in Twilight (in the event that the killing was very recent). This vessel can only be activated once in a given Sothic Turn by any individual who is not one of the Shan'iatu. (In "Pearl of Ascent," this restriction is not made known to the characters, but it exists, nonetheless.)

Curse: The Huntsman's Akhet somehow uses memories to preserve the Plain of Bones. Any Arisen who successfully crosses through and returns to the living world must immediately roll for degeneration as if committing a Memory 1 sin.

once more: "One of you must activate the vessel. Speak the name of the criminal whom you wish to find, and it will open the way for you. You must face trials beyond the gate. If you survive them, your road will emerge in the presence of a thing precious to your quarry's most recent victim — something nearby to the place of his crime. I can tell you no more. May the Judges of Duat favor you."

As you pass into the gateway, the land of ghosts fades from your vision, only to be replaced by the sight of some massive and terrifying sandstorm.



CHAPTER TWO

SECTION 1:

THE PLAIN OF BONES

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL ••

OVERVIEW

The characters have entered the gateway created by the ancient uter known as the Huntsman's Akhet. In so doing, they have crossed into a nightmare reflection of the realms of the dead, in which elements of both Duat and Neter-Khertet have been crudely crushed together. It is a place stalked by ghosts of Iremite criminals, cursed by the Shan'iatu, and long since fallen into abject madness and to monstrous spirits whose purpose is to torment those miserable shades. Once, this place was used by certain of the Shan'iatu as both a means to hunt down murderers and, after receiving justice, as an eternal prison for their spirits. The sorcerer-priests of the Nameless Empire knew potent spells by which the Plain of Bones' prisoners might be cowed and held at bay, but the meret has no such protection. The characters will, instead, have to use force of arms, cunning, sorcery, or whatever other means at their disposal to fight off the savage dead and return safely to the world of the living.

While walking the path that leads out of the Plain of Bones, a pack of wrathful shades descends on the meret. Numbering two per character, these creatures should make for a fairly vigorous contest, but ultimately the Arisen outclass them badly, even at low Sekhem. What they lack in power, though, the shades make up for in sheer stubbornness: The very notion of retreat is alien to them. That said, the ghosts can be outwitted or cowed by smart or charismatic characters, just as readily as they can be destroyed.

Note that while David Hwang's anchor is, if still in the meret's possession, physically with the characters, he nevertheless cannot manifest here, whether willingly or otherwise. Preexisting ghosts cannot exist, at all, within the Plain of Bones; for them, it is simply not a part of reality.

DESCRIPTION

The wind screams, here, with the voices of the suffering damned. No sun shows in the roiling gray sky. A chalky

grit blows everywhere, and it takes you but a moment to identify the stuff as powdered bone, a sea of it seemingly as vast as the Sahara, itself. Here, a femur juts out of the dust; there, wind and gravity slowly drag a cracked scapula down a dune of ivory-white powder. Somehow, in defiance of the unnatural elements of this hellish realm, a road stretches out before you, neatly cobbled in the crowns of human skulls. Instinctively, you know that the road is the only safe way, and to leave it is to lose any hope of returning to the lands of the living.

Following the path, however, is no guarantee of safety; after some indeterminate period of time walking the road, you are spotted by a pack of feral ghosts. The one out in front gestures toward you with both hands and an unearthly shriek pours forth from its gaping maw, even as the rest drop onto all fours and scramble toward you with uncanny speed. The corpus of each hangs in grotesque tatters, and its slaving jaws are filled with teeth broken into jagged points.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The most important thing you can do here is to drive home the horror of the Plain of Bones. This is a place that the Shan'iatu created specifically for the purpose of hunting down and punishing murderers eternally. This scene also shows the Arisen that they, too — masters of death and resurrection though they may be — have things to fear, terrible facets of the Nameless Empire's forgotten past. Becoming forever lost here would certainly be no more promising a prospect for the Deathless than it is for mortal ghosts.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters are just trying to get through this place in one piece and out the other side, hopefully within striking distance of the Roller. Inquisitive or especially mystically inclined mummies may also be curious to



learn something about the Plain of Bones' nature. The deliberate creation of a hell is, after all, a feat of sorcerous artifice nearly as impressive as the Rite of Return itself.

STUDYING THE PLAIN OF BONES

As horrific as it is, the Plain of Bones is nevertheless an artifact of Iremite magic, and so might be of interest to certain among the Arisen. While there isn't time enough to study the place in any great detail, astute observers can potentially gather some useful information.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult

Action: Extended. The player may make a total of 10 rolls, and must accrue at least 12 successes to uncover all of the available information, though a lesser number will provide at least some knowledge. The player may make three rolls during this scene, three during the next scene ("A Storm of Memories"), three more during the scene after ("1887"), and one during the scene after that ("Return to the Living").

Hindrances: The character is badly shaken by one of the memories that he experiences (-1), the character's Memory is 2 or less (-2)

Help: The character is a member of the Su-Menent (+1) or has a Sheut Pillar of 4 or greater (+2), the meret brought David Hwang's anchor (+1)

Dramatic Failure: As far as the character is concerned, the Huntsman's Akhet and the Plain of Bones are complete mysteries, completely beyond the understanding of even the Arisen. No further rolls may be made.

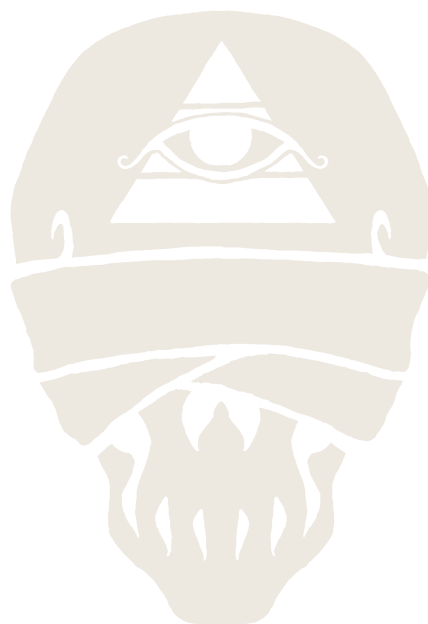
Failure: The mummy gathers no further information.

Success: The character makes progress toward learning something of the nature of this place and the vessel that contains it. Accruing 12 successes reveals that the *uter* and the Plain of Bones are creations of high ritual magic from the Nameless Empire (presumably predating the Rite of Return), that the Huntsman's Akhet may only be activated by any given mummy once per Sothic Turn, that the realm feeds on Memory, and that the Shan'iatu could almost certainly manipulate the Plain of Bones and its denizens in various ways.

Exceptional Success: If the player rolls an exceptional success over the course of the extended action and manages to accrue at least 12 successes by the end of "Return to the Living," he is capable of invoking one of the protocols put into place by the Shan'iatu, gaining one of the ghosts of the Plain of Bones as a spectral servant. The mummy assigns two ghost Numina to the shade, and becomes its sole anchor in the living world. The ghost obeys the character to the best of its abilities, as though it were a loyal pet.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters have navigated the first trial of the Plain of Bones and are drawing nearer to the Roller with each step. One or more characters may have gained a ghostly servitor. Those who care to inquire into how the place was created may also have fodder for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

SCENE II:

A STORM OF MEMORIES

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

While the Shan'iatu who created the Plain of Bones created it such that those who had undertaken the Rite of Return *could* traverse its lengths, the uncertain status of the Arisen between life and death makes for certain complications. The realm, while not intelligent, does possess a sort of awareness, and it isn't exactly sure what to make of mummies. The surest way to check that they are Arisen and not mere ghosts, however, is to plumb the depths of Memory — something only the Arisen have.

Since the characters (unsurprisingly) don't have one of the Shan'iatu accompanying them, and they are not presently shown to the realm for what they are by Iremite spells specifically intended to do so, the Plain of Bones needs to look into the characters' respective histories to identify them. This draws memories — most of them probably long since forgotten in the endless march of time — to the forefront, compelling the members of the meret to relive various moments from history.

DESCRIPTION

The skull-cobbled road very nearly vanishes in gritty gales of powdered bone, but you keep your eyes on your feet and continue to forge ahead without losing the path. As you move forward, voices seem to call to you on the wind, and there is something familiar to them, though you can't quite make out what they are saying.

Amidst the swirling dust, fleeting visions start to appear, like mirages. These half-glimpsed scenes disappear before they can truly resolve into anything, but flashes emerge of people and places you remember, if only barely. It is as though the dust-storm creeps into forgotten corners of your history, coaxing these long-ago times toward the forefront of your consciousness.

Even as you press onward, still feeling the skulls beneath your feet, the roaring winds marshal their strength and

blast aside the present, drawing you into the depths of memory....

STORYTELLER GOALS

This scene gives you a chance to explore the theme of memory, and to perhaps reveal lost pieces of the characters' history to the players through brief (or, if you prefer, longer) vignettes. If you want to, and your troupe is feeling up to it, each character can experience one or two memories, in which the other players take on the roles of various Storyteller characters.

Some ideas for memories conjured up by the Plain of Bones:

- **Thebes** (known to the natives as Waset), under the reign of Hatshepsut: Rumors abound among the Arisen, regarding the possibility of a rogue mummy (perhaps even a Shuankhsen — the stories are unclear) gathering a massive cult of savages in the north for an invasion. Some stand on the side of evacuating and allowing the will of Fate to play out, while others advocate remaining and making a stand.
- **Babylon**, during the rule of the Achaemenids: The mummy is dining with a wealthy and influential merchant, who has heard miraculous stories about his guest being a powerful sorcerer. Different members of the merchant's immediate family have their own opinions regarding these fanciful tales, ranging from abject incredulity to a fervent desire to believe.
- **Londinium**, during the 4th century CE: A Sadikh in service to a local member of the Maa-Kep has discovered a particularly potent vessel, believed to be a relic of the Deceived. Mummies in the city are divided as to what should be done with it. Some believe that its Sekhem should be returned



to the Judges immediately, while others maintain that it would be wiser to study the object, even as the risk of destroying it and losing the power contained within, in an attempt to learn more about the Lost Guild.

- **A desolate and isolated tomb**, around 1,000 CE: The mummy rises from the sleep of death to discover that a handful of her cultists has awakened her. But these cultists are barely more than children. A sudden and terrible sickness has claimed all of the elders, and now one of the youths must take up the mantle of high priest, but they cannot decide amongst themselves which of them it should be.
- **The Karakum Desert**, in the late 17th century: A group of revenants stand guard over a piece of Iremite sculpture. It is a perfectly mundane artifact, but it is also a piece of the Nameless Empire's history, left on the Silk Road in centuries long past. The revenants are theoretically willing to part with the object, but they must be convinced that the mummy is the right person to hand it over to, as their ability to return to their graves depends upon their choosing wisely.
- **Barcelona**, Spain, mid-March, 1938: The city is being devastated by Mussolini's bombardment, and the mummy, awaiting a chance to get out of the region, is holed up with a few survivors. One claims to have seen a creature nearby, seemingly feeding on the dead; a monster with the body of some kind of dog and the head of a snake. No one else really believes this person, but some want to

flee the area, while others feel that staying put is the best idea.

If you feel that such is warranted, dice rolls may be made for certain actions, but they aren't strictly necessary. Even if a given character's actions led to a death cycle, after all, it's all (possibly ancient) history. This scene exists primarily for the players to have a chance to decide not just who their characters are, now, but also who they were in previous decades, centuries, or millennia, and how they might have changed (or remained the same) during all those years.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters just need to navigate these memories (even as the players roleplay through them). If the players like, they can certainly tie their character's actions and decisions in these newly-rediscovered memories into their mummies' current stories — perhaps a player wants a branch of her character's cult to descend from allies cultivated during the Reconquista, or that the carved bone cufflinks he wears in modern times were actually made from the skeleton of the lesser Amkhat that poisoned and killed his mortal lover during the fall of the Roman Empire.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters now have more of a handle on who they were, and, in turn, who they have become. They have also ventured into their own histories and are close to proving to the Plain of Bones that they are guests and not prisoners. They are ready to head into the final memory, one shared by all of the members of the meret.



CHAPTER TWO

SOthic III: 1887

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ...

OVERVIEW

In this memory, a copy of the Heretic's *Dreams of Avarice* has come into the possession of a prominent member of the Sesha-Hebsu, by way of the characters' actions — a papyrus bearing the Heretic's words was inexplicably found among a collection of old Iremite writings that the meret recently turned over to the guild of Scribes. Now, the characters are under suspicion of having some involvement with the Heretic, and they have been summoned to a meeting with a ranking member of the Sesha-Hebsu to explain themselves.

The interview takes place at night, on a train ride between Cairo and Alexandria. The Scribe conducting the inquiry — Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, a powerful member of her guild — has had the characters brought to her private car, so that she can interrogate them personally. Members of her cult, including her Sadikh, also occupy the car, waiting on their mistress' whims...and also to act as an unsubtle show of power.

It is important to note that the characters had no way of knowing that *Dreams of Avarice* was concealed amongst the papyri. They are completely innocent of any wrongdoing: An agent of the Heretic, someone unknown to the characters, misguidedly slipped the text in *after* the meret turned over their find, but before the leaders of the Sesha-Hebsu had an opportunity to peruse its contents. In essence, the characters are the victims of a stroke of bad luck.

This will come out over the course of the interview, and it becomes apparent that devotees of the Heretic exist even within the guilds' halls of power. The resentment that the guild leaders feel toward him begins to make more sense, as it is clear that he is, whether intentionally or not — and in addition to daring to question the wisdom and rightful rule of the Judges of Duat — slowly undermining the authority of the Arisen leadership in this world.

DESCRIPTION

The Egyptian desert passes by, silver under the light of the full moon. The train chugs and rattles, though those sounds are somewhat muted, back here in a private

luxury car. While most of the passengers sleep, immortals are wakeful among them, discussing a disturbing development in Arisen society.

Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, a powerful and respected Scribe of the Sesha-Hebsu, regards all of you with hawkish eyes. She is silent for a long moment, sitting very nearly as still as a statue, her teacup held delicately in her fine-boned hands. The quiet stretches on long enough to begin verging on becoming uncomfortable, when she finally speaks, "I have questions."

A servant seated nearby rises and, with a bow, places a stack of papyri before Ta-Nefu-Sheheri. She waves him away and he retreats back to his place, awaiting any further instructions. Without any explanation, the revered Scribe asks, "How did this...document...come to be among those writings which you salvaged for the Sesha-Hebsu? Do you take this for some sort of sick jest?"

She then sets a fingertip down upon the text and roughly pushes it across the table toward you, turning it as she does so, enabling you to read the flawlessly rendered Iremite sigils as the top of the first page: *Dreams of Avarice*. Ta-Nefu-Sheheri's eyes dart up to gaze at each of you, in turn. "You will tell me where you got this and from whom, and why you placed it among the other writings that you found. I know that there is no possible way it could have been among the other papyri when you first discovered them — master scribes of the Sesha-Hebsu have analyzed all of the texts, and this one was created no more than 2,000 years ago. That tomb, and all of the other papyri within, had lain undisturbed for at least three millennia, and all of the writings were far older than that."

STORYTELLER GOALS

This scene illustrates that the Heretic's writings are not the product of the Fourth Sothic Turn — they go back further than that, and some Arisen have been contemplating those words for a very long time, indeed. Also, Ta-Nefu-Sheheri's hostility toward the Heretic serves as a summary of the guilds' collective stance with respect to the renegade Arisen. This scene should show that the leadership of the guilds despises the Heretic — and, also, that these lofty Arisen *fear* him, and what his



teachings could mean for the future of the Deathless (and their position at the apex of their immortal society). The Heretic is an agent of change, and change never goes easy on those in power.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters must, first and foremost, prove their innocence of any complicity with the Heretic or involvement in his works. They had no way of knowing how his text came to be part of a collection of 6,000-year-old scrolls, but Ta-Nefu-Sheheri is severe and suspicious, and accustomed to acting the part of an inquisitor for her guild in matters of orthodoxy to the ways of the Arisen. Fortunately, they truly *are* innocent of any wrongdoing, and this inquiry will soon prove that to the honored Scribe's satisfaction.

After establishing innocence, the characters can dig a bit into what the guilds know (or, at least, *think* they know) about the Heretic and his forbidden text. Ta-Nefu-Sheheri is at least theoretically willing to discuss the matter to some small degree, and she can be coaxed into yielding further information by those capable of satisfactory displays of academic acumen or respectful charm.

ACTIONS

INQUIRING ABOUT THE HERETIC

Given that they have been called before an elder of the Sesha-Hebsu to answer the question of whether or not they are involved with the Heretic, it is likely that they will wish to ask Ta-Nefu-Sheheri what she knows (or, at least, suspects) about him.

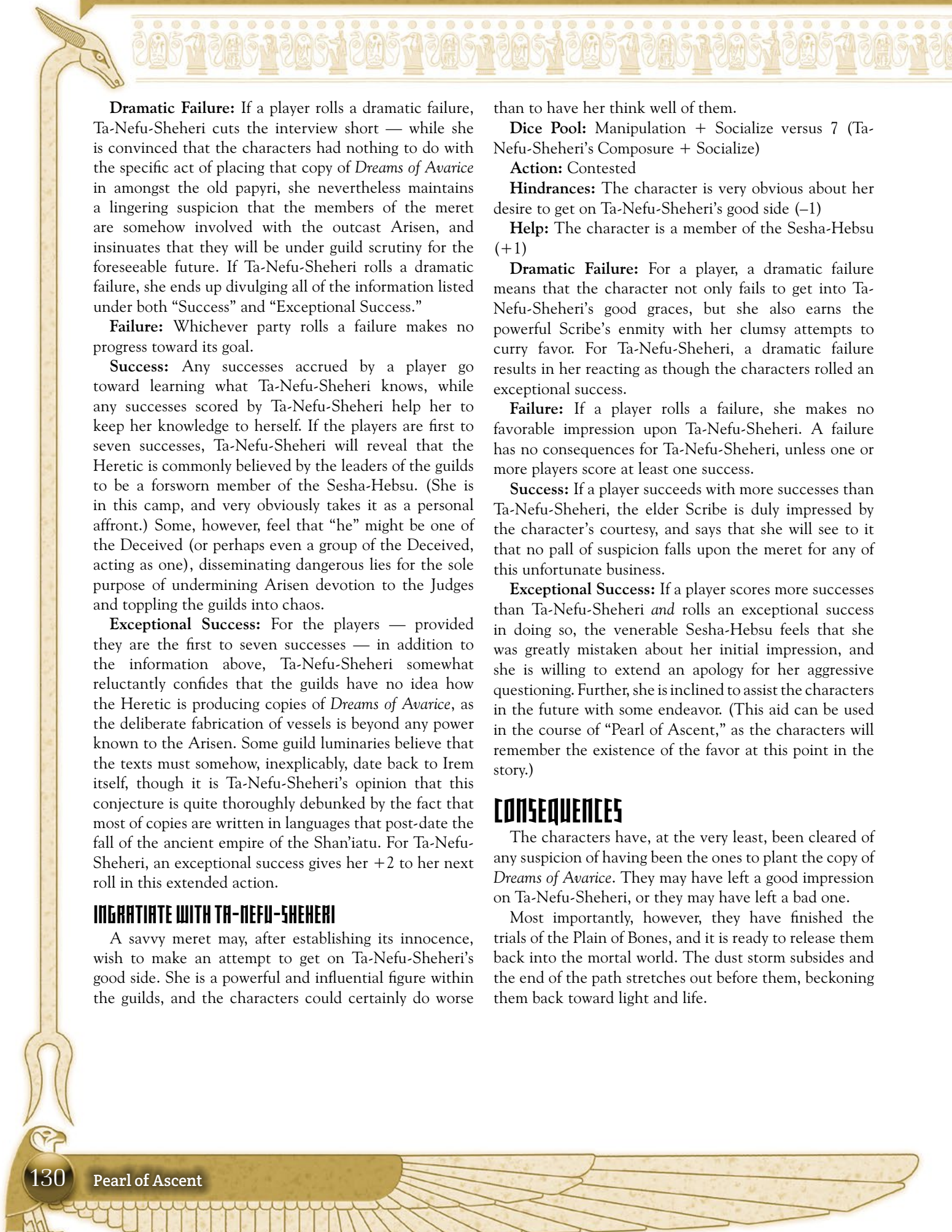
Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation versus 7 (Ta-Nefu-Sheheri's Resolve + Composure)

Action: Extended and contested, with each roll representing 15 minutes of conversation. If the players are able to reach seven successes first, then Ta-Nefu-Sheheri divulges what she knows. If she reaches seven successes first, then she cuts the conversation short and dismisses the meret from her presence.

Hindrances: The characters are rude or irreverent (-2), the characters express obvious eagerness to learn about the Heretic and/or his writings (-3)

Help: The meret comports itself with humility (+1) or appeals to Ta-Nefu-Sheheri's absolute faith in the cosmic order of the Nameless Empire (+2)





Dramatic Failure: If a player rolls a dramatic failure, Ta-Nefu-Sheheri cuts the interview short — while she is convinced that the characters had nothing to do with the specific act of placing that copy of *Dreams of Avarice* amongst the old papyri, she nevertheless maintains a lingering suspicion that the members of the meret are somehow involved with the outcast Arisen, and insinuates that they will be under guild scrutiny for the foreseeable future. If Ta-Nefu-Sheheri rolls a dramatic failure, she ends up divulging all of the information listed under both “Success” and “Exceptional Success.”

Failure: Whichever party rolls a failure makes no progress toward its goal.

Success: Any successes accrued by a player go toward learning what Ta-Nefu-Sheheri knows, while any successes scored by Ta-Nefu-Sheheri help her to keep her knowledge to herself. If the players are first to seven successes, Ta-Nefu-Sheheri will reveal that the Heretic is commonly believed by the leaders of the guilds to be a forsworn member of the Sessa-Hebsu. (She is in this camp, and very obviously takes it as a personal affront.) Some, however, feel that “he” might be one of the Deceived (or perhaps even a group of the Deceived, acting as one), disseminating dangerous lies for the sole purpose of undermining Arisen devotion to the Judges and toppling the guilds into chaos.

Exceptional Success: For the players — provided they are the first to seven successes — in addition to the information above, Ta-Nefu-Sheheri somewhat reluctantly confides that the guilds have no idea how the Heretic is producing copies of *Dreams of Avarice*, as the deliberate fabrication of vessels is beyond any power known to the Arisen. Some guild luminaries believe that the texts must somehow, inexplicably, date back to Irem itself, though it is Ta-Nefu-Sheheri’s opinion that this conjecture is quite thoroughly debunked by the fact that most of copies are written in languages that post-date the fall of the ancient empire of the Shan’iatu. For Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, an exceptional success gives her +2 to her next roll in this extended action.

INGRATIATE WITH TA-NEFU-SHEHERI

A savvy meret may, after establishing its innocence, wish to make an attempt to get on Ta-Nefu-Sheheri’s good side. She is a powerful and influential figure within the guilds, and the characters could certainly do worse

than to have her think well of them.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize versus 7 (Ta-Nefu-Sheheri’s Composure + Socialize)

Action: Contested

Hindrances: The character is very obvious about her desire to get on Ta-Nefu-Sheheri’s good side (–1)

Help: The character is a member of the Sessa-Hebsu (+1)

Dramatic Failure: For a player, a dramatic failure means that the character not only fails to get into Ta-Nefu-Sheheri’s good graces, but she also earns the powerful Scribe’s enmity with her clumsy attempts to curry favor. For Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, a dramatic failure results in her reacting as though the characters rolled an exceptional success.

Failure: If a player rolls a failure, she makes no favorable impression upon Ta-Nefu-Sheheri. A failure has no consequences for Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, unless one or more players score at least one success.

Success: If a player succeeds with more successes than Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, the elder Scribe is duly impressed by the character’s courtesy, and says that she will see to it that no pall of suspicion falls upon the meret for any of this unfortunate business.

Exceptional Success: If a player scores more successes than Ta-Nefu-Sheheri *and* rolls an exceptional success in doing so, the venerable Sessa-Hebsu feels that she was greatly mistaken about her initial impression, and she is willing to extend an apology for her aggressive questioning. Further, she is inclined to assist the characters in the future with some endeavor. (This aid can be used in the course of “Pearl of Ascent,” as the characters will remember the existence of the favor at this point in the story.)

CONSEQUENCES

The characters have, at the very least, been cleared of any suspicion of having been the ones to plant the copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. They may have left a good impression on Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, or they may have left a bad one.

Most importantly, however, they have finished the trials of the Plain of Bones, and it is ready to release them back into the mortal world. The dust storm subsides and the end of the path stretches out before them, beckoning them back toward light and life.

CHAPTER TWO

SCENE IV:

RETURN TO THE LIVING

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

After passing through their memory of meeting with Ta-Nefu-Sheheri, the characters approach the exit to the Plain of Bones. They meet with one of the guardians of the realm and are deposited back in the living world, near the site of the Roller's most recent killing.

DESCRIPTION

As you approach the end of the skull road, a figure awaits you. Its dark gray flesh is withered taut over its bones, and its head is a jackal's skull. It is dressed in the regalia of a nobleman and carries a golden staff in its left hand. A hoarse, grating voice emanates from the being, seemingly from somewhere within its gleaming white jaws, though its mouth does not move, "I greet you, honored ones. You have traversed the road with strength and courage. I shall open the way back to the realm of flesh. Long has it been since I have tasted the fruit of remembrance, and so you have my thanks."

Then, without any further explanation, the creature strikes the ground at its feet with the butt of its staff, and the howling winds of the Plain of Bones die down almost to nothing. The entire place seems to hold its breath in anticipation.

Suddenly, you are all overwhelmed by a wrenching sensation, and your vision blurs. You feel as if you are stumbling and staggering, even while standing still. A voice — a woman's voice — is screaming and crying in terrible anguish, but you cannot quite make out her words. There's blood everywhere. Bones crack with the sound of splintering wood. Her bones? Your bones? A wave of pain overwhelms you.

You are standing by a tree, next to a house. You are sitting with your husband and with friends, on a blanket, spread out under the tree, as the summer sun filters down through the leaves. You are holding your husband's hands, under the tree, when you tell him that you're pregnant.

You can see it from your living room. From your office. It is the first thing of home to greet you as you turn off of the rural road and up the driveway.

You are all scattered haphazardly on the ground, in the dark, beneath the tree which was so dear to the woman that you now know to be the one whose pain you just felt. As Arisen, you know enough of the restless dead to instantly deduce that you have been deposited at a ghost's anchor — presumably, the woman you saw in your vision is dead, and her death is somehow connected to the Roller.

STORYTELLER GOALS

This is the tipping point, at which the meret's pursuit of the Roller really starts to speed up. From this point onwards, until the final confrontation, the characters are turning the tables and gradually putting the Shuankhsen more and more on the defensive. While the characters may be discouraged that they've arrived too late to confront their foe (or to stop him from his ruthless slaughter), they can take heart in the fact that they've made the transition from stumbling along in the dark to being hot on the Roller's heels.

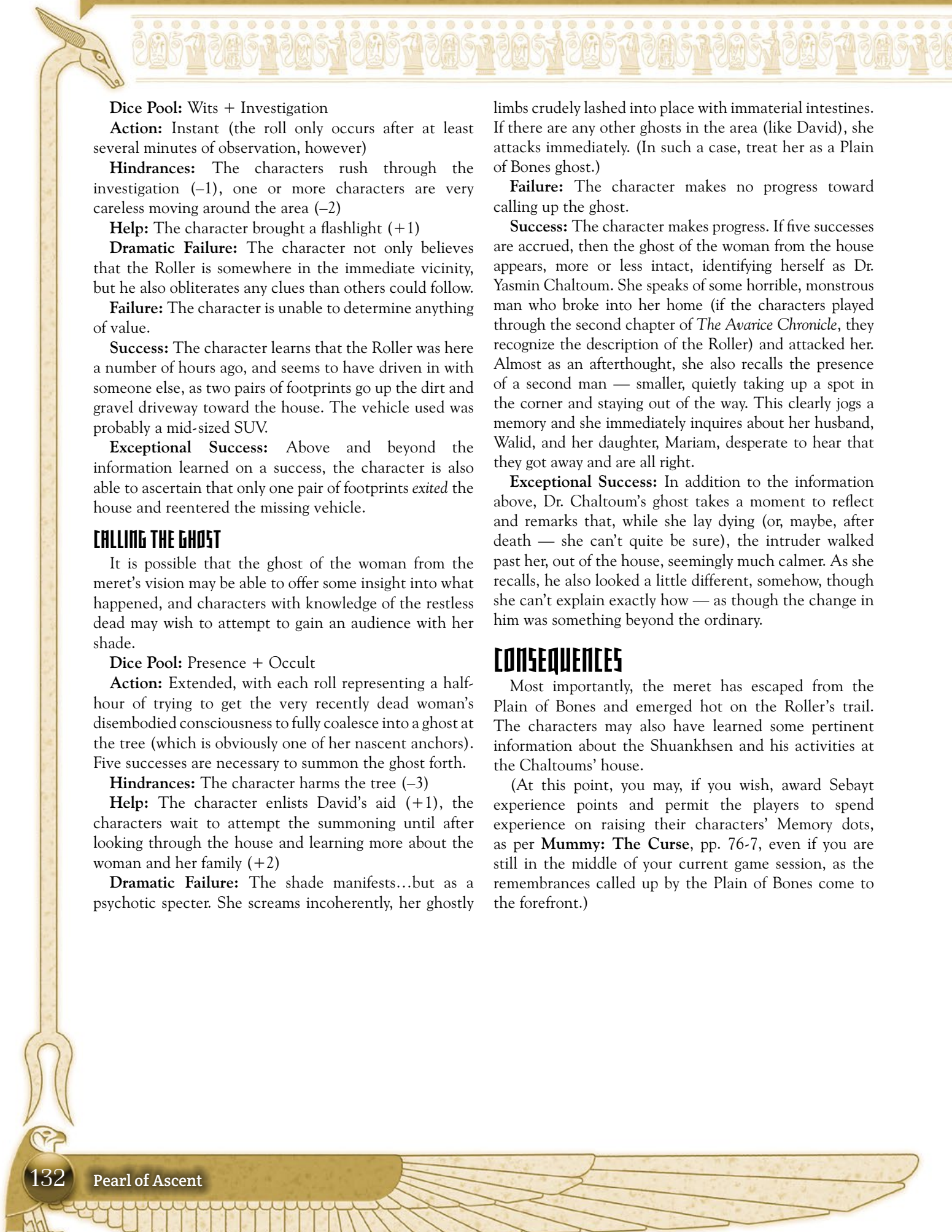
CHARACTER GOALS

The characters may want to survey the area, to see what clues, if any, the Roller left in his passing. They might also want to try to call up the ghost of the woman from their vision (though they'll almost certainly have greater luck with that *after* checking out the house and perhaps learning a bit more about her).

ACTIONS

LOOKING FOR CLUES

The meret may want to check out the area and see if the Roller is still nearby or, if not, whether he left any signs of his passing.



Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Instant (the roll only occurs after at least several minutes of observation, however)

Hindrances: The characters rush through the investigation (-1), one or more characters are very careless moving around the area (-2)

Help: The character brought a flashlight (+1)

Dramatic Failure: The character not only believes that the Roller is somewhere in the immediate vicinity, but he also obliterates any clues than others could follow.

Failure: The character is unable to determine anything of value.

Success: The character learns that the Roller was here a number of hours ago, and seems to have driven in with someone else, as two pairs of footprints go up the dirt and gravel driveway toward the house. The vehicle used was probably a mid-sized SUV.

Exceptional Success: Above and beyond the information learned on a success, the character is also able to ascertain that only one pair of footprints *exited* the house and reentered the missing vehicle.

CALLING THE GHOST

It is possible that the ghost of the woman from the meret's vision may be able to offer some insight into what happened, and characters with knowledge of the restless dead may wish to attempt to gain an audience with her shade.

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult

Action: Extended, with each roll representing a half-hour of trying to get the very recently dead woman's disembodied consciousness to fully coalesce into a ghost at the tree (which is obviously one of her nascent anchors). Five successes are necessary to summon the ghost forth.

Hindrances: The character harms the tree (-3)

Help: The character enlists David's aid (+1), the characters wait to attempt the summoning until after looking through the house and learning more about the woman and her family (+2)

Dramatic Failure: The shade manifests...but as a psychotic specter. She screams incoherently, her ghostly

limbs crudely lashed into place with immaterial intestines. If there are any other ghosts in the area (like David), she attacks immediately. (In such a case, treat her as a Plain of Bones ghost.)

Failure: The character makes no progress toward calling up the ghost.

Success: The character makes progress. If five successes are accrued, then the ghost of the woman from the house appears, more or less intact, identifying herself as Dr. Yasmin Chaltoum. She speaks of some horrible, monstrous man who broke into her home (if the characters played through the second chapter of *The Avarice Chronicle*, they recognize the description of the Roller) and attacked her. Almost as an afterthought, she also recalls the presence of a second man — smaller, quietly taking up a spot in the corner and staying out of the way. This clearly jogs a memory and she immediately inquires about her husband, Walid, and her daughter, Mariam, desperate to hear that they got away and are all right.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the information above, Dr. Chaltoum's ghost takes a moment to reflect and remarks that, while she lay dying (or, maybe, after death — she can't quite be sure), the intruder walked past her, out of the house, seemingly much calmer. As she recalls, he also looked a little different, somehow, though she can't explain exactly how — as though the change in him was something beyond the ordinary.

CONSEQUENCES

Most importantly, the meret has escaped from the Plain of Bones and emerged hot on the Roller's trail. The characters may also have learned some pertinent information about the Shuankhsen and his activities at the Chaltoums' house.

(At this point, you may, if you wish, award Sebait experience points and permit the players to spend experience on raising their characters' Memory dots, as per **Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 76-7, even if you are still in the middle of your current game session, as the remembrances called up by the Plain of Bones come to the forefront.)

CHAPTER TWO

SCENE V:

WORDS WITH A HUSK

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••

OVERVIEW

The meret arrives too late to save the residents of the house (or to prevent the Roller from acquiring and absconding with a powerful mystic relic), but a development utterly unexpected by the Shuankhsen threatens his plans — namely, his loyal Fasad, Vincent Cutter, whom he killed to access the power of the vessel he stole, is somehow alive and conscious when the characters enter the scene.

Having been sacrificed to a vessel, called the Urn of Whispers, and due to the metaphysical differences between Arisen and Shuankhsen, Vincent has been set free from the Roller's thrall. Normally, this sort of thing is impossible, but the Urn was never meant for the Lifeless, and its side-effects when used by one are unpredictable and unprecedented. Of course, this also wouldn't mean much of anything, under ordinary circumstances, as Vincent would therefore simply be dead; but Ammut

is a jealous mistress and it is her nature to oppose the will of the Judges — who have, after a fashion, chosen the Roller as their agent against the Heretic. Thus, she has returned the Fasad to his mockery of life to inform the characters of what is happening, so that they might correct her wayward slave.

Vincent is in the basement, having just finished taking apart the time bomb that he made out of the house's boiler before going under the Roller's knife. He is shaken and scared, and unsure of exactly how he returned to life — though he knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, *why* he was sent back.

DESCRIPTION

(ENTERING THE HOUSE)

The house is a shambles. It's clear that the Roller has already done his work here. A woman and a man, both apparently in their late 30s or early 40s, and a toddler are dead in the living room. A mortal would likely guess that all three have been torn apart by wild animals, but you know the gruesome marks of a Shuankhsen's bite for what they are. The Roller was clearly taking no chances and leaving no witnesses. Even a cursory examination of the ground floor reveals that things are missing, though the chaotic state of the place makes it impossible to tell what was taken or why. Mail sitting on a table next to the front door indicates that this was the residence of Dr. Yasmin Chaltoum and her husband, Mr. Walid Chaltoum.

Just a few minutes into your investigation, before you've had a chance to go either upstairs or downstairs, a shaky, somewhat breathless voice calls up from the basement, "Is someone up there? Am I still dead?"


(THE BASEMENT)

Iremite hieroglyphs are rudely scratched into the exposed drywall of the Chaltoums' basement —

True Name? Urn? What?

If you haven't played through the previous chapter of *The Avarice Chronicle*, then you haven't necessarily involved the Deceived in your story. If that's the case, then there's obviously no reason for the Roller to steal a vessel that foils Arisen True Name magic.

In such a situation, you are encouraged to come up with some other magical object that the Roller might need or want for his upcoming confrontation with the Heretic (perhaps even something that harks back to characters or events from your own chronicle), as well as a reason why he would have to sacrifice one of his Fasad to obtain and/or activate it.



blasphemous sigils of death everlasting and True Names twisted to monstrous purpose. Near the boiler — which looks to have been partly disassembled — a man is leaning against the wall for support. A livid red stain spreads from a hole in his off-white dress shirt, just over his heart. He appears to be unsteady on his feet and even the very act of propping himself up seems to tax the limits of his strength.

He regards all of you with the cold eyes of a dead man, though the tremor in his voice belies his eerily calm expression. “You...are you...did the Roller send you to finish me off? Did something go wrong with the sacrifice?” He forces himself to stand upright, wobbling just a little as he does so, and straightens the collar of his shirt. His tone hardens and becomes more self-assured. “If you’re here to kill me again, I have no doubt you can do it, but I won’t go without a fight.”

STORYTELLER GOALS

Perhaps the most important piece of information to convey in this scene is that fact that Nightmare Alley is currently parked in an out-of-the-way location, and that it is vulnerable without its master to protect it. The meret is in a position to do a great deal of harm to the Roller’s entire operation, and to badly compromise the resources at his disposal as he moves toward his final objective, whatever that might be. (More mercenary or acquisitive Arisen might note that there is also the chance that the Roller has vessels of power or other objects of interest stored away there.)

Of greater significance, though on a level that the characters may not really be able to grapple with or process at this juncture, is the knowledge that the Judges have, for whatever reason, apparently assisted the Roller in his current quest. Vincent possesses no frame of reference for what the Shuankhsen’s self-appointed task actually is, however, so this information is perhaps all the more disturbing. Compounding the conundrum at hand is the Devourer’s involvement, returning Vincent to his sad semblance of life for the sole purpose of giving the meret ammunition to use against her own creature.

In short, the characters should walk away from this scene unsure as to which side they’re on — indeed, which side they’re even *supposed* to be on. If the Judges are, indeed, aiding one of the Shuankhsen, and Ammut is attempting to thwart the ambitions of a being in her own service, then many of the core assumptions of Arisen society have been cast into doubt and disarray. Surely, any series of events which so inverts the order of things must be monumental in its implications for the future of the Deathless.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters have the opportunity to find out some of what the Roller ultimately intends to do, as well as learning some disturbing information about the metaphysical underpinnings of this entire conflict. If they play their cards right, they can also get a renegade Fasad — an occurrence unprecedented in known Arisen history — on their side, for however long the unfortunate creature lasts.

Vincent is the characters’ single most valuable source of information on the Roller’s plans, to date. He can and will gladly spill anything and everything that he believes could even potentially be harmful to his former master. Here, they have a chance to play catch-up and find out some things that will surely disturb them, in both the short and long term.

QUESTIONS FOR VINCENT

Below are some questions that the characters are likely to want to ask Vincent, as well as the Fasad’s answers to each:

What did the Roller take from this house? (Answer: “It was called ‘the Urn of Whispers.’ I have no idea what that means, though. He may have also grabbed some other things, but I was already dead, by then, and — in any case — the Urn was what he came for.”)

How did the Roller discover the existence of the Urn of Whispers? (Answer: “I don’t know, for sure — only that he said something about ‘forty-two who spoke with a single voice.’ He says that they told him about it. He took it as a sign that all of Ma’at desired his ascension.”)

Why did he send you to look for it? (Answer: “Because, of all of his Fasad, I was the only one who could pass for mortal in a face-to-face conversation, and this errand involved a good deal of human interaction.”)

Why does he need the Urn? (Answer: “He doesn’t — *didn’t* — tell me those kinds of things. He gave me an order. I followed it.” After a moment’s pause, Vincent adds, “As I was leaving Nightmare Alley, he looked right at me and muttered something about angering people who would use his name against him, if that makes any sense to you?”)

What are your master’s plans? (Answer: “I don’t know. I assume, though, that they have something to do with eating someone or something for power. That’s a fairly comprehensive summary of his *modus operandi*.”)

Do you know where he’s going next? (Answer: “No. From what he said before he killed me, though, he’s not expecting it to keep him occupied long.”)

Do you know where Nightmare Alley is, right now? (Answer: “Moonville, Ohio. Right near the haunted train tunnel. It’s one of his favorite places to park the operation while he’s otherwise engaged. If you want to hurt his plans, I suggest starting there.”)

How did you return from death without the Roller's intervention? (Answer: "I...don't know. I saw...something — darkness, everywhere, and a mouth without a face, full of fangs, I think? A voice. A woman's voice? It spoke a language I didn't know, but I understood her words, anyway: 'Tell the judges' slaves what you have learned.' I suppose she must have meant you. Do you work for some judges, or something like that?")

Are you still loyal to the Roller? (Answer: "That bastard killed me and didn't even bother to raise me up again. I've served him loyally my entire life, and this was how he repaid me. I let him murder me — twice! I owe him nothing, except maybe a knife between his ribs.")

What are you going to do, now? (Answer: <bitter laugh> "Slowly decompose and go mad, I suppose? Before I do, though, maybe I'll tip off the IRS and the HMRC about Nightmare Alley. I might just buy a yacht with my former master's money and give myself a Viking funeral when looking in the mirror becomes too difficult to bear. I can hold it at bay for a while, but I'm guessing I can't do it forever.")

Will you work for us against the Roller? (Answer: "If you can save my life and keep me from turning into a shambling corpse, then...yes. Otherwise, why should I? I've done what that voice in the dark wanted...my obligation ends there.")

CONSEQUENCES

The characters now know rather a bit more regarding what the Roller intends to do and where to attack to cripple the heart of his operation, and they also have some very weighty metaphysical questions to ponder. If the Judges hate and fear the Heretic so much that they would betray the very principles that they stand for by giving aid to one of Ammut's creatures, then nothing is certain, anymore.

After hearing what he has to say, it's possible that the meret has simply killed Vincent, leaving him to the Devourer's mercy, or they may have let him go — or even won him over to their side. If the Fasad "survives" the encounter, then he may well make another appearance before the end.

The Urn of Whispers (Effigy ●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 3, Structure 7

A unique holdover, created by ancient Tef-Aabhi magics no longer possible in this world, the Urn of Whispers was a precaution intended to be used in the betrayal of those who would come to be known as the Deceived. Initially, it was one of five such relics — one for each guild of betrayers — and is the only one to survive to modern times; the other four fulfilled the purpose for which they were created, then shattered when next their owners entered the repose of henet.

The Urn functions by effectively concealing part of the owner's identity within (in the case of the Roller, it hides his remnant — an act which, as a Shuankhsen, also required pledging the name of one of his husks), rendering him beyond the scope of the magic of the Deceived. Unable to target the name of an intended victim, mummies of the Lost Guild find that most of their sorceries slip off of the subject without effect. The protection lasts the current Descent, and if the subject uses it to ward off Deceived magic more than once during that Descent, the Urn shatters when the spirit next quits the body, releasing the captured fragment of the user's soul so that the spirit may be whole for its journey; otherwise, it remains active when the mummy next arises into a new Descent.

Power: By expending a Willpower *dot* (which may be re-purchased at a cost of eight experience points) and a dot of Sekhem, a mummy may conceal a piece of his identity within the Urn of Whispers. While the fragment of fundamental self is so hidden, he is all but immune to the magic of the Deceived. First- and second-tier Deceived Utterances fail to affect him at all, and he receives a bonus to his Supernatural Advantage rating equal to his Sekhem rating against the effects of third-tier Deceived spells (e.g., the Roller, who has Sekhem 7, would get a Supernatural Advantage rating of 14 against Deceived magic, either reducing an attack's dice pool by 14 or giving him 14 dice with which to resist). Obviously, he gains no protection from a physical effect created by Deceived magic, but does from Deceived spells that would affect him directly or with magic in its raw state. He also gains the bonus to resist Deceived Affinities that target him, as well as any untyped effects listed as powers under a seba relic.

Curse: Tearing away a piece of oneself is not without cost. For so long as a fragment of his identity remains within the Urn of Whispers, a character's soul is painfully divided; he bears an active severe derangement (see **World of Darkness**, pp. 96-100) and suffers a -1 die penalty to all rolls to resist degeneration. Tef-Aabhi, being masters of effigies, only suffer from a mild derangement, with no penalty to resisting degeneration.

CHAPTER TWO

SCENE VI: WHILE THE MISTERS AWAY ...

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

The meret now knows where Nightmare Alley is currently located, and that the Roller is far away, attending to secret business of his own. This is the perfect opportunity to attack the Shuankhsen's support network. Moonville, Ohio, is a ghost town — a perfect hideaway (one of many) for the Roller's sideshow during downtime. The location's isolation, however, also means that mortal scrutiny is near to nil, and the Arisen can bring their full supernatural fury to bear against their enemy's servants without reservation. Performers and crew — cultists and other servants of the Roller — mill around, unaware of anything amiss. They've been to these kinds of hidey-holes too many times without incident to suspect an attack.

In addition to numerous cultists and four active and animate Fasad, three greater Amkhata lurk around the periphery of Nightmare Alley, ever so slightly out of synch with the rest of reality. With the Roller gone — and, thus, unable to command them to come forth — the Amkhata have no ability to enter the material realm...unless, of course, Arisen bring vessels with them (they won't touch their master's vessels, but anyone else's are fair game) and/or otherwise start slinging around a lot of Sekhem. Then, all bets are off, and the monsters can manifest. As it turns out, the broken souls peopling Nightmare Alley have enough experience with these beasts that they can — though terrified to the very cores of their beings — continue mounting a defense while the Amkhata attempt to kill the interlopers.

You should tailor the specific power level of the Amkhata to the number of characters in the meret, and to their general level of combat ability. The fight should be very challenging, but not impossible. It's entirely likely that one or more characters could end up dead (at least, dead for as long as it takes to raise them up again), depending on the luck of the dice.

DESCRIPTION

When broken down between appearances, Nightmare Alley looks nowhere near as imposing as when the show is in full swing. All of the trappings that lend mystery and terror to the sideshow are stowed away, and it appears more like a somewhat haphazard encampment of slightly run-down RVs, with a couple of 18-wheelers. About a half-dozen motorcycles are parked, here and there. The place smells of damp earth, grilling meat, cheap booze, tobacco and marijuana smoke, old sweat, and some subtle traces of stranger (and fouler) odors at least passingly familiar to most Arisen.

STORYTELLER GOALS

First and foremost, this scene is intended to give the players' characters the feeling that they *can* harm the Roller in a meaningful way; up until now, the Roller has always been at least one step ahead and cunning enough to keep himself completely protected. But even his ingenuity and resourcefulness are not without their limits, and this is an opportunity to strike at the Shuankhsen in a way that will genuinely hurt him.

This is also a chance for the characters to cut loose and really throw their weight around. Throughout much of *The Avarice Chronicle*, the members of the meret have been forced to tread softly in the presence of greater powers than themselves. Here, however, they *are* the greater power, and the hands and eyes of their enemy are largely undefended. The Roller's slaves are about to witness, firsthand, the wrath of the Deathless, and learn why the ancient world feared the Arisen.

CHARACTER GOALS

The meret's objective, here, is to wreak havoc on the Roller's primary base of operations, and to damage (and perhaps steal) as many of his resources as possible.



The characters can put down a considerable portion of the Shuankhsen's cult, as well as destroying most of his Fasad and several of his Amkhata. Characters of an investigative bent might also be able to discern some information about the Roller, and perhaps even divine something of his long-term plans.

ACTIONS

ROBBING THE ROLLER

Having spent the past several millennia, on and off, stealing various objects of interest to the supernatural world — not all of which it was in his benefit to consume for their power — the Roller has amassed quite a stockpile of interesting artifacts. It stands to reason that one or more characters might want to ransack his hoard.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Larceny

Action: Instant (though the roll takes place only after 10-15 minutes of searching Nightmare Alley after its defenders are dead, incapacitated, or otherwise out of the way)

Hindrances: The characters deliberately damaged Nightmare Alley's vehicles in the course of their attack (-2)

Help: The characters compel one or more of the carnies to lead them to anything that the Roller seemed to regard as especially valuable (+2)

Dramatic Failure: The characters find something, all right: something accursed and dangerous, something that even the Roller, in the depths of his madness, knew

enough to keep locked up and not play around with. This object may make trouble for them before the end of *The Avarice Chronicle* or afterwards, depending on the needs of your story.

Failure: Damage to Nightmare Alley (including a few fires, volatile chemical spills, and other mishaps involving caustic Amkhat venom or whatever other unnatural unpleasantness) has resulted in the destruction of anything that the characters might find useful or valuable. On the upside, however, this also means that these objects are no longer available to the Roller, either.

Success: The characters locate one or two vessels (see **Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 213-237), totaling no more than three dots between them.

Exceptional Success: The characters locate two or three vessels, totaling no more than five dots between them.

CONSEQUENCES

Nightmare Alley is almost certainly in ruins by the time the characters are done with it. Any servants of the Roller who haven't been killed have either fled or (in the case of mortal cultists, who at least have something of a choice in the matter) switched sides. The meret may well have absconded with some of the Shuankhsen's most valuable artifacts, both mundane and magical, or else destroyed them. From here on out, the Roller becomes desperate — the characters have struck their enemy a grievous blow.



CHAPTER THREE

SCENE 1:

A LIGHT IN THE DARK

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

Shortly after attacking Nightmare Alley and salvaging whatever they can from it, the characters receive a phone call from Khenafsaa's mysterious ally. She informs them of a lead that draws them still closer to the Roller, and which will reveal the stage for his intended final showdown with the Heretic.

Observant characters may also use this second, somewhat less calculated, communication with Khenafsaa's contact to figure out more about her and perhaps divine her identity: Setenanshi, a highly-placed member of the Mesen-Nebu. From there, it may be possible to coax — or coerce — further assistance out of her for the inevitable confrontation.

DESCRIPTION

As you pick up the phone, a familiar, lightly distorted female voice says, "Don't speak. Just listen. I have a lead. I just tracked down a cellular phone purchased with money from an account that I've identified as belonging to this Shuankhsen you're hunting. According to the information I've been able to discover, the phone hasn't switched towers for about a day, now, so he's either stationary or he's discarded it. Whichever the case, this is probably your best chance of finding him, either now or later."

After a brief pause, the woman on the other end continues, "The phone is in a place called Emporium. It's a town in Pennsylvania, not very far from where you are now."

She is silent, then, as if taking a moment to collect her thoughts or perhaps wait for questions.

STORYTELLER GOALS

With this scene, you're giving the meret the final pieces of the puzzle needed to run the Roller to ground. They're so close behind him now that he's racing ahead to finish his work before the characters can disrupt things worse than they already have. You also should use Setenanshi's words and tone

to illustrate that the Heretic's disciples are seriously worried about what's transpiring, now. This has gone from being a series of isolated incidents to a cause for genuine concern.

CHARACTER GOALS

The only thing that's absolutely necessary for the characters to do during this scene is simply to receive the information about where to go next. Once they've done that, however, they might want to ask their mysterious benefactor some questions about what's going on and what's to come. If they're particularly discerning about doing so, it's quite likely that they'll be able to figure out who the mummy on the other end of the line actually is.

ACTIONS

UNVEILING THE CONTACT

Given the stress she's under, Khenafsaa's contact within the Heretic's network of supporters presently lacks the presence of mind to practice her customary degree of discretion and misdirection. In communicating with the meret, she is therefore exposing herself to the possibility that the characters may be able to figure out who she is, by listening to the cadence of her voice, her inflections, and her particular turns of phrase — there are a limited number of Arisen, after all, and the majority of them have met at one point or another over the course of millennia.

Note that this action is only available if the characters succeeded in getting a read on the contact in the scene "A Far-Off Voice."

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Action: Extended, with each roll representing a couple of minutes' worth of conversation. The players have three rolls in which to accrue at least five successes.

Hindrances: The characters are on the move while talking (-1), the characters hurry the contact through the conversation (-2)



Help: The characters are patient and understanding with the contact and offer her reassurances that they will stop the Roller (+2)

Dramatic Failure: Any roll resulting in a dramatic failure gives a completely erroneous idea as to who the contact is, and no further rolls may be made.

Failure: The character gains no further insight into the contact's identity.

Success: The character makes progress toward learning that Khenafsaa's contact is Setenanshi, a ranking member of the Mesen-Nebu.

Exceptional Success: In addition to learning Setenanshi's identity, the character also receives +2 dice to any subsequent social roll made against her for the remainder of the adventure.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters now know that the Heretic's students take this threat seriously, and that the Roller needs to be stopped as quickly as possible. They also now know where they have to go next. Lastly, if they've uncovered Setenanshi's identity, they may have additional resources to bring to bear in the final fight.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SCENE II: SLAYMASTER OF THE SERUANTS

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

After arriving in Emporium, Pennsylvania, the meret is able to identify the location of the Roller's cell phone fairly easily. Even as the characters come into town, it's quite obvious where the Roller was and what he was doing: A building on the edge of town has been roped off by the police, clearly the scene of theft, violence, or both.

This scene reveals that the Roller has demanded a face-to-face meeting with the Heretic, and that the Shuankhsen will, if his wishes are not obeyed, continue to brutally murder his way through all of the Heretic's disciples. Further, the Roller has specified a time and place for this audience. While his message indicates a desire for the legendary Amulet of Two Fingers, it is essentially a foregone conclusion at this point that the Roller intends to kill and consume the Heretic.

DESCRIPTION

(OUTSIDE)

Police tape cordons off a decrepit factory on the outskirts of town. A battered old sign declares, "PRIVATE PROPERTY. NO TRESPASSING — POLICE TAKE NOTICE." A couple of cruisers are still outside the building. At your approach, an officer steps out of one of the cars, gesturing for you to pull to a stop and roll down your window. She nods her head respectfully, and says, "We were told to expect you, honored ones. You can go inside. You'll find what you need." After a moment's hesitation, she observes, "Just to warn you, it's pretty gruesome in there."

The officer directs you to a parking spot in front of the building. As you pass by her to enter the building, the officer adds, "It's down back. You can't miss it. The door's smashed in." She shakes her head and growls. "When you find the...*thing* that did this, kill it."

(INSIDE)

Blood and gore cover the walls of what looks to have once been one of the factory's offices. Piles of torn viscera have been strewn across overturned pieces of furniture and haphazardly slung into the corners of the room. Even more so than the murder of the Chaltoums, this attack was clearly an act of deliberate savagery and cruelty. After you have several seconds to take in the scene, the Roller's phone, carefully placed on a clean patch of floor, catches your attention.

The cellular is plugged in into the wall socket. On the screen is a lengthy text message which has been composed, but never sent: "*Saturday, 2 AM. Hart Island, New York City. Bring me the Amulet of Two Fingers. I understand what it is and what it does. Fail to do as I command, and I will destroy all of your followers. I will kill everyone who has so much as glimpsed your book. You see, now, that I can do it.*" No recipient is specified in the "send" field.

The scene of the crime has clearly already been disturbed: The bodies have — to the degree that such is possible, given the horrific state that they're in — been arranged in positions of peaceful repose. Underlying the stench of disembowelment, the faint scent of funerary incense lingers in the air. Of the two set of footprints in the blood on the floor, one looks to have been made at least several hours after the murders, and its steps are rather more deliberate, including a trail that leads up to the phone, and a smudge in the dirt on the floor, as though from someone stooping down to take a knee and study the message.

STORYTELLER GOALS

Show the characters that the Roller has called the Heretic out, using perhaps the only leverage that can force a direct confrontation. The meret needs to understand that, if the Shuankhsen isn't stopped, he



will continue to relentlessly and remorselessly slaughter cultists, Sadikh, Arisen, and whomever and whatever he has to, in order to achieve his goals. In his rampage, he's already demonstrated that collateral damage is not merely acceptable to him, but desirable, given the fear and chaos it spreads. Given enough time, the Shuankhsen might do sufficient damage to the veil of secrecy concealing the Deathless from the mortal world that even the most extensive and influential cults can no longer hide his actions. In short, his continued existence is a threat to the Arisen and to all that they hold dear.

CHARACTER GOALS

The meret has a chance, here, to figure out what's really going on. At this point, it should become increasingly obvious that what the Roller *truly* wants is the Heretic, himself. The characters also have an opportunity to figure out some things about that enigmatic figure.

ACTIONS

PROFILE THE HERETIC

Character studying the scene of the Roller's massacre may attempt to gain some insight into the Heretic, based upon the evidence of his actions upon encountering the slaughter.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended, with each roll representing 10 minutes of careful study of the scene of the murders. A player needs seven successes (the total of the Heretic's Manipulation + Subterfuge, -2 for his lack of preparation) to divine all of the relevant information. If she stops before accruing all of the needed successes,

however, she will still get at least some information, based on the number of successes rolled.

Hindrances: The mummy is rushed (-1), or has to deal with a lot of distractions (-2)

Help: The mummy has appropriate occult paraphernalia on her person (+2)

Dramatic Failure: The character draws a deeply erroneous conclusion — that the Roller is the one who laid the bodies in repose, for example, or that the Heretic did so purely for ritual purposes — and can make no further rolls.

Failure: The character makes no progress toward her goal.

Success: The character makes progress toward figuring out certain details about the Heretic. He is patient and methodical; he is someone with extensive Iremite funerary ritual knowledge; and he deeply values the lives of even the least among his servants.

Exceptional Success: If the player rolls an exceptional success during the investigation and obtains seven successes before rolling a dramatic failure, her character also experiences a flash of memory from the time of the Nameless Empire: The subtleties in the positioning of the bodies and the particular blend of incense used indicate not only that the Heretic wishes to give peace to the spirits of the fallen, but also that he intends to avenge them.

CONSEQUENCES

The meret now knows that the Roller has demanded an audience with the Heretic, and possibly learned some things about the Heretic, himself. Especially observant Arisen may also have figured out that the Heretic is now out for blood.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SCENARIO III:

THE SHUANKHSEN'S OFFER

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL ••

OVERVIEW

Now aware that the meret is hot on his heels, the Roller extends to the characters as generous an offer as his pride and insanity will allow. He has come to believe that his intended destruction of the Heretic is the will of Fate, but he has enough presence of mind left, even at this juncture, to at least *attempt* to cover his bases and get greater force of numbers on his side. The problem, of course, is that he is a megalomaniac, currently high on an overabundance of Sekhem, who has come to feel that his plan is so perfect and so favored by destiny that not even the gods can stop him now.

This “peace offering,” such as it is, constitutes the largest possible gesture that the Roller is able to make without compromising his sense of nigh-omnipotence. It galls him even to do this much, but some in some dim and long-neglected rational corner of his mind, a part of him is aware that a possibility exists, no matter how slim, that this troublesome meret could somehow disrupt — or even just delay — his plans. His arrogance doesn’t permit him to offer friendship or respect, though. The best he can manage is to tell the characters that he will regard them as first among his slaves when all is said and done.

To deliver this message — in his deranged mind, as something of a show of esteem for the meret’s power and persistence — the Shuankhsen has dispatched his most uniquely horrific Amkhat, an abomination even by the standards of those misbegotten beings, the result of centuries of blasphemous experimentation. Naturally, any response other than blind acceptance of the Roller’s offer results in the creature attacking to kill.

DESCRIPTION

Even as the appointed hour of the Roller’s meeting with the Heretic draws near, you make your own preparations. The calm before the storm is disrupted,

however, by the manifestation of a nightmarish entity, something that can only possibly have been sent by the Shuankhsen. It appears at a safe distance, moving forward in a posture that does not appear to convey any hostile intent.

What paces before you, slinking low to the ground, is a horror the likes of which even the Arisen have never before encountered. Its body is that of a starved lion, the hide dotted with scabrous patches of missing fur. Its oversized head is that of a jackal, but the jaws are stretched wide and wrenched apart, revealing within the mouth the rotted visage of a centuries-old Fasad. The milky-white eyes set in that decaying face seem to study all of you intently. From each of its shoulders, the monster sprouts the front half of a king cobra, seemingly erupting out of a festering wound to weave in the air before you. The creature’s tail is that of a scorpion, though sized for a lion’s body.

Settling down on its haunches, the ghastly creature addresses you, its voice a small chorus of harsh, grating whispers. “My master knows of your interference in his grand design, and he extends to you an offer of truce. Forswear the guilds and the Judges, kneel before him in submission, and, once his task on Hart Island is complete and his power is grown beyond anything the Arisen have ever dared to dream, he shall exalt you as most favored among his slaves. If you do not accept this offer, you will be destroyed utterly — not merely in this life, but forevermore.”

STORYTELLER GOALS

If any doubt remained in the characters’ minds that they’re dealing with a dangerous lunatic, suffering from delusions of grandeur on a cosmic scale, they should no longer have any reservations on that account. Further, the creature sent to deliver the Roller’s ultimatum serves as a preview of what sorts of things the Shuankhsen

would do with the power that he believes he can gain by devouring the Heretic and assimilating the knowledge of Apotheosis. It's something of a window into his twisted psyche. Really drive home the grotesquerie of the Roller's custom-built pet abomination.

CHARACTER GOALS

It is all but a foregone conclusion that the characters will reject the Roller's offer, and it is therefore almost certain that a fight will ensue. That said, a cunning meret may accept the proposal with the intention of betraying the Shuankhsen — right now, the Roller is so blinded by the promise of power that he will not see the deception for what it is, and the characters' lie may claim a critical advantage in the fight to come.

CONSEQUENCES

Either the Roller's aberrant Amkhat is destroyed and the characters have thereby declared their enmity toward him, or they have given him reason to believe that they are on his side and have renounced all other allegiances. In either case, they are ready to meet their destiny — and, quite possibly, the destiny of *all* Arisen — at Hart Island.



CHAPTER THREE

SCENE IV: HART ISLAND

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL ...

OVERVIEW

The site chosen by the Roller for his showdown with the Heretic, Hart Island (also sometimes called Hart's Island), is a mile-by-quarter-mile islet in Long Island Sound, part of the borough of the Bronx. Over the centuries since Europeans first settled the area, Hart Island has become an ill-omened place, its history one of prison and workhouse, tuberculosis sanatorium and lunatic asylum. Since the dark days of the American Civil War, it has served as a potter's field, which in modern times groans under the weight of a million graves — many of its tenants nameless and forgotten dead, piled into mass burials or stacked unceremoniously atop one another like so much refuse. It is a site sick with the reek of pain, sorrow, loss, and death. Access to the island is also very strictly limited by the city, which makes the place in every way ideal, both poetically and practically, for the Roller's intended murder of the Heretic.

A little bit of reading and research on Hart Island can certainly go a long way in capturing the feel (and, if the characters decide to look into it, the history) of the place, but also bear in mind that this is the World of Darkness. Here, Hart Island is filled to bursting with the anonymous corpses of a century and a half. Here, in the island's various facilities, horrid crimes against basic human decency were the norm, not the exception. Even now, with so many of them having long since gone on to whatever final fate awaits the spirits of the dead, the ghosts cluster as thickly on these shores as the living do in downtown Manhattan during rush hour — wailing for a nurse to change filthy sheets, begging not to be whipped again, muttering about someday killing that one guard, or wondering tearfully whatever happened to a crudely amputated limb.

DESCRIPTION

You step off the boat onto a fog-shrouded shore. The wind moves only lightly, but soundlessly, in from over the water, slowly churning the mist. Faintly visible through the silvery vapor are hundreds or even thousands of grave markers, most in some kind of disrepair, whether

tagged with graffiti, shattered by vandals, or just gradually succumbing to the march of years. The ground is spongy with the chilling wetness in the air, and with the unimaginable vastness of the decay underfoot. No moon shines, and even the light from the city nearby seems muted. Sound seems to carry reluctantly, as though the world has lowered its voice to a mere whisper here.

In the distance, across a great sea of headstones, small glimpses of light are visible, and even the fog cannot completely silence the sound of a familiar voice raised in... anger? Exultation? Perhaps some combination of the two? Even as you draw closer, you can hear words unspoken since the days of the Nameless Empire, falling from the Roller's lips, proclaiming pain and death upon his enemy, and glory to his own name. Through the swirling of the mists, a figure stands before the Shuankhsen, in opposition to the Lifeless monstrosity — an unremarkable-looking man, attired plainly — at the head of a throng of people, seemingly from all walks of life.

Calmly, with perhaps even a note of pity in his voice, the man facing down the Roller speaks, likewise in the Iremite tongue, "You are as far beyond hope as you are beyond reason. You have come here for a battle, and so you shall have it. May Ammut show you mercy, for Azar will not."

STORYTELLER GOALS

This is the final showdown with the Roller, and the characters' first opportunity to behold the Heretic. This should be a combat of epic proportions, with the meret able to contribute by strength of arms, keen tactics, force of personality, and mystical might. Every character has something to contribute, and all of them should have the opportunity to feel like heroes, fighting for a worthy cause.

CHARACTER GOALS

This is it. The characters are here to take down the Roller and to end his mad ambition. If they can, it's also likely that they'll want to destroy as many of his followers as possible, so that the threat he poses is ended not just in this lifetime, but for many lifetimes to come.

The Deceived

If you used the second chapter of *The Avarice Chronicle* and the characters did exceptionally well in their negotiations with the Deceived, it's possible that the Lost Guild pledged resources to the final confrontation with the Roller. If the meret followed up on this, then you may need to adjust the scope of the battle somewhat, since the True Name magic of the Deceived is considered an object of awe and dread by the Arisen. This could result in a fight of legendary proportions on the shores of Hart Island, even as the Deceived shroud the place in a curtain of arcane secrecy. Under these circumstances, remember that the Heretic is beyond of the power of magic that affects or requires his True Name, so that the Deceived are incapable of assisting him directly during the combat. (Otherwise, the characters are apt to feel completely overshadowed and, indeed, extraneous to the action as it unfolds.)

One other consequence of the presence of the Lost Guild is that the Roller, once defeated, does not return to Ammut if he perishes. Instead, the Deceived capture his essence with their sorcery, even as it attempts to flee to the Devourer's embrace, and erase what remains of his name from the very memory of the cosmos, unmaking him for all time. Needless to say, witnessing this event should be a cause for trepidation on the part of the meret, as the Deceived reveal that they possess the ability to utterly destroy even mummies.

ACTIONS

RALLYING THE TROOPS

Not every mummy is a warrior. Some do their best work instead inspiring others in battle.

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion

Action: Instant (this action can be rolled repeatedly over the course of the combat)

Hindrances: The character obviously avoids the thick of the fighting (-2)

Help: The character has the Inspiring Merit (+2)

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the character fail to fire up the troops, but he also feels disheartened by his own lackluster attempts to do so, and loses a point of Willpower.

Failure: The character fails to inspire the forces fighting against the Roller.

Success: The character raises the spirits of those fighting on the side of the Heretic. The next action, of any sort, rolled by anyone opposing the Roller or his minions gains a +1 bonus.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the Roller also sees the tide turning badly against his people in the character's corner of the battle and loses a point of Willpower.

RITUAL ASSISTANCE

Potent magic fills the battlefield, and certain characters may wish to take a hand in directing those energies, as Arisen, Sadikh, cultists, ghosts, and possibly others harness the power of Pillars, Affinities, Utterances, Numina, vessels, and whatever else they can bring to bear.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult

Action: Instant (this action can be rolled repeatedly over the course of the combat)

Hindrances: The character's position is directly assaulted by the Roller's forces, with no other character helping to hold them off (-2)

Help: The character has at least one Pillar at 5 (+1), the character drains a relic for its Sekhem and allows that energy to be used by friendly forces (+2)

Dramatic Failure: The character suffers a backlash of misdirected energies, sustaining a point of aggravated damage.

Failure: The character's ritual magic is ineffectual at this time.

Success: The character creates a beneficial flow of Sekhem for her allies, who gain a +2 bonus to the next roll made to activate any supernatural ability.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the Roller's forces are hindered by a detrimental arrangement of energies. Every servant of the Roller fighting in the battle suffers a -1 die penalty to its next roll to activate a supernatural ability.

CONSEQUENCES

One way or another, the conflict is over for now.

CHAPTER THREE

SIGNS OF MORTALITY AND WISDOM

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

OVERVIEW

It is a certainty, at this point, that the characters have questions for the Heretic, and he is more than happy to answer any such inquiries to the best of his ability.

DESCRIPTION

Even as the Heretic's remaining allies help to clear away the dead and otherwise erase any evidence of the battle on Hart's Island, the renegade Arisen approaches you. His khopesh is still wet with the blood of the Roller's servants, and he certainly looks a bit worse for wear. He nevertheless smiles warmly to see all of you, and bows his head in a show of respect and esteem.

"I owe you my thanks," he says. "I believe that your presence here tipped the balance and secured victory against the Shuankhsen and his mad scheme. Though most of them do not yet understand — and many of them never will — *all* of the Deathless are in your debt, this night."

STORYTELLER GOALS

The meret has emerged victorious. Let the characters enjoy their victory and give them a chance to meet and speak with the Heretic (and tie up any loose ends left over from the adventure, if they so choose).

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters surely wish to interact with the Heretic — they've gone to the trouble, to one degree or another, of finding him and defending his life, after all.

Some of the characters' likelier questions, and the Heretic's answers to them, follow:

Did you write "Dreams of Avarice?" (Answer: "Yes.")

Why? (Answer: "To light the candle of memory within my brothers and sisters.")

Is Apotheosis real or is it heresy? (Answer: "Both.")

The Roller wanted the Amulet of Two Fingers. Do you know where it is? (Answer: "Yes, but the Roller never would have found it, even had I told him. You...might

still have a chance, but only by reading the book will the path to the Amulet become clear.")

Why can't you tell us where the Amulet is? (Answer: "I could tell you, but the answer would not help you to find it. Not yet.")

Is the Amulet of Two Fingers necessary for Apotheosis? (Answer: "I do not know. I know that it played a significant role in my Apotheosis. And, while it is likely, I cannot say for certain that it must necessarily be a part of yours.")

Why should we risk the ire of our guildmasters to pursue such enlightenment? (Answer: "Because without it, the Arisen are nothing more than agents of avarice. Forever.")

Why are you helping us? (Answer: "Because it is right for me to do so, and also because it is a terribly lonely thing to be the only one of our kind who remembers the truth of our ancient homeland, and the truth of who and what I am.")

Who were you in Irem? (Answer: "A scribe, no more or less important than any other. A servant, just like the rest of you. If there is anything meaningful about me, it is to be found in what I have learned in the ages since the vanishing of the empire.")

Have you achieved Apotheosis? (Answer: "Yes.")

How? (Answer: "By forging a path that you cannot, just as I could not have walked the path which leads to *your* Apotheosis.")

How can we find you again if we need to? (Answer: "You cannot. Because I am whole, those who have yet to reclaim themselves cannot find me of their own accord. But take heart: You do not need to find me to find your way. I am merely the message.")

What will you do if the Roller returns to find you or some other Shuankhsen hunts you down? (Answer: "The Roller was a unique aberration in that respect, and his threat to me is ended. Whatever parts of him the Devourer permits to return will remember me no better than all of you will, in time. Still, it is possible that he or another Shuankhsen will find me, one day. If and when that day comes, I will fight. Hopefully, I will win.")

Will we see you again? (Answer: "I cannot say with a certainty, but I believe so, yes.")



ACTIONS

CONFINING THE HERETIC

This action is doomed to certain failure. No matter what means the characters might use in any attempt to hold the Heretic and/or his cultists against their will, the Heretic will nod once to them and then he and his followers will crumble into fine sand, blowing away on the night breeze.

FREING VINCENT

If the characters have managed to convince Vincent Cutter to involve himself in the final showdown with the Roller and Vincent survives the experience, the Heretic will, without being asked, go to the rogue Fasad and set a hand over his unbeating heart, speaking words in what the Arisen recognize as Iremite, but which they are unable to comprehend or remember. In answer to Vincent's look of puzzlement, the Heretic says, in

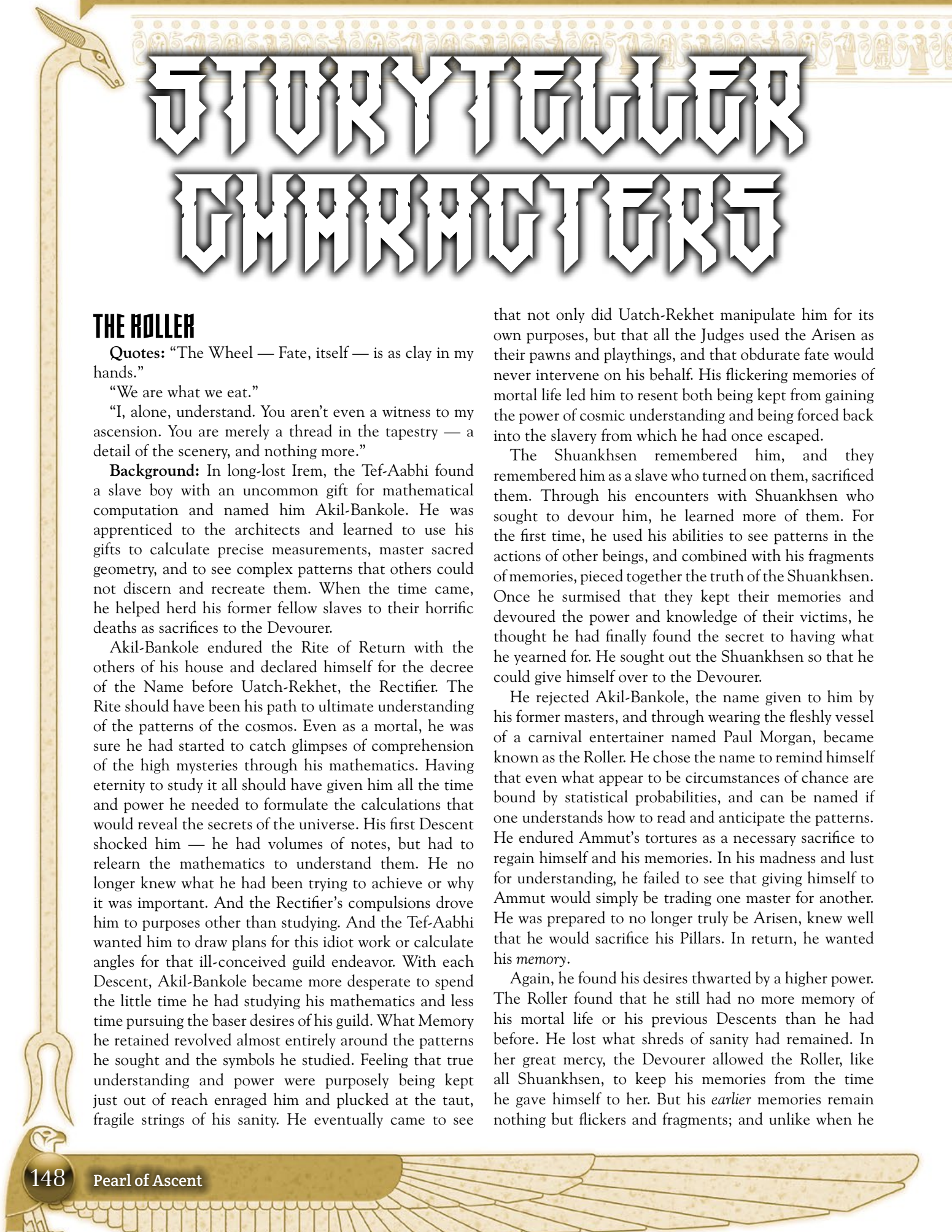
English, "I release you. Be at peace," whereupon the husk shudders and collapses into a pile of grave dust and bone fragments, leaving what appears to be Vincent's gauzy and translucent spirit standing in his place. After a moment's hesitation, the disembodied essence begins to walk away, into the west, growing fainter and fainter with each step, until he finally vanishes completely.

If anyone questions the Heretic on his actions, asking what the man has done to earn peace after a lifetime of service to the Roller, the Heretic answers simply, "Who among us — any of us — has *ever* truly "earned" peace? This time, it was mine to give, and I chose to give it."

CONSEQUENCES

The most telling consequence of this encounter is that the meret will now be in possession of a copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, and capable of taking the first tentative steps upon the long journey of Apotheosis, if they so dare.





STORYTELLER CHARACTERS

THE ROLLER

Quotes: “The Wheel — Fate, itself — is as clay in my hands.”

“We are what we eat.”

“I, alone, understand. You aren’t even a witness to my ascension. You are merely a thread in the tapestry — a detail of the scenery, and nothing more.”

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 the Name before Uatch-Rekhet, the Rectifier. 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 high mysteries through his mathematics. Having eternity to study it all 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 the Rectifier’s compulsions drove him to purposes other than studying. And the Tef-Aabhi wanted him to draw plans for this idiot work or calculate angles for that ill-conceived guild endeavor. 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 almost entirely around the patterns he sought and the symbols he studied. Feeling that true understanding and power were purposely being kept just out of 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 the Judges used the Arisen as their pawns and playthings, and that obdurate fate would never intervene on his behalf. His flickering memories of 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, sacrificed them. Through his encounters with Shuankhsen who sought to devour him, he learned more 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, pieced together the truth of the Shuankhsen. Once he surmised that they kept their memories and devoured the power and knowledge of their victims, he thought he had finally found the secret to having what he yearned for. He sought out the Shuankhsen so that he could give himself over to the Devourer.

He rejected Akil-Bankole, the name given to him by his former masters, and through wearing the fleshly vessel of a carnival entertainer named Paul Morgan, became known as the Roller. He chose the name to remind himself that even what appear to be circumstances of chance are bound by statistical probabilities, and can be named if one understands 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 Arisen, knew well 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 since. Though 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 other means. He considered 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 comprehension and at last 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 role in a black robe. Over his face he wears a mask adorned only with a stylized 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 carny worker. Naturally, the effect is not that of a seamless genetic blending, but rather a pastiche of all the most visually ill-fitting characteristics. Those least fortunate of all see the Roller's sahu as it truly appears. The Roller has had to devour so much lifeforce that he appears with the wide, sharp teeth characteristic of the Jaws of the Devourer unless he actively concentrates to suppress their appearance.

Concept: Cannibal Madman

Remnant: Name

Judge: Ammut, the Devourer

Guild: None (formerly Tef-Aabhi)

Attributes: Intelligence 7, Wits 5, Resolve 5; Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Skills: Academics (Mathematics) 7, Crafts 3, Investigation 5, Occult 5, Athletics 2, Brawl 5 (Biting), Drive 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4



Merits: Common Sense, Cult (Reach 2, Grasp 4), Enigma 5, Languages 2, Meditative Mind, Relic 5, Resources 4, Tomb (Geometry 3, Peril 5, Famous, Obscure, Radiant), Vessel 3

Affinities: Ammut's Feast, By Steps Unseen, Enlightened Senses, Godsight, Living Monolith, Retributive Curse, Shadow Rending

Utterances: Blessed is the God-King, Chthonic Dominion, Kiss of Apep, Torn Veil of Forgetting, Wrathful Desert Power; Jaws of the Devourer (power)

Pillars: Ab 2, Ba 1, Ka 3, Ren 5, Sheut 4


Sekhem: 7 (If you have played through the second chapter of **The Avarice Chronicle**, you will note that the Roller's Sekhem has increased drastically since that time. The Shuankhsen has been frantically devouring his way to more Sekhem, in anticipation of his showdown with the Heretic. This not only grants him greater power, but it also enables him to keep more of his husks simultaneously active.)

Willpower: 10

Morality: 2

Virtue: Faith (The Roller has an absolute conviction that everything can be explained mathematically, given the proper information and time to complete the necessary calculations.)

Vice: Pride (Just as the Roller knows that everything can be explained mathematically, he is equally certain he is



the only one who can truly understand the mathematics of the universe.)

Derangements: Megalomania (The Roller knows that he is the only one capable of understanding fate's grand design, and only he has ever come close to uncovering the mathematical mysteries of the cosmos.)

Initiative: 12

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Jaws 2 (L) 10

Drain Sekhem 10

Health: 13

THE HERETIC

Quotes: "Apotheosis is not a lie... it is our destiny."

"I am no longer a slave to avarice. You need not be slaves to it, either."

"Ask yourselves who ultimately benefits by Arisen society eternally continuing on as it has over the past six millennia. Who gains the most? Not the guilds, but the Judges."

Background: For much of his existence, the Arisen now known as the Heretic was merely a Scribe. At some point over the course of the millennia, he gained what started out as nothing more than an academic interest in the myth of Apotheosis. In truth, his original goals in pursuing such knowledge purely involved chronicling and categorizing these legends, and had nothing at all to do with seeking out the fabled state of freedom from the endless cycle.

Somewhere along the line, however, scholarly curiosity became something more. Through the thoroughness of his explorations and inquiries, the Scribe found himself drawing connections that other Arisen had never previously discovered. Indeed, through contemplation of the patterns that emerged in his studies, he began winnowing the false from the true with some degree of confidence in his assessments. He broke his research into many pieces — none of which could, on its own, reveal anything more than a dispassionate, clinical sort of interest in Apotheosis — and charged different arms of his cult with the pursuit of each. Through cycles of death and rebirth, he returned every time to find more information, and used what hours and days he could spare during each awakening to distill fact from fiction, slowly but surely mapping the course of an unprecedented spiritual journey.

Eventually, he began piecing together true relics of lost Irem, uncovering secret writings and artifacts — and vessels — which had lain untouched for an age and

more. The Scribe followed the course set forth by these revelations, recording the steps of his strange journey in accordance with both his nature and his calling. Carefully navigating a tenuous middle ground between the callings to which he was raised from death and the obsession which now consumed his every private thought and moment, he moved inexorably toward a metamorphosis that even he did not fully comprehend. And, one day, at long last, after centuries of walking stranger paths than are common even to the unusual experience of the Arisen, his understanding transcended the purely intellectual: He beheld the wisdom of the Shan'iatu, and saw that it was great and terrible. He knew at least some part of the Judges' true designs.

And he resolved to see it all ended.

The defrocked Scribe had attained the fabled state known as Apotheosis, but when he attempted to share this knowledge with a few close confidantes among the Arisen, they rebuffed him with shock and horror. Fortunately, he soon discovered that those still in thrall to the Judges could not long hold him in their memories, and he embarked on the long and lonely path of an immortal prophet and visionary, exercising far greater discretion in those to whom he revealed his new knowledge. Knowing that Apotheosis was not something he could simply give another soul, he turned instead to his newfound ability to repurpose — and thereby create — new relics, penning the now-infamous primer, *Dreams of Avarice*.

In the years since, the Heretic has moved quietly along the peripheries of Arisen society. Invisible to mystic senses, he has observed the affairs of his kind — often from afar, but sometimes as closely as a servant or even cultist, only to vanish and be forgotten when the time was right. Every step of the way, he seeded stories and rumors, subtle murmurings intended to inspire those Arisen with the spiritual openness necessary to do so to set their feet upon the road to Apotheosis. At times, he has dared to serve more directly as a mentor, but his sorcerous anonymity has worked to his detriment, in that respect — to say nothing of the threat of guild censure that keeps many otherwise potentially worthy and capable seekers shackled to their fear and the inhuman will of the Judges.

Description: He looks like anyone you might pass on the street — slender and maybe a touch shorter than average, with thinning, dark stubble on his head, a clean-shaven face, brown eyes, and a dusky complexion. There's nothing especially striking about his features, and he's neither ugly nor handsome. The Heretic dresses comfortably and casually. He is soft-spoken, with a fairly deep voice, and faint shadows of some long-lost accent that tugs at the outermost corners of Arisen memory. He fingers are long and fine, with traces of ink under his



nails. His expressions are subtle, though he often wears just a hint of a kindly and knowing smile.

Storytelling Hints: Speak with quiet authority. Treat all goodly beings with honor, dignity, and compassion. Give the wicked the opportunity to reform, and give them the mercy of swift destruction if they will not or cannot find redemption. Question everything you experience and always be willing to learn. Do not give in to despair, no matter how grim the situation — you have defied the Shan'iatu and forged the path to freedom, and none can take that away from you.

Concept: Visionary Liberator

Decree: Shadow

Judge: None (formerly Usekh-Nemtet, the First Judge)

Guild: None (formerly Sesha-Hebsu, later Su-Menent)

Attributes: Intelligence 8, Wits 5, Resolve 7; Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 8

Skills: Academics (Research) 8, Animal Ken 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Computer 2, Crafts (Scribe) 9, Drive 1, Empathy 7, Expression 8, Firearms 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 6, Larceny 4, Medicine 2, Occult (Irem, Vessels) 8, Persuasion 4, Science 3, Socialize 2, Stealth 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5, Survival 4, Weaponry 3

Merits: The Heretic has a fairly massive number of Merits, revolving largely around a tremendous (and well-hidden) cult and support network, a fairly comprehensive personal knowledge from Iremite pre-history onward, and a vast stockpile of mystic relics and lore — if your story requires the Heretic to have (or, at least, have access to) a given Merit, it's probably safe to assume that he does.

Affinities: Blessed Panoply, Charmed Lives, Deathstight, Dominating Might, Enduring Flesh, Enlightened Senses, Familiar Face, Guardian Wrath, Miraculous Benefactor, Soulsight

Utterances: Blessed is the God-King, Dust Beneath Feet, Eye of Radiance, Obedient Clay, Power of Re, Rebuke the Vizier, Torn Veil of Forgetting, Word of the Amanuensis, Words of Dead Fury

Note: The Heretic can only use the first-tier spells of his Utterances (except cosmic Utterances), due to the drawbacks of Apotheosis.

Pillars: Ab 5, Ba 5, Ka 5, Ren 5, Sheut 5

Sekhem: 1

Willpower: 10

Memory: 10

Virtue: Hope (The Heretic truly believes that his people can be freed from the tyranny of the Judges and the endless cycle of metaphysical slavery into which they have been bound for nearly 6,000 years. *Dreams of Avarice* is the culmination of this unwavering hope.)

Vice: Wrath (While his outward calm belies it, the Heretic carries considerable anger toward the Judges and the Shan'iatu for what he now feels was an act of eternal enslavement. For the most part, he channels that rage into productive directions, but those who attempt to thwart his sacred mission or do him harm learn just how brightly the flame of his wrath can burn.)

Initiative: 13

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Fist 0B

Khopesh sword 3L

Health: 15

Notes: In addition to the powers explicitly spelled out in his write-up (and in the systems for Apotheosis; see **Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 174-5), the Heretic possesses a variety of supernatural abilities which are wholly unique to him. He has had years to explore the esoteric possibilities of Apotheosis and unlocked powers never conceived of by even the wisest of the Shan'iatu. He is not undefeatable, not by any stretch of the imagination, nor is he indestructible — indeed, the Roller's plan of devouring him is one means through which the Heretic could potentially be slain permanently — but he nevertheless commands gifts otherwise unknown to the Arisen, and you are encouraged as Storyteller to invent

and bring into play any powers that fit narratively with the themes of **Mummy: The Curse**, and which further the story of your chronicle without overshadowing the player characters' abilities and actions.

VINCENT CUTTER

Quotes: "I've told you all I know."

"It's not that your power is unimpressive. I've just seen a hell of a lot scarier than you."

"My former master is going to wish I *stayed* dead."

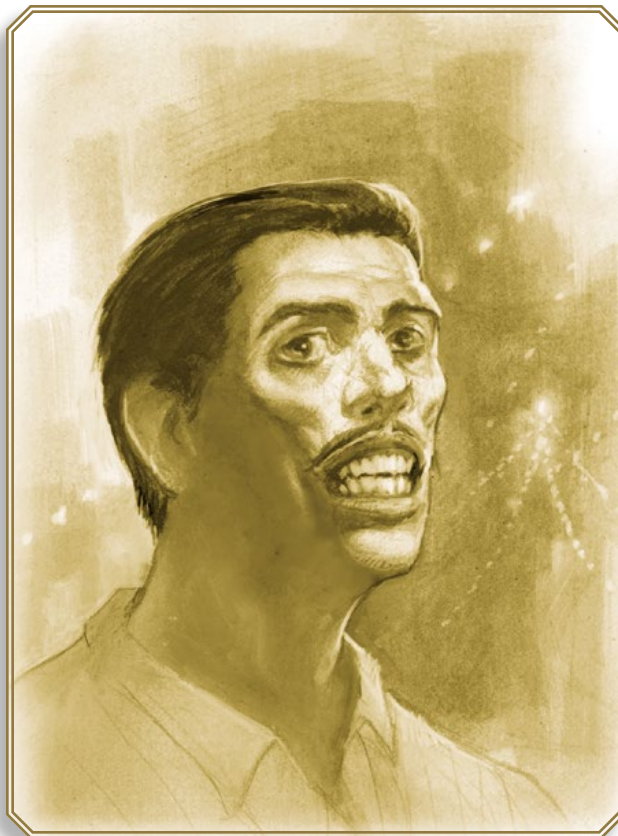
Background: When Corey Hammett Jr. inherited Hammett & Sons Funeral Home, the family business, he had at least some small idea as to what was written in the finest of the fine print. Used by the Roller for years to dispose of certain "inconvenient" things, Hammett & Sons — a fourth-generation enterprise — was no longer especially useful in that respect. While he lived, Corey, Sr. had been a loyal servant, in his own quiet way, but Shuankhsen have, at best, a skewed sense of reward and punishment.

Corey remembered the Roller from his childhood and adolescence; a terrifying specter of awe-inspiring power, who would occasionally appear to convey orders to first his grandfather and then, when old Thomas Hammett was dead and gone, to his father. Shortly after Corey, Sr. was lowered into the ground (some of Corey, Jr.'s best work to date had been done on the old man), that dark figure appeared with a new mandate. Corey was to receive life eternal, in exchange for a more direct form of servitude. Finally, the blessing which had been promised to the Hammetts over a century before was manifesting. Unhesitatingly, he agreed to his master's terms.

Corey Hammett, Jr. died that night. There was just enough left of the body found after the electrical fire — old houses can have such temperamental wiring, after all — to identify him by dental records. That same night Vincent Cutter was born, and Nightmare Alley gained its new face-man. His previous life's extensive experience with civil bureaucracy made him the perfect candidate to manage the sideshow's licenses, permits, IDs, and the like, and natural cunning filled in wherever firsthand knowledge was lacking.

Given his largely normal appearance and the unique role he fulfilled within the sideshow, Vincent was the one chosen by the Roller to track down the Urn of Whispers — he could move without attracting too much mortal notice, and his access to Nightmare Alley's resources was more or less absolute. That was also why he was the Fasad on hand when the Shuankhsen needed someone to sacrifice to the Urn.

Description: The man now known as Vincent Cutter is a study in the ceaseless war between consummate



craftsmanship and inevitability. Vincent smells subtly of fine cologne, with just a faint whiff of something floral and, just beneath that, something acrid and chemical. His build is gaunt and his middle-aged face is sunken, as if slowly tightening against his skull, but there is no trace of the decay common to husks. Not yet, anyway; his agonizing regimen of self-maintenance has held the corruption at bay so far. His brown eyes stare out from deep, shadowed sockets; his short, gray-peppered brown hair is neatly combed back, as if to display the exquisite work he has done on his own living corpse. An expertly-fitted set of dentures conceals the sharp teeth of one of the Fasad, and his unsettling smile is gleaming white.

Storytelling Hints: You are a meticulous creature, and ill-suited to the unexpected — it tends to throw you for a loop, at least for a little while. Given a bit of time, though, you adapt, and reestablish your customary mien of unflappable calm. You are a unique being, in a number of ways, and you don't hesitate to take pride in that simple truth.

Concept: Abandoned Husk

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

Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts (Mortician) 5, Drive 1, Expression 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 2,

Investigation 3, Larceny 2, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Persuasion 3 (Cutting Deals), Science 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3 (Con Jobs), Weaponry 1

Merits: Contacts (Bureaucracy, Finance, Law, Medicine, Transportation), Language (French, Latin), Iron Stamina 3, Resources 5

Remnant Ability: Branding Wound

Willpower: 7

Morality: 3

Virtue: Prudence (If anyone involved in Nightmare Alley knows where all the money, cultists, and corpses are hidden, it's Vincent. He keeps an eye on — and his hands in — everything. Patient and methodical, Vincent misses little and forgets less.)

Vice: Pride (Vincent is an artist, and the lifeless human form is his canvas and his clay. He, quite justifiably, thinks very highly of his own skills in that respect, but they have led him to look upon himself with a sort of vanity, as a uniquely well-preserved specimen of his kind.)

Derangements: Narcissism

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Fist OB

Knife 1L

Light pistol 2L

NIGHTMARE ALLEY FASAD/CARNIE

Quote: “Show’s closed. Get out.”

“The boss is going to be pissed.”

“That’s it — time to feed you to the monsters.”

Background: To a one, all of the Roller’s rank and file servants are dregs and outcasts — broken people who have no other way of being part of the world. Truth be told, he has little use for any other kind of person. Only those who have nowhere else to turn have any appeal to him as staff for his ghastly sideshow. Any right-thinking person with any other options in life would run screaming from a life in Nightmare Alley, after all.

Description: The denizens of Nightmare Alley look, for the most part, like the seediest, most unsavory possible stereotypes of carnival folk. They’re the sort who make people think of carnies as criminals, junkies, and creepy outcasts with no place in a civilized society. They’re adorned with prison tattoos, unsanitary piercings, mysterious scars, and bad dye jobs.

Obviously, Nightmare Alley’s resident Fasad are rather more horrific in appearance, with gangrenous flesh, oozing sores, and bits and pieces rotting right off their bones. Depending upon when and how they’re encountered (and



how recently Vincent Cutter has had an opportunity to work on them), these monstrosities are often disguised in ways that conceal (to varying degrees of success) their obviously undead states.

Storytelling Hints: Serve the Roller. Do as he commands. Strive to please him and earn his favor, for he will one day be a god. He said so, and you have every reason to believe it.

(**Note:** In any instance in which they appear, entries before the slash are for mortal carnies, while those after the slash are for Fasad.)

Concept: Dangerous Outcast

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

Skills: Athletics 1/2, Brawl 2/3, Crafts 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Intimidation 1/3 (Veiled Threats/Torture), Larceny 2 (Pickpocketing), Medicine 1, Occult 1/2, Stealth 2/3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 2 (Knife)

Merits: Fast Reflexes 1, Iron Stamina 1/3, Toxin Resistance, Witness

Remnant Ability: Branding Wound (Fasad only)

Willpower: 4

Morality: 3/2

Virtue: Faith (Once he has attained godhood, the Roller will provide for his loyal subjects.)

Vice: Sloth (This horror-show is as good at it gets, and there's no point in trying for anything better.)

Derangements: Depression, Irrationality

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 10/11

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Fist OB

Improvised bludgeon 2B

Knife 1L

Light Pistol 2L

HAMUNSHERE WAREHOUSE GUARD

Quotes: "Get down on the floor and put your hands on your head!"

"If you don't do as I say, I'm going to shoot."

"Glory to Hamunshere!"

Background: The cultist-guards at Hamunshere's warehouse, where Khenafsaa's pitcher is kept, come from a fairly thuggish and violent sect. They're just the sort of guys to employ to knock heads and keep sightseers at bay. Raised in their mistress' cult, they do as they're told and don't ask too many questions.

Description: Tall and broad-shouldered, with powerful limbs and thick, scowling faces, these brutish men are the result of centuries of selective breeding under the direction of a bellicose immortal. To a one, they wear forest green security uniforms, and all carry truncheons. A couple are also outfitted with handguns.

Storytelling Hints: Speak a bit too loudly, while leaning forward in an aggressive posture. Always keep at least a hint of a threat in your tone of voice. Practice strength (and boldness) in numbers.

Concept: Violent Guardsman

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

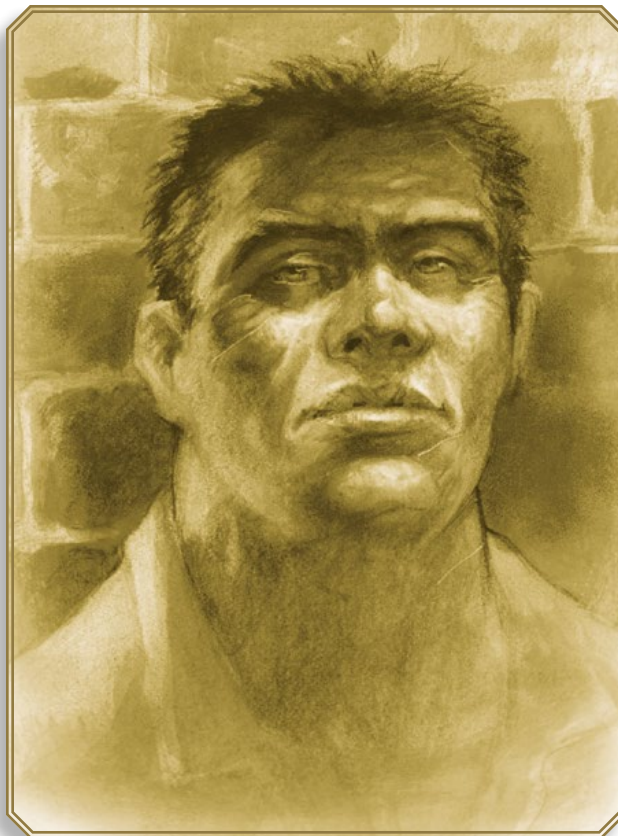
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Ganging Up) 3, Computer 1, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Intimidation (Blatant Threats) 3, Investigation 2, Larceny 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry (Club) 2

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Iron Stamina 1, Language (English), Strong Back

Willpower: 5

Morality: 4

Virtue: Faith (The mistress' will is everything. What she commands is law. This place and its contents must be defended against intruders.)



Vice: Wrath (If it's possible to bust some skulls in the process of enforcing the mistress' will, so much the better.)

Derangements: Suspicion

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Fist OB

Club 1B

Light pistol 2L

DAVID HWANG

Quotes: "I'll help if I can. I guess that's why I'm here."
"I'm not like other ghosts. I don't know why."

"Have you seen my wife and son? They're dead, too."

Background: In life, David Hwang was a devoted husband and a loving father. The car accident that took his wife and son left him a hollow shell of a man. If he'd been aware of it while it was happening, he'd have considered the aneurism that killed him, four years later, to have been a blessing. But, when he came to his senses as one of the restless dead, his family was nowhere to be found. He could move between their graves and his



favorite of the family photos, but he could find no trace of them in the afterlife.

Damning the fates that would free him from a life without his loved ones and then refuse him the joy of reunion, David honed his ghostly abilities with a fierce resolve rarely found among the dead. He pushed himself further and further from the ties that chained him to those stones and that picture, hunting after any sign that his wife and child were out there. By sheer force of will, he learned to attach himself to other people who he believed might be able to help him discover what became of his family — the priest who came to comfort his grieving parents, the visiting “psychic” who his mother believed could help her to communicate with him. Soon, he figured out how to “jump” from one lead to another, exchanging newly-forged anchors, struggling ever outward in his quest to find the twin lights of his life and the sole solace of his death.

It was in this manner that he stumbled across the first person to see him and know him for what he was. She was one of the Heretic’s disciples. The mummy’s expression betrayed no sign of noticing David, though she nevertheless passed word along to her teacher of this young but extraordinary shade. Observing David from afar, the Heretic found him equally remarkable and

worked necromantic magics unknown since the days of the Nameless Empire to give him a secondary purpose as an agent of Apotheosis. And, though David doesn’t know it, he has a powerful friend indeed quietly seeking any news of Kylie and Jared Hwang, among all of Neter-Khertet’s numberless dead.

Description: David’s ghost appears as a relatively handsome man of Taiwanese descent, in his late 30s, a bit on the tall side, with dark brown eyes and close-cut black hair. He has dark circles under his eyes, as though from a chronic lack of sleep, and he looks just a little underweight.

Storytelling Hints: You still don’t entirely have a handle on being a ghost. You’ve been testing the boundaries of your condition so much that you have little in common with most of the shades of the restless dead. Normally, you speak and act decisively and with confidence, but this new mission on which you find yourself — for reasons you don’t really understand — has thrown you for a bit of a loop, so you’re willing to look to others for guidance. If those others can possibly help you to find Kylie and Jared, so much the better.

Concept: Persistent Shade

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

Skills: Academics 2, Animal Ken 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Computer (Programming) 3, Drive 1, Empathy (Motives) 2, Expression 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Ghosts) 1, Persuasion 2, Science 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 1

Merits: Language (English, Taiwanese)

Essence: 10

Willpower: 7

Morality: 7

Virtue: Hope (You **will** find them and be a family, again, even if it takes you a thousand years. What do you have, if not time? Only in your very darkest moments since you first came to understand that you were dead have you ever held even the slightest doubt that you will eventually be reunited with your wife and son.)

Vice: Pride (Most of the rest of the dead are broken records, playing out meaningless performances for empty theaters. You’re better than they are. Stronger. You’ve had to be. What you’re fighting for, after all, is far more important than whatever reasons most of them had for sticking around.)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 15 (species factor 10)

Size: 5

Corpus: 8

Numina: Lucid Dead, Spectral Toughness, Stalker

Weapons/Attacks:

Hands OB

PLAIN OF BONES GHOST

Quotes: <bone-chilling shriek>

<animalistic snarl>

<eerie hiss>

Background: Anything that was once human in these ghosts has long since fled them. They have no memories of their lives, or of the crimes for which they were sentenced to this endless hell. All they know is that the idea of inflicting pain, rather than suffering it, is — even if only for a few moments — a balm to their torments.

Description: Their naked, dust-caked spectral flesh torn and ragged with millennia of unspeakable torments, the ravenous dead of the Plain of Bones are feral, desperate creatures, with jagged teeth and claw-like nails. They go on all fours as often as on two legs, scuttling with surprising speed. Their only vocalizations are inarticulate shrieks and roars.

Storytelling Hints: You are much more a wounded wild animal than a human being, now. You hunger for life and for escape from this hell, but those desires can never

be satisfied. Instead, you must content yourself with acts of horrific violence against any intruder into your place of torment.

Concept: Savage Shade

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 3

Essence: 3 (the continual torments of the Plain of Bones prevent the ghosts there from ever building up much strength)

Willpower: 7

Morality: 0

Virtue: Fortitude (Endure the torture. There is nothing left, save to endure. Forever.)

Vice: Wrath (Tear. Rend. Devour. Hurt. Kill. Destroy.)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 4

Speed: 16 (species factor 10)

Size: 5

Corpus: 8

Numina: None

Weapons/Attacks:

Hands/teeth 1L

THE ROLLER'S AMKHAT HUSK

Perhaps the most monstrous of the Roller's creations, this unique Amkhat/Fasad hybrid is truly an affront to nature and the gods.

Description: This perversion of the cosmos has the body of a gaunt lion, complete with diseased patches of missing fur and ulcerated flesh. A massive jackal's head sits atop its thin neck, jaws dislocated to accommodate the zombie-like head of an ancient Shuankhsen husk. A gargantuan black scorpion's tail protrudes from its hindquarters, while half the length of a king cobra protrudes from a raw patch of flesh in each of the monster's shoulders.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3; Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Expression 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 1, Survival 3

Willpower: 1

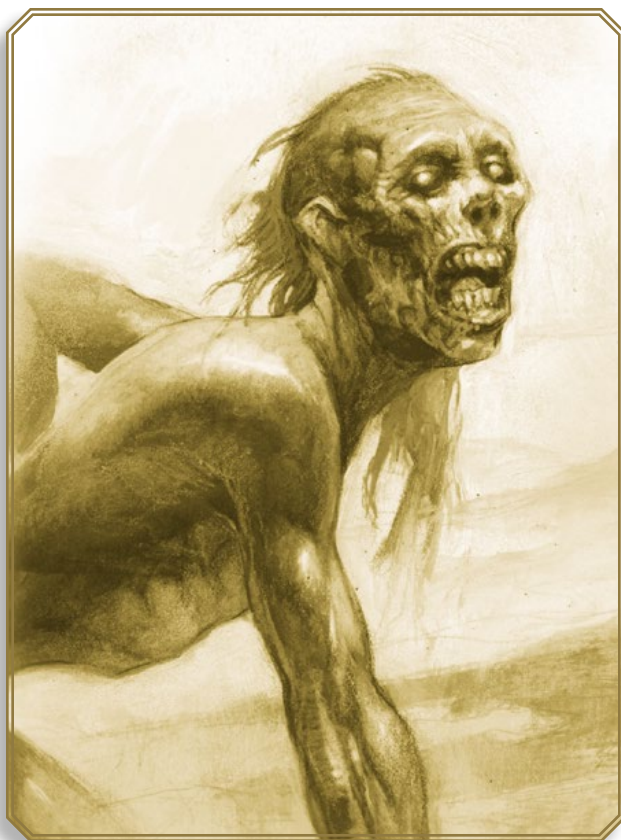
Initiative: 7

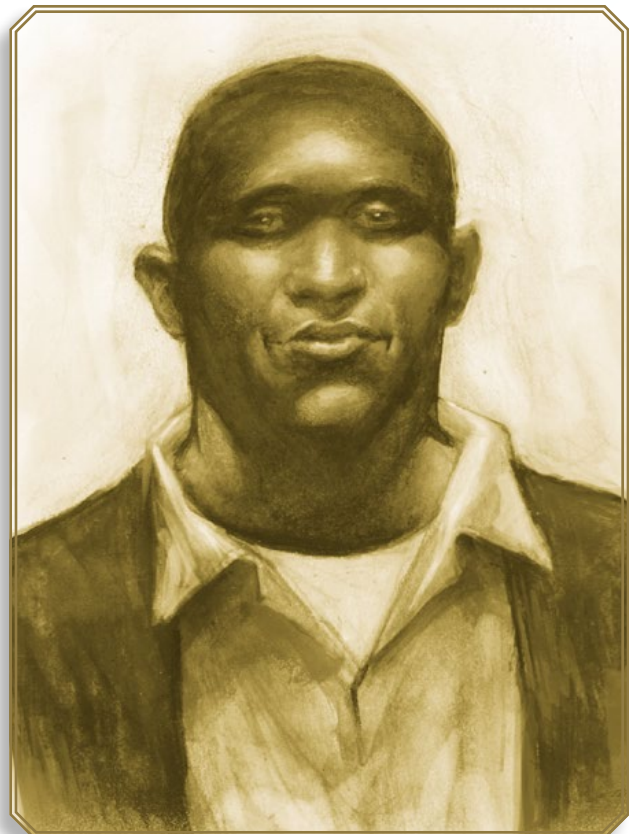
Speed: 21

Size: 6

Weapons/Attacks:

Between its claws, the two serpents sprouting from its shoulders, and its scorpion tail, the Amkhat Husk is effectively able to make three attacks **every turn**, all of them 2L. Additionally, it has a unique heart, made from the American carrion beetle, which has been mystically altered to feed on the flesh of the dead, the undead, the Lifeless,





and the Deathless. Every time a being meeting one of those descriptions inflicts damage on the Amkhat Husk, it sustains a point of lethal damage, unless armored from head to toe.

KHENAFSAA

Quotes: “Sit down, friends! Have a drink — on the house.”
“Tell me your troubles. Perhaps I know of a solution.”

“I have discovered that eternity is merely a longer time in which to have the same problems that have always beset everyone. If I may offer a word of advice....”

Background: While the man known by his fellow Arisen as Khenafsaa recalls next to nothing of ancient Irem, he is quite certain that he was a brewer, given his prodigious skill with the crafting of beers.

Description: Khenafsaa is a short, broadly-built man, a little thick through the middle. His face and scalp are always clean-shaven and his eyebrows are naturally sparse, almost to the point of nonexistence, making his head to look very nearly like a sculpture of polished ebony. Khenafsaa is almost always smiling, at least a little, and he has the kind of friendly face that makes people more inclined to like and trust him. He dresses in fine, though tasteful, clothing, with an eye for both comfort and style.

Storytelling Hints: Laugh freely and easily, and — most importantly — *sincerely*. The world is a splendid

place, full of opportunities for a good time, even in the midst of the heavy burdens of one of the Deathless. You are in many ways the archetypal bartender, always quick to pour a drink and to offer a friendly ear.

Concept: Life of the Party

Decree: Heart

Judge: Tutuutef, the Giver of Wickedness

Guild: Mesen-Nebu

Virtue: Charity (At almost all times, Khenafsaa is a model of hospitality and courtesy, who believes that one goes a good deal further in this world with generosity than with thrift. He finds happiness in giving to others and in providing a sympathetic ear to those in need.)

Vice: Gluttony (Khenafsaa enjoys feeding his own appetites just as much as he does tending to the needs of others. A full pitcher of beer; a plate of sweets; a couple of pretty women on his arms — Khenafsaa revels in all manner of indulgences.)

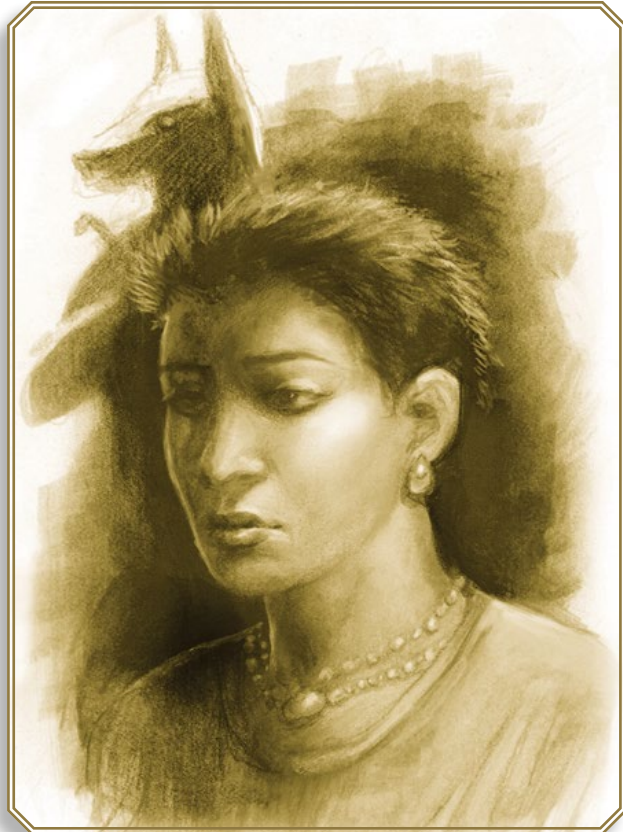
TA-NEFU SHAHEKI

Quotes: “The will of the Judges is the law. We know no other way.”

“Attend your appointed tasks with virtue and devotion, always.”

“Desires are for mortals. Our obligations are never-ending — what we *want* rarely warrants consideration.”





Background: In life, she was the personal scribe to one of the Shan'iatu — she remembers that much, even now, though her master's name and face are lost to her. Though she cannot be certain of it, Ta-Nefu Sheheri believes that she was also one of his concubines, a servant favored above all others and chosen for the Rite of Return, so that their love would never die. In the millennia since then, she has judged the entire world and all the people in it according to the impossibly high standards set by her hazy recollections. This drive toward perfection has served her well, however, and won Ta-Nefu Sheheri a high place among the Sesha-Hebsu, a position that she values almost as greatly as her dedication to the laws and traditions set forth by the Nameless Empire.

Description: Ta-Nefu Sheheri appears as an elegant Middle Eastern woman in her late middle years. She is much more striking than she is beautiful, with close-cropped iron-gray hair, a beak-like nose, lips drawn taut with concentration, and eyes almost perpetually narrowed in an appraising stare. When among mortals, she dresses in garb suitable to a modest, conservative Egyptian Muslim woman (including a *niqab*); when solely in the company of those initiated into the society of the Arisen, however, she wears the clothing and jewelry that serve as marks of her high station in the Sesha-Hebsu.

Storytelling Hints: When you speak, you only ever do so from a place of absolute self-assurance. You never fidget or otherwise show any other sign of discomfort or lack of focus — indeed, your every motion is calculated for effect. Your patience is half the product of a keen, analytical mind, and half a deliberate affectation to make others wait on your words or actions, simply because you can. Your default tone of voice is judgmental, verging on accusatory. If ever you possessed a sense of basic human warmth, it is long since gone from you.

Concept: Guild Hardliner

Decree: Spirit

Judge: Shet-Kheru, the Orderer of Speech

Guild: Sesha-Hebsu

Virtue: Faith (The ancient way is the best way. Indeed, it is the **only** way. Those Arisen who speak of change are traitors to Irem, and they turn their backs on the very gods who made them. One must believe in the will of the Judges and in the wisdom of the Shan'iatu who created the Deathless. All things proceed according to their ineffable plans.)

Vice: Envy (Not content merely to hold a position of power and authority, Ta-Nefu-Sheheri also begrudges others any ascension within the political hierarchy of the guilds, lest the value of her own influence and lofty station be compromised. It is not enough that she is successful — she also desires that others **not** succeed.)

SETENANSHI

Quotes: “I can tell you only so much.”

“You have three minutes. Say what you need to.”

“Following the wisdom of the Heretic is dangerous — for him, no less so than for his disciples.”

Background: Setenanshi grew disillusioned with the guilds, long ago, though she concealed her dissatisfaction carefully. The Heretic, however, saw through her façade, inviting her to undertake the journey toward Apotheosis. Over the years — realizing, quite early on, its vast potential — she focused her attentions upon the burgeoning field of communications, carving out an important niche for herself within the Heretic's following, even as she maintained a position of trust and authority within the Mesen-Nebu, quietly informing her teacher as to the Alchemists' doings.

Description: While she is unlikely to physically appear in “Pearl of Ascent,” characters who know her from previous lifetimes may remember Setenanshi's appearance as that of a slight and lovely young woman in her late teens to early 20s, with thick waves of black hair, an olive complexion, and eyes the color of dark honey.

Storytelling Hints: Guard your words and your identity — not just your wellbeing, but also that of the Heretic's following, and perhaps even the Heretic himself, may well



depend on it. Still, it is possible to draw you out and get you talking through well-timed appeals to your emotions. In particular, you are afraid that the Roller may be coming for you, soon.

Concept: Cautious Supplicant

Decree: Heart

Judge: Neheb-Ka, the One Who Unifies

Guild: Mesen-Nebu

Virtue: Prudence (It is well and good to venture boldly on the road of Apotheosis, but some must step with caution and foresight, lest the wrath of the guilds destroy that path, forever.)

Vice: Sloth (Setenanshi is, at her core, something of a coward. She tends to avoid direct action whenever possible, instead preferring to sit in the center of a web of influence and direct her plans from there.)



You burn to know the significance of the rise of high Sothis,
and now that we have dragged ourselves through the arid fullness of time, I will answer thus:

What is it that reveals itself under the light of a rising star?

When convergence slides its ineffable will into place, and Fate swings but one pole-star wide,
high above the contours of creation's map, what emerges to stand before that celestial radiance?
To defiantly utter the words of power etched upon its own naked name?

The truth is rooted in the fact that each star is unique,
possessed of its own name and light, just as the name of one man is not the name of another.
And the starlight of Sothis is deeply reflective,
bathing the eyes of those who gaze up at it in the brilliant tapestry of their own celestial night.

You ask for revelations about Sothis, but you ask them of me.

If you would have answers,
you must first know in whose name your starlight shines.

And in that light, high Sothis reveals all.

— Sefet-Qam, the Hallowed Mask

This book includes:

- Comprehensive information on the mundane and supernatural world during each of the three prior Sothic Turns, **Mummy's** pivotal eras of historical play — the Cannibal Hymn (2371 BCE), the Mighty Despair (910 BCE), and the Return to Dusk (551 CE).
- A wealth of new material for Storytellers, including characteristics of a Sothic chronicle, features of the latest Sothic Turn, a secret society of the Deathless, a new kind of Utterance, and two new types of story framework — the interwoven chronicle and the parallel chronicle.
- "Pearl of Ascent" — a complete **Mummy** story that Storytellers can run alone or as the climactic final act in a three-part series called *The Avarice Chronicle*.

