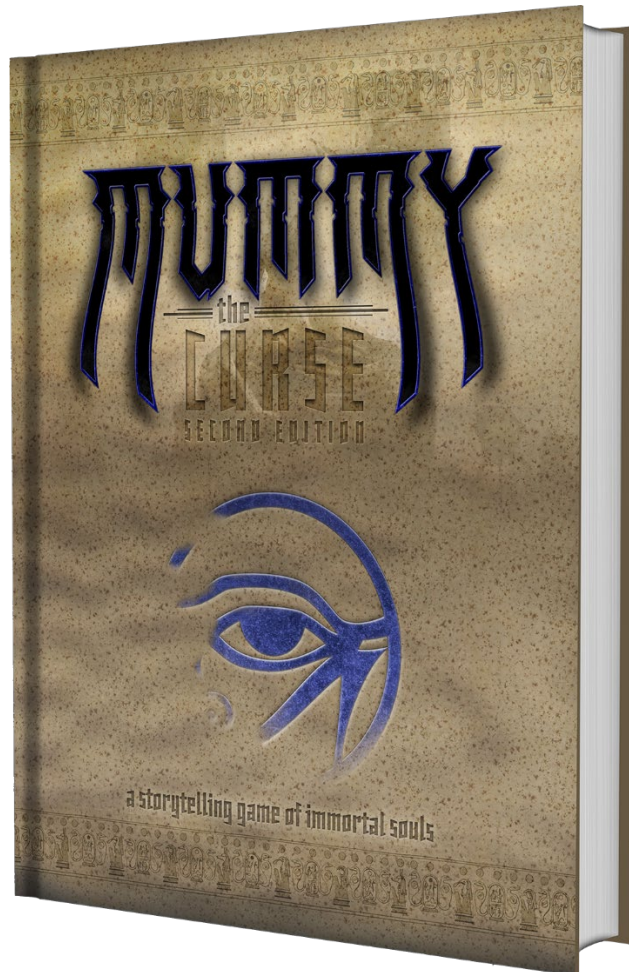


MUMMY

the
CURSE

SECOND EDITION

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #1



Introduction

When I awaken in the dark of the tomb, I am little more than purpose and raw power. I sense the thrum of Sekhem all around me, and the pull of my Judge's will. The smells of holy oils and fresh blood hang heavy on the air, and the last refrain of a chant echoes off the stone walls.

The faces around me — I'm not alone — are familiar. A little older, maybe, than when I went to sleep. How much time has passed, since that last lifetime and this? Who are they?

Who am I?

You've served him all your life, though he's never stirred from his slab in the innermost chamber before tonight. All these years, you did his bidding, observed his rituals, managed his business, kept tabs on his enemies. Your mother did the same before you. Now he rises, and you're ready to give whatever he asks of you.

Mummy: The Curse is a storytelling game of timeless souls set in the **Chronicles of Darkness**, a world much like our own, but full of supernatural horrors. This book contains everything you need to create your Arisen characters and their followers and guide them on their Descents throughout history.

In **Mummy: The Curse** you play a person who was once a citizen of the Nameless Empire. Its sorcerer-priests granted you immortality, but at a cost. You awaken from your deathly slumber brimming with power, but devoid of memory. Each Descent is a race to discover who you were and who you've become, before Duat claims you once more. What will you build, with the time you have?

The Arisen don't always experience time in a linear fashion. A mummy awakens in 1950s America, but recalls parts of her prior Descent occurring in 2012. She remembers history out of order, both the world's and her own. How can she bring about the things she knows are coming? What pieces can she change, and who will she become if she changes them?

You may also play members of the Arisen's cult, those mortals who've dedicated their lives to serving the Deathless. Whether you're the heir to a millennia-old sorcerous legacy, or a new devotee, you carry out your mummy's wishes while she sleeps. You guard her tomb. You manage the business she established in a prior Descent. You seek out relics to empower her when she awakens. In return, she trusts you to wield a sliver of her immense power.

We present options for playing a *meret* — a group of mummies — or a mixed troupe of Deathless and mortals as they carry out the wishes of their Judges in Duat, race against the competition to reclaim relics, and battle their ancient enemies, the Shuankhsen.

Mummy is a game about empires: how they're built, how they fall, how we reinforce them and how we break free.

It's also a game about individuals, about who you are and who you perceive yourself to be. What happens when you learn things about yourself that contradict the narrative you've so carefully pieced together?

It's a game about power: the consequences of wielding it, the things we trade it away for, what it feels like when it wanes.

Theme: Memory

Each Descent, the Arisen begins as a blank slate. If she's lucky, her cult reminds her who she is and fills the gaps with facts about her lives, her plans, and anything that stands in her way. But not every rising starts with an orientation session. Sometimes the mummy has to piece herself together on her own, cobbling her memories together into a timeline as they surface.

As immortals whose lives span eons, mummies attempt to anchor themselves to the world even as it moves on without them. They make connections, not only to their cults but also to other Arisen who can share experiences across the millennia. Memory shapes identity, and the more lines a mummy can connect, the better she can anchor her sense of who she is. But tethers snap, and rope frays. Memory can be unreliable, and for the Arisen it's often fragmented and out-of-context. It's frustrating, having to rely on other peoples' interpretations of events. Sometimes, however, it can be freeing. If you don't know who you were, you can be anyone you like. That is, until recollection comes knocking.

Mood: Discovery

A mummy's Descent is full of discovery. Immediately upon waking, she has to figure out where she is, and when. She quickly learns what her cult requires of her. Sometimes her enemies reveal themselves before she's even shed her wrappings. At its heart, however, **Mummy: The Curse** is about the Deathless discovering themselves. How does new information about old sins affect your plans? Your sense of self? With every revelation about his previous Descents, the Arisen has to reassess what that knowledge means for him *now*. Maybe he was someone better back then, and sees his past as a standard to aim for. Or maybe he was a monster, and his past actions horrify him. What things does he accept, what does he try to bury all over again?

Playing with Compassion

Few Arisen inhabit the same body they lived in when they were alive in Irem. They may appear as a different race or gender than they recall from their previous Descents. We greatly encourage playing a diverse range of characters, but remind players and Storytellers to be thoughtful about how you address such concepts at your table. Please be mindful and avoid harmful tropes and comments that might be triggering to other members of your gaming group.

Inspirational Media

Mummy: The Curse can span several genres. You might want to tell a story inspired by 1920s pulp adventures, or opt for a quieter game of self-discovery in a modern setting. Here are some books, games, and movies that evoke these varying aspects.

Movies and Television

Altered Carbon (2018) In the future, people store their memories on disks and transfer their consciousness from body to body, granting them a type of immortality.

Bubba Ho-Tep (2002) Though the film features a mummy as its antagonist, we're recommending it for the way it shows the characters dealing with aging and the powerlessness they feel as a result of it.

Fringe (2008) Another study in how memory shapes identity, the character of Dr. Walter Bishop underwent several brain surgeries to remove memories he felt made him dangerous. As the series progresses, he regains many of them, and must deal with the fallout.

Memento (2000) is an excellent exploration of memory and loss, and how someone builds (and alters) their narrative with limited and often conflicting information.

The Mummy (1999) represents several elements of **Mummy** — a race to find a hidden city and claim the relics within, traps laid to protect the tomb, ancient sorcery. Imhotep's desiccated body repairs itself much like one of the Arisen, and his formidable displays of power could easily be Utterances. Though their aim is to keep him from rising rather than serving him, the Medjai have been protecting Imhotep's tomb for thousands of years, much like a mummy's cult.

Books

11/22/63, by Stephen King (2011) explores many of the ripple effects altering a timeline can cause, both on a small scale and a global one.

The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August by Claire North (2014) Though Harry would technically be one of the Reborn, this novel is both a good example of what it's like to use knowledge from an earlier Descent to nudge history, and how it feels when your best friend in one Descent might turn out to be your eternal nemesis, too. The Chronus Club functions both like a mummy's cult and a group of Arisen whose Descents overlap.

The Time Traveler's Wife, by Audrey Niffenegger (2003) gives readers a sense of what it's like for mummies to experience their Descents in a non-linear fashion, and the effects that can have on those devoted to them.

For sorcerous cults, the works of Robert Howard and Clark Ashton Smith showcase their rituals and eldritch observances.

Games

Assassin's Creed: Origins (2017) is set in Ptolemaic Egypt, and its stunning visuals can inspire Storytellers running scenes in lost Irem or the first Sothic Turns.

Planescape: Torment (1999) follows an immortal character attempting to piece together memories of his previous lives.

Lexicon

The following is a sample of the core terms used in the world of **Mummy**.

A'aru/Aaru: the afterlife to which worthy mortal souls ascend after death.

ab: In the five-fold soul, the heart.

Affinity: A mystical imbuelement that grants a mummy the quiet power to prevail at his purpose.

Am-Khaibit: A Judge of Duat who presides over those who commit crimes against humanity. Known as the Eater of Shadows.

Apotheosis: A fabled state of being whereby mummies might either end or otherwise transform the cycle of death-and-rebirth to which they have chained themselves for eternity.

Arem-Abfu: A Judge of Duat who presides over those who commit crimes against the cosmos. Known as the Final Judge.

Arisen: A mummy or mummies created in lost *Irem* by the sorcerer-priests of the great guilds.

Ashem: The decree of shadow.

ba: In the five-fold soul, the spirit.

benbenet: A human or piece of sacred geometry at the midst of a Judge's emanation, bearing its *crown*.

crown: A metaphysical signifier marking a person or piece of sacred geometry as a Judge's herald in this world. A crowned *benbenet* speaks and acts with the Judge's authority.

cult: Customary term for any group of mortals that has forged a bond with a mummy.

Deathless: All mummies who are not *Lifeless*.

Deceived: Mummies of a "lost" guild who practiced the Nomenclature and wielded the terrifying power of true names.

decree: One of five defining pronouncements an Arisen might make before the *Judges of Duat*; one's decree determines which aspect of the five-fold soul guides a mummy throughout unlife.

dedwen: a mystical property contained in all things, mutable and valuable, capable of being shaped into its own perfected form and granting prosperity. Properly refined, dedwen can be transformed into *Sekhem*.

Descent, the: An activity period, or life cycle, for a mummy; it could last a night, or it might last a year.

Deshret: The decree of spirit.

Devourer, the: The oblivion goddess Ammut, who devoured the souls of those whom the *Judges of Duat* had judged and found wanting.

Duat: The underworld, to which Arisen souls return during their *henet*, ruled over by the *Judges*.

guild: One of six mighty organizations in lost *Irem*, each overseen by the *Shan'iatu*); the five modern guilds reflect the Arisen's reconstructed visions thereof.

henet: The spiritual repose into which mummies fall when they must take their rest.

Immortals: Humans who have achieved vastly extended lifespans, without undergoing the Rite of Return.

Inheritors: A mortal in whom the Arisen has invested Pillars via the Rite of Investment.

Irem: The Arisen nickname for the many-pillared city that was the seat of *the Nameless Empire*.

Iremic: The Iremite language, roughly analogous to Archaic Egyptian and Old Egyptian.

Iremite: "of Irem", such as a mummy who lived their mortal days in Irem, or an artifact crafted in Irem.

Judges of Duat: The godlike beings who sit in judgment over departed souls; each Arisen pledges himself to the service of his people and his purpose before one of these beings.

ka: In the five-fold soul, the essence.

Kenemti: A Judge of Duat who presides over those who commit crimes of blasphemy and desecrate the sacred. Known as the Penitent.

kepher: The psychic resonance the Arisen sense when tracking sources of Sekhem or relics of lost Irem.

Kher-Minu: A minor guild of warriors and tomb guardians, whose deaths and souls are tied to their weapons. Between Descents, the Kher-Minu's body turns to stone.

Kheru: The decree of heart.

Lifeless: Umbrella category of warped, less perfected visions of undeath than the *Arisen*.

Maa-Kep: The Arisen iteration of an ancient guild of laborers and spies who specialize in the creation of mystically imbued amulets.

Maar-Kherit: A minor guild originally composed of physicians and healer-priests, warped into Sybaris-spreading horrors by a failed act of resurrection.

meret: Customary term for an alliance among several Arisen; denotes the group as a unit.

Mesen-Nebu: The Arisen iteration of an ancient guild of craftsmen and smiths who specialize in the occult transmutations of alchemy.

Nameless Empire, the: The lost, predynastic Egyptian civilization that gave birth to all true mummies.

Nebha: A Judge of Duat who presides over deceivers and liars. Known as the Flame.

Neheb-Ka: A Judge of Duat who presides over crimes borne of human pride and arrogance. Known as the One Who Unifies.

Nesrem: The decree of essence.

Neter-Khertet: A realm on the border between life and death, ruled by the god Anpu.

nome: The territory over which a mummy exerts their influence.

Pillar: One of five aspects of the ancient soul—heart, spirit, essence, name, and shadow.

relic: A vessel containing distilled or refined *Sekhem* (or in rarer cases, substantial levels of unrefined Sekhem) and thus bearing both discernable mystical properties and an attached curse; found in one of five general forms (amulets, effigies, regia, texts, and uter).

ren: In the five-fold soul, the name.

Rite of Return: The sorcery that created the Arisen and that binds its *Sekhem* to their souls so they can walk among the living.

Sadikh: trusted mortal servants of the Arisen, granted a limited type of immortality from the Rite of the Engraved Heart

Sekhem: The pure “life force” that gives both the Arisen and their occult traditions power.

Semektet: The period during which an Arisen is awake.

Sesha-Hebsu: The Arisen iteration of an ancient guild of magistrates and scribes who specialize in the creation of the occult word.

Shan'iatu: The cabal of sorcerer-priests who ran the ancient guilds and created all mummies.

Shuankhsen: The deadliest of the Lifeless, they are mummies who have been lost to shadow.

sheut: In the five-fold soul, the shadow.

Sickness, the: Informal term for the occult miasma that settles over living mortals unaccustomed to the ancient power and dread presence of a mummy (q.v., *Sybaris*).

sorcerer: A human who can perceive and manipulate Sekhem.

Sothic Turn: An interval of time coinciding with the end of the previous canicular period (about 1,460 years), during which all the Deathless arise unsummoned and seek out new purpose.

Su-Menent: The Arisen iteration of an ancient guild of funerary priests and ritualists who specialize in the creation of vessels of the shell.

Sybaris: Customary term for the Sickness, experienced in one of two ways: terror or unease.

Tef-Aabhi: The Arisen iteration of an ancient guild of architects and engineers who specialize in the creation of magical effigies.

temakh: the mystical essence the Shan'iatu possess in place of human souls.

Unem-Besek: A Judge of Duat who presides over the theft of land, denial of sustenance, and disruption of dominion. Known as the Eater of Entrails.

Usekh-Nemtet: A Judge of Duat who presides over those who would challenge the Judges and seek immortality. Known as the First Judge.

Usheb: The decree of the name.

Utterance: A powerful spell invoked by a mummy through the power of his Sekhem.

vessel: An object that has either naturally accumulated or been artificially imbued with Sekhem.

vestige: A vessel containing only pure/unrefined Sekhem and bearing no mystical properties, but holding a great deal of emotional or spiritual value to one or more earth-bound souls.

Wadjet-Itja: A minor guild of tricksters, gamblers, and oracles, who supplement their imperfect immortality by stealing years from mortals' lifespans.

Witness: a mortal who, via exposure to the Arisen and her cult, is drawn to the mummy's orbit. Often a Witness stirs the mummy's memories of Irem.

Chapter One: The Arisen

I have traveled through the tomb, dark and lonely ground. I am here now. I have come. I see. In the underworld, I embraced my father. I have burned away his darkness. I am his beloved. I have killed the snake. I have given him meat. I walk in my sleep through earth and heaven.

— *The Book of the Dead*

[LAYOUT: THIS OPENING ITALICIZED TEXT SHOULD BE LIKE THE OPENING CH1 TEXT FROM VTR2E AND CTL2E.]

I am Deathless. I die, but I return.

I am a relic. I am a monument to a buried empire. I dedicate life and death and life again to my unending purpose.

My soul is eternal. I devote myself to one of its aspects. It reminds me who I am no matter how many millennia I persist or what I forget.

I am not my own master. My Judge demands my faith and service. I reap what I sow.

I am Arisen. Memory is fleeting, but these things endure.

Guilds

No empire survives by its rulers alone. Many hands built Irem, many minds kept it running, and many hearts guided its worship. Those who kept the wheels of empire greased and turning were organized into *guilds*, sworn to service in their areas of expertise and passion.

The Shan'iatu chose workers from these guilds to undergo the Rite of Return and become living monuments, for monuments to Irem have always been guild business. Their dread sorcery wrote these purposes into the souls of the blessed, memories deeper than mind, flesh, or bone. A guild is not an organization, but a *raison d'être*. Being Deathless means committing eternity to the same calling they dedicated their lives to.

Maa-Kep

Shadow of Pillars

Spies, Junta, Dapifers

We would never say we know better, of course. It's just that not taking our advice would be a mistake.

I listened closely while he spoke. The people would love him, he said. They would offer their loyalty gladly, and in exchange they would gain power over their own fates. All it would take was a revolution, guns and fists raised high in silhouette against the orange blaze that would light up the night and banish tyranny. I could see his passion, his dedication. His logic was sound. His preparations were prudent. Even now, I laud his efforts.

He looked up from his maps and schedules to beam a smile my way. He cut a handsome figure, there in the candlelight, and I admit his plan had merit. It was a temptation, as surely as any convincing bait ever is. I smiled, too.

“So,” he said, “what do you think? Will it work?”

“It would have,” I assured him. “It would have worked very well, were it not for one fatal flaw.”

“What’s that?” he asked, concern writ plain in his bright eyes.

“You told it to me.”

Tradition of the Amulet

The relics of the Maa-Kep are protective talismans, badges of office, engraved emblems that declare something to be true, and unobtrusive seals that can hold back power, carry it, or transfer it from place to place. Worn or mounted, they passively soak in magic and secrets. Like their **amulets**, the Maa-Kep are subtle protectors and preservers of ideas and ideals, those who quietly move power from hand to hand or rein it in when it needs limiting for the greater good. They serve quietly but never let anyone forget how important they are. They absorb information, only doling it out when and to whom they believe it’s warranted. They’re the secret police of the Arisen, and the beat they walk is all of civilization. They shepherd ideological purity; sometimes those ideas come from the Judges, sometimes from the mortals the mummies guide, and sometimes from their own meret’s priorities.

Magnanimous in Victory, Blameless in Defeat

Maa-Kep rarely take the spotlight themselves, instead gathering information and then reporting it to someone else who will do the forward-facing work for them. This is partially because they believe to take credit is to disrespect their place as tools and useful right hands, passed down to them from the Judges and the Shan’iatu. It’s also for plausible deniability in case something goes wrong. It’s not that they throw their friends under the bus, it’s just that it’s easier to smooth things over later when they’re not the ones catching the heat. They’re loyal to their leaders but unafraid to speak truth to power — if only behind closed doors. They shape civilization around them by forever making corrections and adjustments to everything and everyone, whether with one quiet word or with a brute force tool — like a fellow mummy or a well-armed cult.

Foundations

In Irem, the Dapifers were originally a collection of middle managers — slave drivers, overseers, and convoy masters. They gradually made themselves indispensable, demonstrating their dedication to making sure Irem’s caravans ran on time and their understanding of the inner workings of empire. The Shan’iatu eventually recognized the guild’s potential to be so much more, and elevated the Maa-Kep to act as secret police whose true purpose was hidden from the other guilds. They preserved the ideological purity of Irem, making sure no one strayed from the path to glory and conquest in the gods’ names.

The Wheel Turns

The guild’s secret duty didn’t stay hidden forever; by the time of the Rite of Return, the others knew why the Spies had been chosen. Their fellow mummies don’t always *remember* it, though. Having a Maa-Kep in the meret is a slow pendulum swinging between trust and suspicion, as her comrades rediscover her covert goals over and over again; but by the time they remember, she’s always made herself too damn useful to ignore. To this day, it’s gauche to talk about it in polite company, and usually the meret’s cults other than the Maa-Kep’s itself aren’t in the know even once the Arisen remember. To those who don’t, the Junta are valued advisors and scouts, playing

the roles of coordinator, majordomo, surveillant, appraiser, and yes, spy — it's just that few realize this spy is *always* a double agent, even if it's for their own good. (Usually.)

Maa-Kep are kingmakers and internal affairs agents, watchdogs and stewards. They are project managers who support their merets and cults, rooting out incompetence, corruption, and untrustworthy sorts. They watch over their allies but also constantly evaluate them. To those who *do* remember their purpose, a Dapifer is all those things as well as the conductor who guides the meret's train along the rails and keeps everybody else in line. Some appreciate it; some resent it; and many feel differently depending on the Descent.

The Maa-Kep's cults are extensions of themselves by way of surveillance, information gathering, and spreading out like a web of eyes and ears with the mummy at its center. The Junta are men in black and spymasters, but also keen investigators with cults full of detectives and journalists, and mysterious strangers who waltz into someone's life, help him out for no apparent reason, then vanish into the ether — arranging people and events on a grand scale humans can't see. They're not the ones who give a man a fish; they're the ones who teach him to fish by writing the manual and having minions leave it conspicuously on his desk without ever talking to him, watching him from across the street with binoculars while he reads it, and then expecting him to do it *right*.

Once, the Dapifers weren't the ones with the big picture vision, instead enforcing that of the Shan'iatu. They were content with that...but the Shan'iatu aren't around anymore. The Maa-Kep view themselves as the Shan'iatu's true successors because they enshrine Irem's highest ideals. They know how things are really supposed to be done, and how to make sure they're done that way. The less they remember or care about their original mandates, the more they build their own versions of the grand vision in their minds and enforce *those*. They insist it's what the Judges want — who better to keep the seats warm for the great sorcerers than the ones who stood by their right hands so long ago?

As Sothis Ascends

A Maa-Kep deals with immortality by resting assured she can rely on her powers of observation and knowledge-gathering to catch her up on anything she forgets or misses, and by staying focused on the minutiae. She can't contemplate the existential dread of knowing she'll probably outlive the human race if she's busy micromanaging everyone else and poking her nose into their business 24/7. She might miss old friends, but at least she got to know them better than anyone else did — probably better than they knew themselves. Thus, they live on in her.

The patterns the Spies see and perpetuate in the world are those of behavior, relationships, and philosophies. They track the principles every society values and how it maintains its high road, or falls from it into a subversion or even perversion of its purported ideals. They understand how civilizations rise and fall by the integrity of their beliefs, their dedication compared to their hypocrisy, and how well their people work together.

Starfall

A Junta turns her back on the Judges because she sees what she believes is a flaw in the gods' plans or comes to believe that something has corrupted even those lords of Duat. Those who grow to resent their servitude don't do so because they hate the concept of serving, but because they feel they're not being utilized to their full potential, they're being ordered to uphold an impure idea, or their elegant work is stymied by frustrating obstacles beyond their control.

Others fall to corruption themselves, losing faith in their purpose after standing vigil for so long or craving the spotlight after lifetimes of hiding in the shadows.

Vessels: Amulets

Affinities: Affable Aid, Amulet of the Envoy, Nexus of the Soul

Who We Are

- Internal affairs officer in a metropolitan police department, monitoring society's dedication to its ideals through its law enforcement
- Deep-cover espionage agent, collecting intelligence about cultures and nations around the world and only reporting back what will push her employers to act the way she wants them to
- Project manager at a large company, raking in money so the cult can donate large sums to ideologically desirable groups
- Butler and house manager for a rich and bustling estate belonging to another Arisen and consisting of generations of a dynasty cult
- Trusted advisor to an influential politician or crime lord, whispering and nudging to influence governments, underworlds, or both

Beyond the Shadow of Pillars

Mesen-Nebu: You make an excellent vanguard, even if your materialistic streak makes you a bit of an embarrassment. We'd never say so to your face, though.

Sesha-Hebsu: Without you, many valuable secrets would be lost. Without us, your judgments would ring hollow.

Su-Menent: Curb your worst impulses, my friend. Your work is important, but not as important as you think it is.

Tef-Aabhi: It's an intricate dance we weave, isn't it? We both have long memories, but yours are so much more reliable. Pity, that.

Wadjet-Itja: One day, we'll dig up the secret of how you managed your chicanery, and on that day, you'll wish you never pretended at immortality.

Mesen-Nebu

Born of Gold

Revolutionaries, Alchemists, Brokers

If all you see here are the flaws, you're of no use to me. Out of the way — I'll show you what I see.

"That's it?" she grunted. "A handful of starry-eyed children and desperate runaways? That's not a cult."

"Not yet," I said, watching them fondly on the security feed as they milled around or huddled together, confused and frightened. "But I will make of them something extraordinary."

“What’s the point? In the time it takes, you could grasp power at the highest levels of this little social experiment of a nation, a hundred times over.”

“I could,” I conceded. I tapped the screen with one perfectly manicured nail, pointing out the one who had already opened the tome I left them and begun to try deciphering its sigils. She couldn’t have been older than 17. Her life was the blink of an eye, but in that blink...oh, the wonders she would master. “Yes, I could. But these children hold more dedwen in their little fingers than your posturing fools contain in their entire bodies.”

My comrade shook her head. She didn’t understand. But she would in time. These waifs would transform into beautiful, blooming flowers, loyal worshipers dreaming of pillars reaching higher than the clouds. Mine to shape. All mine.

Tradition of Alchemy

The relics of the Mesen-Nebu are objects and materials of beauty and value, transformed from something base. Potions and medicines, superior weapons and armor made of magical alloys, luxuries crafted from secret formulae, beautiful jewelry. Like their **regia**, the Mesen-Nebu transform and perfect. They see potential in everything, and know how to coax it out through mystical processes granted to them through their understanding of the mystery of alchemy. For them, alchemy isn’t about the mortal idea of the philosopher’s stone and eternal life — they already have that, after all. It’s about the occult principle of *dedwen*: “prosperity.” Dedwen comes of transmuting potential to power; uplifting the base and unfinished to a more perfect state, whether it’s metals and medicines, people, or societies. Thus, all will prosper, and all things will maximize their value. What “perfect” means varies from Judge to Judge and meret to meret, but regardless of the end product, every Revolutionary feels the drive to improve — themselves and everything else — and none are willing to settle for anything but the best. They earn that epithet every time they look at the way something *is* and, dissatisfied, change it into what it *could* be.

Value in Utility, Perfection in Beauty

To the Mesen-Nebu, a thing’s worth isn’t in its practical use or monetary value alone. Dedwen comes from aspiration to all facets of the gold coin’s worth: its utility as currency, yes, and the rarity that makes it desirable, but also its lovely shine that gleams in the sun. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but in the Broker’s mind, each beholder should work to surround themselves with what they desire, what pleases them. It’s not a shallow belief in appearances mattering more than what’s underneath, or a hedonistic indulgence (although many Alchemists do that too); it’s an arcane principle underlying the very concept of worth, marrying function and form together into a true ideal. Why settle for dull jewels when you could polish them? Some think the Mesen-Nebu frivolous, but they work just as hard as any Arisen, producing wonders and encouraging others not to settle either.

An intrinsic part of the pursuit of dedwen, and the visceral lure of this pursuit for these Arisen, is in its elusiveness. Even forms of value that seem objective to mortals, like a product’s market price or one tool achieving its purpose more efficiently than another, are subjective and debatable to the Mesen-Nebu based on esoteric criteria that only those initiated into the guild’s mysteries comprehend. Beauty is the most elusive prize of all; conceptions of what’s aesthetically pleasing vary from era to era, from culture to culture, and from person to person. The quest to understand beauty, the Alchemists say, is their *true* purpose. Crafting miracle

medicines and sorcerous weapons to aid the meret and its cults is a bonus — it's in the *process* that the real work lies, because the process is what produces the dedwen.

Foundations

In Irem, the Brokers forged the superior panoply with which the Shan'iatu and their soldiers conquered others, invented cures and restorative potions far in advance of not only their contemporaries but even, in some cases, modern medicine, and kept the empire's coffers full. They introduced commerce and perfected it to an art, demonstrating the power of exchange and economy as a form of alchemy, too — turning work into bread and investment into reward. They studied the properties of the world with mystical sciences the rest of humanity wouldn't discover for millennia. The Mesen-Nebu of Irem viewed themselves as the guild most dedicated to expressing the glory of the gods and displaying it for all to see — and to bow before.

The Wheel Turns

In the modern world, where capitalism reigns and the material sciences are highly advanced, the Alchemists are in their element. Of the Arisen, they're the most given to ostentatious displays of wealth and fame among mortals. They take varied roles ranging from chemists, doctors, and investment brokers to fashion designers, hairdressers, and career counselors; they serve anywhere they can transform and improve, or help others do so. They seek beauty in all things and strive to fulfill the desires of others, shaping mortal institutions by giving them what they want in exchange for material goods, favors, or worship. Having a Revolutionary in a meret means never wanting for anything, but it also means being constantly pushed to do more and do it better, to grow cults and train cultists in new skills. The Mesen-Nebu often represent the meret to outsiders, using elegance and aesthetics combined with a practical transactional mindset to persuade the skeptical to meet demand with supply.

The Mesen-Nebu's cults are extensions of themselves by way of their hooks into the world's economies and industries, and their influence over the populace's desires. Many Mesen-Nebu plant or recruit cultists in the higher echelons of marketing firms and advertising agencies, in red-light districts running high-end escort services, and in modeling and magazines to gauge (and sway) public opinion on what's desirable. Others use their significant reach and resources to invest in chemical and materials science laboratories, sneaking occult secrets into the formulae, or to found circuses, bands, and dance troupes to seek purer forms of aesthetics. A Revolutionary's cultist is as likely to be a talent scout or the producer of a reality show like *American Idol* as they are to invent experimental drugs and sell them on a street corner. The one thing the Alchemists' cults never are is idle.

As masters of dedwen, the Mesen-Nebu see themselves as the true successors to the Shan'iatu because they understand how to foster prosperity, and what is an empire that doesn't prosper? The other guilds may build things that last, but it's the Alchemists who make sure they have everything they need to do it. These Arisen keep food on the table, money in the bank, and joy in the heart. Dedwen, they say, is how the Shan'iatu perfected their sacred arts and created the cycles that live on beyond them; who better to make sure the wheels keep turning than those who understand dedwen best?

As Sothis Ascends

The Mesen-Nebu deal with immortality by always keeping their eyes on the next prize and reinventing themselves with every Descent. They view their cycles of death and resurrection as iterations — crucibles that purify and transmute their souls into more perfect versions of themselves each time they face their Judges in Duat’s long halls. Nothing is gained by dwelling overmuch on what is lost, because whatever it was became something better in the losing.

The patterns they see and perpetuate in the world are those of commerce and trade, and how the worth of things waxes and wanes. They track the delicate balance between prosperity and greed, and note how certain trends increase or decrease how much of the population steadily produces dedwen; a stagnant culture and a depressed economy may herald a civilization’s proper end, or may signal a disruption of the natural cycle, and the Mesen-Nebu can tell which is which. They understand that everything in the world is a zero-sum game because all resources are finite, and they can see which way the scales are tipped.

Starfall

A Mesen-Nebu turns his back on the Judges because he’s decided to put his own prosperity above theirs, succumbing to greed or pursuing self-actualization. He might grow frustrated at the lack of obvious return on his investment when he sacrifices vessels to Duat, or suspicious about the use to which all that dedwen he transforms into Sekhem for the Judges is put. Some Brokers abandon their first purpose to follow inspiration or insight into the true nature of beauty and dedwen, and pursue it to the exclusion of everything else.

Vessels: Regia (sing. regium)

Affinities: Almsman’s Tithe, Divine Flesh, Hone the Soul

Who We Are

- Talent scout who seeks young artists or musicians and turns them into major stars
- Personal trainer who transforms mortals through fitness regimens and literal miracle drugs
- Head of a modeling agency who sacrifices the most attractive models to Duat as “regia”
- Stockbroker who quietly influences the stock market according to his whims
- Jeweler whose work is so highly coveted he only sells at private auctions, and influences the 1% through those auctions

Beyond the Born of Gold

Maa-Kep: Your false modesty ill becomes the Arisen. We’d rather have true peers than watchdogs who pretend to serve.

Sesha-Hebsu: We make a good team — we open the deal, you close it. Education transforms civilization, a respectable form of dedwen. We salute you.

Su-Menent: You play at godhood and imagine it makes you worthier than the rest of us. We respect the wish to better yourselves, but keep some perspective, please.

Tef-Aabhi: Together we will surpass the greatest achievements of our lost empire. Prosperity rises from strong foundations, and you lay those beautifully.

Kher-Minu: Give us time. We'll figure out a way for you to transcend your imprisonment and be something more. Something new.

Sesha-Hebsu

Testimony to Ages

Diplomats, Lorekeepers, Arbiters

You speak these idle words at your peril. Is this really how you want to be remembered, at the end of all things?

They described his crimes to me one by one, in great detail. Word for word, I took them down, my pen scratching across the page in quick, precise strokes. When they fell silent, I looked up at him, pen poised. He watched its point as one might watch a serpent ready to strike.

"Please," he said. "You know me. I've been loyal. Faithful! Show mercy, and I promise I'll never—"

"It is not my privilege to show mercy. The Judges will hear your appeal. I do only as they demand."

He paled. "The Judges? But...you can't mean..."

My pen came down. In a few smooth strokes, his fate was written. I didn't apologize as they dragged him away, though my heart ached. They come and go. It's the way of things.

Maybe if I keep telling myself that Descent after Descent, it will someday get easier. But I doubt it.

Tradition of the Scribe

The relics of the Sesha-Hebsu are scrolls and tablets recording history, information, prayers, and magic. They set precedent and establish facts, allowing dynasties and bureaucracies to flourish beyond living memory. They preserve stories, spells, and other aspects of oral culture so fallible memory and even death can't erase knowledge from the world. Relics that arise in modern times are often books and other documents, but don't always look much like the traditional understanding of **texts**, enshrined on film, magnetic tape, or optical disk. Nevertheless, they serve the same purpose: record, preserve, and inform. The Sesha-Hebsu themselves do the same. They are the scribes and bureaucrats, archivists and reporters: those who absorb all knowledge and set it down for future generations. They see value in even the smallest piece of recorded data — even a shopping list or Instagram selfie tells the reader or viewer something.

Knowledge itself is only a means to an end, though — ultimately, the Lorekeepers believe in all their accumulated millennia of work both comprising and being empowered by the divine *Scroll of Ages*: the cosmic record that inscribes all of history and thought from the gods' omnipotent vantage. What's recorded is not as important as the sacred act of recording it.

Learning Breeds Wisdom; Ignorance Breeds Folly

With the Diplomats' primary duty comes another: using the wisdom gained from recorded knowledge to impartially mediate and advise others in conflict. The Sesha-Hebsu believe anyone else trying to fill that role would have gaps in their insight leading them to make the wrong

decisions; thus, they are the only ones in a position to negotiate, pass judgment, and provide unbiased counsel when it comes to the most important matters. Remaining neutral is not just a matter of professional pride, but of divine mandate; sullyng the Scroll of Ages with prejudice or favoritism is the gravest sin an Arbiter can commit. Any caught doing so earns righteous curses and sanctions from their fellow Arisen, up to and including violence against the mummy or her cult, or confiscating relics and resources.

The Sessa-Hebsu believe magic flows from two cosmic keystones, the Will and the Word. The Will conceives, and the Word gives those conceptions life. The Sessa-Hebsu are the Word's keepers; the Will was once the purview of a traitorous lost guild known now only as the "Deceived," who practiced **ren-hekau**, the magic of true names. Were this magic not as lost as those who performed it, the Lorekeepers would debate whether they should destroy it to prevent corruption of the Scroll, or claim it as their own.

Diplomats, though masters of language, typically aren't verbose. They choose their words carefully, knowing how each echoes with weight and carries the potential to change the world. It's a heavy responsibility they don't take lightly, and one sorcery plays no part in — *anyone*, even the lowliest mortal, can topple cities and take lives with a single word, if they only know the right one to inscribe for the right eyes. Despite their core philosophy, many Lorekeepers feel uneasy about literacy's availability to so *much* of humanity in modern times; billions of people with the power to change everything could easily bring civilization to its knees prematurely.

Foundations

In Irem, the Sessa-Hebsu were the world's first imperial bureaucrats. They claimed the secret of literacy at a time when few could, making them elites second only to the Shan'iatu themselves. They enjoyed privileges beyond those of other guilds, granted the honor of mediating disputes between the great sorcerer-priests, and passing judgment on any case too important to leave to local governors to adjudicate but not quite important enough for the Shan'iatu's involvement. The Arbiters were responsible for keeping a record of all major decisions and endeavors, as well as providing legal counsel, performing administrative tasks like transactional bookkeeping for the Mesen-Nebu or taking down a dying pharaoh's last words, and scribing copies of important texts for cities across the Nameless Empire.

The Wheel Turns

Today, the Sessa-Hebsu are much lower on the ladder than the hazy recesses of Memory tell them they should be, because reading and writing are so much more common in modern civilizations. They flock to academia, where they can still find a measure of exclusivity in traditional scholarship. Some embrace the rise of computing to recapture the culture of highly skilled, in-demand masters of vast stores of knowledge, while others decry the ephemeral nature of electronic data and shun it as anathema to their purpose. While today's Lorekeepers still prize the sacred arts of hand-wrought inscription, the word "record" means more than it used to, and many take full advantage of modern recording technology. Cameras of all kinds fascinate the Diplomats and prompt heated arguments over whether images captured on film contribute to the Scroll of Ages, or whether it really is the written word that holds all the power. They clash over whether digital vessels are truly worthy of the Judges. Is a digital scan of an arcane text still sorcerous? Does Sekhem flow across wireless data streams? Is the modern glut of mass media wondrous or horrific (or both)?

The Sesha-Hebsu's cults are extensions of themselves as curators and scribes; even the gods' chosen scribes can't be everywhere at once, and populations grow exponentially with each Sothic Turn, creating ever more history that needs passing on. No longer can they assume their cults wield power simply by virtue of their education; instead, Sesha-Hebsu cults act as pillars of journalism and research. The Maa-Kep are the information brokers when it comes to secret intelligence and gossip, but when millennia of accumulated wisdom and occult lore are needed, seek the Sesha-Hebsu. Arbiters and their cultists range from court scribes, notaries, lawyers, and judges, to reporters and bloggers, to biographers (and autobiographers), documentary filmmakers, and oral historians; from photographers and cameramen to translators and researchers; from archaeologists and archivists to forensic scientists who study handwriting and written evidence or analyze surveillance footage and incriminating photography to solve crimes.

As the Scroll of Ages' keepers, the Sesha-Hebsu see themselves as the true successors to the Shan'iatu because they were entrusted with the duty to judge their fellows and keep the peace. It's a small step, they say, between interpreting law and making it; between passing judgment and ruling outright. Who knows the sorcerer-priests' intent better than those they chose to keep their wisdom, those who hold themselves apart from the masses through impartial judgment that surely must come straight from the Judges' own mouths?

As Sothis Ascends

Diplomats deal with immortality by appointing themselves as wise counselors and mentors who hate seeing other people make the same mistakes that have always been made — or repeating their own. The only way to cope with being a part of so much history is to find ways to learn from it. They also appoint themselves mediators among the Arisen, preventing Irem's successors from falling to infighting and intrigue against one another when they all have better things to do. While the Mesen-Nebu often play the role of a meret's "face," the Sesha-Hebsu arbitrate conflicts and negotiate terms with other merets and supernatural beings.

The patterns they see and perpetuate in the world are those of learning and literacy, how much a society relies on and values news and education, and how much it uses propaganda and lies to manipulate its citizens. They encourage the former if they think the Judges would prefer wisdom to spread to the masses, or the latter if they believe in controlling it for only the chosen few. They track important events and threads of causality that run throughout history, and how prominent figures — mortal and supernatural — make their marks on the Scroll of Ages. From Hollywood to politics, from social media to university campuses, the Sesha-Hebsu see the impact of recorded media on the way humans relate to one another, and how it sways their decisions. They're better at remembering things they've recorded or read than their own lives.

Starfall

A Sesha-Hebsu turns her back on the Judges because in sending texts to Duat she's actively destroying earthly knowledge, and she decides it's counterproductive in the quest to complete the Scroll of Ages; or she views the Scroll itself as nothing more than Shan'iatu propaganda to keep the guild in line. Some Arbiters come to believe they *shouldn't* be impartial — after all, they're the judges of the Arisen, why *shouldn't* their opinions matter? Now that no one but their peers is around to hold them to objectivity, corruption and decisions made according to whim, grudges, or gut feelings are more common among the Diplomats than they ever were in Irem.

Vessels: Texts

Affinities: Eyes of Justice, Loremaster's Guile, Master of the Written Word

Who We Are

- Tomb-raiding archaeologist who knows every language living or dead, and who recovers and translates lost texts, both relic and mundane
- Judge for a neutral court that handles disputes for all supernatural beings who live in the city
- Investigative reporter who publishes breaking news stories before any mortal outlet possibly can
- History professor at a local college who writes groundbreaking research papers citing sources no one's ever heard of, and takes student cultists on "field trips" to distant places
- Photographer who captures perfect images of places no human would dare visit

Beyond the Testimony to Ages

Maa-Kep: We appreciate your hard work in uncovering secrets, but stop keeping them so close to the vest. *We* watch the watchers, in case you were wondering.

Mesen-Nebu: You make strong marks on the Scroll of Ages. Don't let greed blind you to your purpose; you're better than that.

Su-Menent: Your arrogance is unearned. Remember your place. These "experiments" of yours aren't holy paeans to the Judges — they're pure vanity.

Tef-Aabhi: As we give voice to history, you give it form. First comes the Will, then the Word, and lastly the Web: that which connects all we bring into the world.

Deceived: If the Namers were not already mere footnotes in the Scroll's margins, we would make them so.

Su-Menent

Eulogy for Souls

Morticians, Necromancers, Shepherds

*We are gathered here today to honor the death of a dear friend. Honor his life?
Don't be ridiculous. His death is worth far more.*

She was trying to impress me with her knowledge, I could tell. I let her prattle on about ancient civilizations — as if she knew what "ancient" really meant — and took pains to look fascinated. Finally, she showed me to the glass case that held what I needed: what remained of the mummified shell of my beloved queen.

"With radiocarbon dating, we've narrowed down the timeframe for this mummy's life to sometime during the early Middle Kingdom," she said with a smile, laying a hand flat on the glass as though she could connect herself to the distant past.

Pure nonsense. I remember now, Your Perfection. I remember your wise eyes and the shape of your silhouette against the white pillars. You perished much longer ago than this Middle Kingdom. But I will bring you back. I must.

“Thank you,” I interrupted the curator mid-sentence. “That will be all.”

“I beg your pardon?” she said.

“No need,” I replied, as I reached out to grasp her thin neck in my hand. Her eyes went wide and her limbs jerked as I carefully crushed the life from her body. “I commend your sacrifice to the Judges. May you rest in peace.”

Tradition of the Shell

The relics of the Su-Menent are lingering remnants of life, preserved in death; paradoxes of living energy channeled through withered remains, transgressing natural law to harness the power of necromancy. Like their **uter**, the Morticians are walking anomalies, eternal beings who cross the line between life and death as a sacred purpose. How a civilization treats its dead — and how gone they believe those dead really are — says a lot about the fears it buries beneath its banal exterior. The Shepherds master those fears to ensure humanity is just afraid *enough* of death, cultivating a healthy respect but stopping them from trying to cheat it with blasphemies or take its power for themselves. These Arisen are dark sorcerers of ritual sacrifice and gentle psychopomps; clinical experts of mortuary science and authorities on matters of the soul. They understand existential journeys and the passages between the living world and Duat better than anyone. They remain tight-lipped about these secrets to protect others from the grim enormity of their arcane knowledge, and to preserve the sanctity of their dread, holy purpose.

Life Begets Death; Death Begets Magic

People often console themselves in grief by telling themselves it doesn’t matter what happens to the body after death — it’s the soul that’s important. The corpse is just a shell. The Su-Menent understand that the shell holds power, too. Having housed life and as the conduit for the mystical process of its end, a corpse carries the residue for as long as it persists, which acts as potential to house Sekhem again. Moreover, the shell’s preparation has demonstrable effects on the soul’s fate, and on any echoes a dead thing leaves behind. Necromancers manipulate and exploit a cadaver’s potential, practicing a lesser version of the arts the Shan’iatu used to enact the Rite of Return itself. While strictly devout Su-Menent rebuke anyone who puts it in such bald terms, they can’t deny the truth of it, and it often makes them arrogant. But *truly* introspective Shepherds whisper their own heretical theories; what if Irem’s sorcerer-priests craved power over life and death for the same reason mortals do — plain and simple terror? Were they desperate enough to keep from fading away to rewrite the laws of mortality itself to ensure their escape from it?

Foundations

The Su-Menent of Irem saw themselves as the Shan’iatu’s favorite children, the privileged few allowed to sit at the grown-ups’ table for sacrificial rites and funerary preparations. In truth, the Shan’iatu inducted mortal mortuary priests into a guild entrusted with their darkest secrets to feed the mortals’ egos and prevent those secrets from getting out. *Someone* had to do the grunt work of sacred burial, so they took measures to make those someones unquestioningly loyal. Treated like special conspirators, the Shepherds of the Nameless Empire never dared betray their

masters, and lorded what they saw as favored status over their peers relentlessly. Their reputation was one of flawless devotion and absolute faith, and they lived up to it more often than not. To cross the Su-Menent was to risk one's eternal soul, as they could refuse to bury someone properly when they died, ensuring a hellish afterlife.

The Wheel Turns

In the Rite of Return's wake, the Necromancers understood the truth of their place in Irem, and their fellows knew vindication. The revelation hasn't humbled the Su-Menent much, but it has given them a lot to think about. Still, they continue their work, chasing the mysteries of life-in-death and death-in-life, and teaching societies to respect and revere the dead. They infiltrate and influence mortal religions to encourage adherence to principles of permanence and longevity — not coincidentally, the funerary practices they espouse result in more ghosts and other remnants they can press into their service. They take up positions as medical examiners and morgue attendants, gravediggers, game hunters, and taxidermists, as well as priests, counselors, and other spiritual advisor roles. They play fast and loose with mortal law, robbing graves and killing when they must to perfect their vessels. No one is better at disposing of a body than a Su-Menent. They're also innovators, always seeking the next secret of the Shan'iatu's lost art; they experiment with corpses and Sekhem, creating undead abominations and servants loyal only to them, with bizarre and unsettling powers. Sometimes, they even do it on purpose.

These Arisen act as priests of the Judges and consciences for their merets, for a certain definition of "conscience." Mortal morality doesn't concern them, but they pressure their peers to abide by whatever they believe is "proper" and "holy" for mummies, whether that means interpreting the Judges' commands, delving into Memory to dredge up lost principles of Irem to champion, or finding a new faith to help their fellows cope with an eternity of servitude and achronological time.

The Su-Menent's cults are extensions of themselves by way of procuring supplies and securing privacy. In many cases, "supplies" are dead bodies, purloined from graves and morgues or made dead just for the occasion. They could also be occult tomes, charms, and reagents for funerary rites from cultures around the world, or even mummified corpses stolen from museums or unearthed from undisturbed sarcophagi. The Tef-Aabhi may build tombs and master the Lifeweb, but the Su-Menent understand the mystical give and take of a tomb's energies best, attuned to ways any place where the dead lie or linger clings to souls and magic. Su-Menent recruit cultists from those predisposed to conspiracy and fanaticism — those used to lives governed by hierarchies of fear and obedience. Shepherds regularly induct ghosts into their cults, appointing them along with other kinds of undead and lesser Immortal guardians to watch over their workplaces, and graveyards or temples they claim as theirs. A Necromancer needs his cult to cover up the evidence of his grisly activities (and perform their own), to infiltrate mortal religions and spread the ideas he wants spread about death and the afterlife, and to help his meret create and safeguard the sacred rituals that govern resurrection, summoning, and other ways humans interact with their Arisen patrons.

As sorcerer-priests themselves, the Su-Menent see themselves as the true successors to the Shan'iatu because, regardless of their ascended masters' original intent, they are the caretakers of the Nameless Empire's most valuable magics. Death and resurrection, life and its pale imitations: these are the pinnacle of Iremite occultism, the principles upon which Duat and the Rite of Return stand. Who better to rule than those who master the very foundations of the Arisen

condition — and may, some whisper, someday perfect their *own* all-powerful rites and join the Shan'iatu in godhood?

As Sothis Ascends

Shepherds who maintain strong faith in the Judges lean on that faith to sustain themselves and others in coping with immortality. As eternal instruments of the gods, they always have more responsibilities — after all, almost everyone dies. They allow themselves no time to dwell on their own situation. Those who doubt suffer crises of conviction, as they see the long millennia stretch out before them and wonder why they alone are denied final judgment and final rest. It scares them to realize just how much power builds up in the shells they inhabit, and what someone else could do with those shells once they've moved on. These Necromancers deal with eternity by turning their mastery of existential fears inward, facing and conquering nightmares about persisting beyond humanity's end or losing all Memory for good.

The patterns they see and perpetuate in the world are those of ending and revival, tyranny and revolution, terror and courage. They track times of mass devastation, death, and panic: wars hot and cold, plagues, terrorism outbreaks — and more recently, disasters due to climate change. They can predict body counts and how quickly a community will bounce back, or whether it will at all. They have insight into the minds of serial killers, religions that perform ritual sacrifices (human or otherwise), funerary rites, and how cultures deal with fear, hysteria, grief, and loss.

Starfall

A Su-Menent turns his back on the Judges because he seeks Apotheosis or wants to become like the Shan'iatu himself, taking the power of death magic for his own gain rather than for the gods'; or because he loses faith that the Judges' plans are best for the greater good. He might come to resent eternal servitude, particularly once he remembers that in life the Shan'iatu manipulated him to keep their secrets, or he might — given the right crisis of faith or life-changing experience — convert to another religion. Shepherds who invest Pillars into cultists with strong beliefs in other gods, or resurrect into their bodies, sometimes find those gods taking up space in their hearts.

Vessels: Uter

Affinities: Blazing Zeal, Fated Soul, Flesh-Culled Secrets

Who We Are

- Medical examiner for the local police who performs autopsies, extracts “evidence” by questioning homicide victims' corpses, and fudges paperwork to cover up missing or mutilated bodies
- Popular demagogue who keeps his cult enormous by actively evangelizing to mortals and converting them to worship of the Judges
- Occult pawn shop owner who buys and sells macabre trinkets made from bat wings, shriveled fingers, shark teeth, and animal hearts, and keeps the ones that turn out to be vessels
- Serial killer trying to create an advanced form of zombie that can function as a cultist, thinking for itself and capable of holding invested Pillars

- Grief therapist for the supernatural underworld who helps monsters and mortals deal with unnatural loss and strange fatalities, and studies other creatures born of death

Beyond the Eulogy for Souls

Maa-Kep: We appreciate your sharp eyes when one of our own goes astray. We *don't* appreciate your thinly veiled attempts to spy on our secret rituals.

Mesen-Nebu: It's shameful, the way you flaunt meaningless wealth and court earthly desires. The Arisen should be above such mummery.

Sesha-Hebsu: You think yourselves Judges? Think again. We are not beholden to your pale imitation of Irem's true law.

Tef-Aabhi: "Lifeweb" implies life, and where there's life, death follows. When your works crumble to dust someday, what will remain?

Maar-Kherit: You are our great folly, and we will make it right. But keep your guilt trips to yourselves. One can't learn without first making mistakes.

Tef-Aabhi

Spider of Fate

New Pharaohs, Architects, Geomancers

This place was built to keep your secrets, though you forgot them long ago. Walk its halls, and remember.

Primly suited executives applauded politely around the table, as the speaker finished his proposal. I didn't. Instead, I spoke up for the first time in months, prompting stares from one and all. "Your timetable is too short," I said. "Construction will complete on October 6th, and no sooner."

"Um...with all due respect," the presenter stammered, "delaying three months will anger the stakeholders. They might pull sponsorship. We'll lose funding."

"Is that so?" I fixed him with a steady gaze. "Whose sponsorship would you rather lose? Theirs, or mine?"

They all shuffled uncomfortably. "May I ask why finishing early is a problem?" the speaker said eventually.

"No, you may not."

They spent the rest of the meeting scrambling to adjust project deadlines and allocate resources, but I didn't stay. I had my own preparations to make. The planets only align in this configuration once every 700 years, and I've been planning this since the last time. No trivial mortal matter will get in my way. If these shortsighted, moneygrubbing halfwits can't follow orders, I'll have to find someone else who can.

Tradition of the Effigy

Mortals think of **effigies** as representations of people used for rites of destruction, but to the Tef-Aabhi an effigy is far more. Any monument or representation is an effigy: an object or structure created as a symbol for something else, connected to the past and to people, places, concepts, or

gods. Effigies derive their power from the Lifeweb, *Netit-Sekhem*, named for the goddess of primordial creation, spiders, and weaving. Other Arisen call the Lifeweb a product of sacred geometry, a metaphysical lattice of geomantic energies that pervades a mummy's tomb, but the Architects know it pervades *everything*. Like their effigies, the Tef-Aabhi foster connection and order, serving as keystones for the alignment of occult powers and catalysts for spiritual harmony. They build and sculpt, crafting representations of the gods' will and venerating symbols of the past to uplift civilization. Mystical mathematics, Fate, the stars in the sky, and the alignment of earthly things: these are the Geomancers' tools, with which they push humanity to build in Irem's image.

Power in Sympathy, Memory in Form

The core of the Tef-Aabhi's power lies in *sympathy*: the idea that one thing may stand in for another, not just representing it but actually connected directly to it. Whatever happens to one happens to the other; the effigy may channel whatever power the original has. To the Architects, the Lifeweb is sympathy's ultimate expression, the lattice that powers those connections by linking all things and beings through Fate. The web traverses not just distance and realms but history: an effigy may be connected to another being or another place, but any monument is also Memory given form. They're erected as memorials to honor the dead, great people's deeds, or turning points of the past. They may even draw power from mystical similarities to other beings and places, even ones that ceased to exist millennia ago. Structures built according to sacred geometries spell out symbols that manifest power from Duat and from Fate. Aligning a pyramid — or a skyscraper — with a certain constellation in the sky draws down that constellation's oracular insight and gains influence based on the god or concept the constellation represents. Timing the completion of a bridge or highway with an eclipse or planetary syzygy infuses the structure with the event's cosmic pull.

These connections lead the Tef-Aabhi to prize longevity and persistence: what good is spending all that time and effort perfecting a building's alignment or the expressive curve of a statue's face just to see it torn down a decade later, all its Sekhem and mystical potential wasted? Just like the Arisen themselves, effigies wax and wane in power based on cosmic cycles — so to achieve their full potential, they must persist through many such cycles. Effigies are expressly designed to symbolize events and lives that are fleeting, thus enshrining ephemeral things as something more lasting. Some Architects believe the Lifeweb is the Memory of all humanity's history and future, laying out instructions for building the perfect civilization, if only the guild can decipher and follow them.

Foundations

In Irem, the Tef-Aabhi were the architects and designers who built the cities and great temple-tombs of the Pharaohs. They helped craft the very *djed*, or pillars, that anchored the Nameless Empire's power as representations of the spine of Azar, and erected statues and monuments to the glory of the Judges and the Shan'iatu. They constructed the fortresses and impregnable walls that defended Irem. As masters of the Lifeweb, they were entrusted with the duty of building what would become the Arisen's tombs as well. They were responsible for the magical matrices that allowed relics to anchor and empower such tombs, carefully building passages and adjusting ley lines to allow Sekhem to flow just so.

The Wheel Turns

Today, the Tef-Aabhi shape civilization by manipulating humanity to align what it builds to the shape of the divine, just like the Pharaohs of old, who ruled as representations of the gods on Earth — symbols of their power given human form. Thus, members of this guild call themselves New Pharaohs: the will and might of the Judges made manifest, standing in for them to walk among mortals and craft sacred works. They see the Lifeweb's sympathetic connections everywhere — not just in buildings and sculptures, but in societies and cultures — and tend to be the most cosmopolitan of the Arisen. They take to the modern world's massive metropolises more easily than their fellows, often getting involved in urban planning, city architecture, construction, and similar industries. They engage in sculpting and pottery, wood carving, and creating street installations. They join city councils and committees to make decisions about what monuments the government erects. They influence society to run on nostalgia to preserve historical districts and memorials, but they also encourage urban development of all kinds to enact Netit-Sekhem's plan for what will be the Memory of the future. As self-appointed guardians of Memory's material forms, Geomancers aid their merets and cults in locating and building tombs and other sacred structures; they're the best among the Arisen at planning ahead for future Descents, dealing more adeptly with their achronological existences, and deciding what the Arisen should remember and how the world should remember *them*.

The Tef-Aabhi's cults are extensions of themselves by way of master-apprentice relationships and securing mundane things like licenses and real estate to make sure the Tef-Aabhi have what they need. Many New Pharaohs see it as their responsibility to cultivate crafts among mortals, and their cultists take apprentices and found or fund independent schools. Some also teach subjects like mathematics and engineering, or work as theoretical mathematicians and engineers themselves, turning their careers toward their cults' sacred techniques. The guild also recruits cultists from religions that already have magical traditions based on poppets, totems, grave goods, and other such sympathetic practices, as well as psychics who demonstrate talents in psychometry, astrology, and geomantic sensitivity.

The Tef-Aabhi see themselves as the true successors to the Shan'iatu because they literally built the Nameless Empire. Theirs were the hands and minds that aided the Shan'iatu in raising the great *djed* that made up Irem's mystical anchors; theirs the sacred calendars and geomancy that determined when and where rituals would take place, including the great Rite of Return itself. The Architects argue that without them, Irem, its sorcerer-priests, and its mummies would all have perished long ago, swallowed forever under the endless sands. Who better to build a new empire than those who have already done it once and succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams?

As Sothis Ascends

The Tef-Aabhi deal with immortality by viewing *themselves* as monuments, telling themselves it's right and good that they persist forever as remembrances of lost Irem and a perpetuation of ancient traditions. They chase Memory for its own sake more than most, and prize anything that helps remind them of the past, treating these as anchors that help ground them as their lifespans stretch on and on into a future they can only try their best to shape. They treat the loss of things, people, places, and cultures they remember fondly as motivation to build memorials to them and perform their sacred duty of enshrining memories in effigy.

The patterns they see and perpetuate in the world are those of urban and community expansion, geomantic traditions like feng shui and ley lines, navigation, cartography, and landmarks. They

can track urban development across centuries and predict how a city will rise and fall; they know how long a structure or object will last and what kinds of events or activities will bring it down prematurely, and whether the timing of an event is auspicious or mystically ill-advised. They're good at astrology, and at recognizing faces, shapes, colors, and forms; a Tef-Aabhi may forget names, but *never* forgets a face.

Starfall

A New Pharaoh turns her back on the Judges because she sees the Arisen as *imperfect* monuments due to their consistent loss of Memory. Those who dare whisper about rebellion or Apotheosis want to turn themselves into *pure* monuments, flawless representations of the Judges who can usurp and wield the full power of the gods through perfect sympathy and remembrance. Others resent not being able to create relics themselves or be truly creative in ways completely divorced from Irem's lingering legacy, and hate the way they perpetuate old patterns just by existing.

Vessels: Effigies

Affinities: Guardian Statue, Model Lifeweb, Nest of Dolls

Who We Are

- City planner who hijacks construction and expansion projects to build a giant mystical lattice for a massive ritual over the course of multiple Descents
- Street artist who teaches kids and teenagers to reshape the city, subtly influencing their work's themes and subjects
- Architect-mystic who designs new tombs for fellow Arisen in exchange for vessels, cultists, and favors
- Irem scholar who studies ancient monuments' connections to the Nameless Empire and helps foster Memory in other mummies
- Pagan cult leader who specializes in rituals using poppets, wicker men, fetish dolls, and other sympathetic magic; everyone knows he's the one to see if they want to curse an enemy

Beyond the Spider of Fate

Maa-Kep: You always seem to know exactly when and where to show up to complicate our lives. Inconvenient for us personally, but impressive, nonetheless.

Mesen-Nebu: Prosperity is a noble goal, but you've heard of the Ship of Theseus, yes? Sympathy to the past only stretches so far.

Sesha-Hebsu: We'd give more credence to your Scroll of Ages if you had any proof that it exists. But you keep order, and that's valuable on its own.

Su-Menent: Guide our hands — whatever you need in a tomb, in a temple, we can provide. Tell us your wildest dreams, and we'll make them come true.

Deceived: Is it any wonder you fell from grace? Chasing such a formless, fleeting vessel was bound to leave you grasping in the end.

Minor Guilds

Where are their dwellings now? Their walls are down, their places gone, like something that has never been.

— Harper's Song from the Tomb of King Intef

The five guilds the Arisen know today are only those that persisted mostly unchanged. Others prowl the depths of Memory and buried places, exposing ugly secrets the Shan'iatu never meant to see the light of day when their lingering remnants rise like ghosts from the sands of time.

The Deceived

Akhem-Urtu, Restless Stars, the Unforgiven

The Akhem-Urtu were masters of Nomenclature: ren-hekau, the Will, the power of true names. Their guildmasters claimed they were the *first* Shan'iatu, as their signature relics were not tangible crafts but ethereal arts, the very spark of creative inspiration itself. Upon realizing the Restless Stars planned to rule them once they reached Duat, the other sorcerer-priests betrayed and broke them during the Rite of Return. Their *temakhs*, the soul-like cores of their being, shattered like glass. They would have been lost, drifting in pieces through **Neter-Khertet** (Twilight) forever, had they not snatched at last-ditch salvation by attaching themselves to the souls of their own Deathless servants at the moment of the Rite's completion.

The Wheel Turns

Rather than serving a Judge far away in Duat, an Unforgiven suffers the yoke of sharing **Semektet** (the Descent) with the broken shard of a divine temakh that lives in her soul and hijacks her free will. An Akhem-Urtu is one being struggling with two identities, a mummy whose god manifests not as subtle urges and vague duties, but a shrieking insanity bent on eternal vengeance. Commands are often half-unintelligible hallucinations or wordless screams that push her to gather and hoard relics while scheming to thwart the other guilds. The Deceived are not immortal servants, but eternal slaves. To the other Deathless, this "lost" guild is a nightmarish legend they don't all believe still exists — at least, that they'll admit. Deceived merets have millennia of experience in the shadows, only appearing to snatch nascent relics from under the other guilds' noses or crush a cult one minion at a time until all that's left is to tear their Arisen apart piece by piece.

An Unforgiven doesn't, and never can, enter Duat. Instead, her death rips her human soul and temakh apart. Both wander Twilight while dead — the soul as a ghost-like being, finally clear-headed and free of her tormentor, and desperate to stay that way; and the temakh as an alien and corrupted beast of fluid form, seeking its other half to drag her kicking and screaming back to enslavement. It would be suicide to reach out to the Arisen for help, but even if she did, her temakh would ruin the attempt; and what could the other guilds do anyway? Plead with their Judges on the Deceived's behalf? The Judges would never voluntarily allow the Namers back into their fold.

The Unforgiven cultivate cults filled with artists and creatives gripped with the constant urge to create, an obsession that drives them to the "starving artist" stereotype time and again as they leave everything else in their lives behind. Some think obsessive artistic geniuses like Poe and Mozart must have been Deceived cultists, although no one remembers for sure. Whenever a

Deceived invests a Pillar into a cultist, it's like opening the floodgates to let the howling wind of the temakh spill over into someone else — the shard screams at both of them now, and is no quieter for it. Their relics are **seba**, moments of creative inspiration. More than any other Deathless, the Deceived are muses to humanity, even while they resent mortals for possessing that true spark they are now denied.

Among the Arisen

The Arisen hate and fear the Akhem-Urtu for more than simply their enmity. When they vaguely remember the magic of Nomenclature from Irem, they recall how commanding it was, and how their own arts seemed to pale by comparison to its raw creative power.

They say the Deceived can use kepher to track down relics *in potentia* — they can capture seba by finding inspiration gathering in mortal hearts before it converges into a tangible relic, and steal it for themselves before it can become a text or an amulet.

They say if you speak a name associated with one of the Deceived, even if she's lost in henet, she will hear you and return to unerringly find you; so, when they have reason to refer to the Unforgiven at all, they do so by generic nicknames and euphemisms. Just in case.

They say their ancient foes' true names are written into Fate itself, making them *truly* eternal. The Deceived can resurrect no matter what; no amount of scouring their cults and remains from the Earth can stop them from coming back, even if nothing at all is left of them. When the Arisen catch even the smallest rumor that Nomenclature might have reared its head in the world, they do their best to crush it before they ever find the Deceived that might be behind it.

Just in case.

Kher-Minu

Stone Spears, Tomb Watchers, Eternals

The Rite of Return was not the only death-defying ritual the Shan'iatu and their guilds performed; it was just the most ambitious. They made many preparations and test runs to refine and perfect their magics, and to train mortal sorcerers in the arts necessary to aid them in their lofty affairs. Nor were the major guilds the only ones in Irem; they were just the ones the Shan'iatu led themselves. Lesser guilds abounded in pursuit of empire, though they were mere tools by comparison to those groomed to one day be monuments. One of the largest was the warrior guild.

The Kher-Minu are tomb guardians and latent weapons, immortal through a process that bound their souls to relics. Scholars of modern occult phenomena would call them a kind of "Eternal," thanks to the method by which they persist, but they didn't choose their immortality or the objects that keep them alive. In truth, the Tomb Watchers weren't originally made to guard tombs at all. They were the product of a winning tactic the Shan'iatu used in their wars of conquest: mystically prepare a living soldier to shunt her own death into a relic at the moment she's killed, then protect the relic as she wades through the battlefield, undying and still fighting no matter how many arrows and spears pierce her body. The result was fierce Iremite warriors with a murderous urge that subsumes their living desires, and flesh that turns to stone when their Sekhem is gone.

The Wheel Turns

These Eternals seem like ordinary statues while dead, although they can't be destroyed. They wake from stone death when a place they ritually guard is disturbed, or when blood is shed nearby. Once defeated, though, they can't rise again for 100 years without a sacred Shan'iatu rite currently lost to history; the sorcerer-priests didn't want their enemies to capture their stone soldiers and use them against the empire.

Normally, a Kher-Minu must enact a ritual blood oath to take on the solemn duty of a guardian who will wake to safeguard her charge, but a mummy can bind a Stone Spear's relic as the center of his tomb's Lifeweb — or that of any other sacred structure — to force her to act as its defender. Doing so requires getting his hands on the relic first, though, and the Kher-Minu are peerless in skill, tougher than stone, and possessed of a need to spill blood and protect their relics at all costs. Their Sekhem automatically expends itself to close their wounds, regenerating their flesh in an instant. Thus, the only way to stop them is to hurt them enough to deplete their Sekhem and turn them back to stone. Their relics turn to indestructible stone as well, impervious to cannibalization, making the only way to kill a Tomb Watcher the destruction of her relic while she's alive.

A Kher-Minu's *henet* is not a soul-searching journey to Duat, nor does her soul travel through Twilight. She remains inside her stone body, and although she's dead to the world in this state, she remembers every moment of her imprisonment in death when she wakes once again.

Among the Arisen

Though the Arisen consider the Kher-Minu a “lost” guild — when they remember the Kher-Minu at all — only a few have ever been destroyed over the long millennia. Hundreds still stand sentinel in dark, dusty places, or lie undisturbed waiting to be uncovered. Waiting to be *released*.

While many Stone Spears can be found guarding tombs and other places of power or import, others are scattered around the world — buried under sand, lying at the bottom of the ocean, or gathering dust in a ruin or museum somewhere. Their loyalties are their own; some remember Irem fondly and serve the Arisen voluntarily, while others harbor deep resentment from many lifetimes of bloodshed and succumb completely to their natural violent impulses. Some suffer serious trauma from what the Shan'iatu made of them, but no matter how much they may want to rest in peace, they cannot voluntarily allow their relics to be destroyed.

Maar-Kherit

Physics, Blights, the Malignant

Once, the Maar-Kherit had another name, lost to history. They were an esteemed guild of physicians and healer-priests, those who set right the disturbed Sekhem flows of the sick and injured by curing them of their ills with specialized magics. The Shan'iatu themselves partook of the Physics' mystic arts, and taught them how to prolong human lives. As the Su-Menent's sister guild, the physicians preserved and protected life above all; their relics, the **ankhs**, were sacred vessels that harnessed breath and life-giving waters, safeguarded, and purified.

The healers' guildmasters refused to go along with the Rite of Return, condemning it as a perversion of the natural order. To protect their secrets, the other Shan'iatu disposed of them and their entire guild, disguising the incident as a plague that took the valiant physicians as they tried to save lives behind quarantine lines. But a faction of Necromancers learned the truth and launched a clandestine, heretical attempt to restore the Physics' souls to their shells. They wanted

to revive their sister guild; but, failing that, they hoped to at least gain access to its valuable secrets.

Both aims were futile.

The Wheel Turns

The rogue Su-Menent did not uncover the secrets of resurrection that day. Instead, they produced unliving abominations that spread corrupted life magic like a cancer, causing unnatural regenerative mutations wherever their Sybaris takes hold. Even as the Arisen slumbered in henet while Irem fell, the Maar-Kherit wandered the deserts seeking an escape from the half-life that gives them no voice and no rest. Uncontrollable, twisted Sekhem deforms their bodies and minds with black tumors that leak power, causing Terror Sybaris constantly. These tumors eat away at their innards, causing deformities ranging from losing one or more senses, to an inability to speak, to monstrously swelled brains in heads too large for their bodies, and worse.

In unending agony, the Malignant lash out at anyone who refuses or fails to kill them — they beg for death but cannot die. Even chopping their bodies into scattered pieces or burning them to ash doesn't stop them from regenerating back to full health within a few days.

The Maar-Kherit learned long ago that ordinary humans have no power to end their misery, so they don't normally venture into heavily populated areas. When mortals do come into contact with a Blight, they suffer first Sybaris and then a hideous pestilence of warped life magic gone out of control. Flesh seethes with boils and sarcomata oozing a contagious pus that glistens, black and viscous.

The Malignant wander the world's empty places seeking potent sources of Sekhem and other powerful magics, sensing them instinctively and hoping one of them will hold the key to eternal rest. Some of them still carry their relics, clinging to what they used to be with the tenacity of the condemned; but with no ability to use them or sacrifice them to Duat, such vessels are only reminders of a lost history to them.

Among the Arisen

Those Su-Menent who took part in the ill-fated ritual don't often remember their horrific failure until forcibly confronted with it. They haven't yet figured out a way to end the Maar-Kherit permanently and bury their shame, but each Descent brings another opportunity to try. Their secret still remains a secret among their fellow Arisen, but every time a meret runs afoul of a Blight, the countdown to its exposure runs down a little further.

Wadjet-Itja

Gamblers, Oracles, Thieves of Eyes

The art of gambling dates back to a time before Irem's pillars rose from the sands, originating in methods of divination such as the astragali that later became dice. Irem's lesser guild of Oracles who received auguries from the gods and read the future in signs and portents was also a guild of shrewd professional Gamblers who blurred the lines between the two arts regularly. The Wadjet-Itja had a controversial reputation across the Nameless Empire, highly valued for their role as divine messengers and wise diviners, but simultaneously often disdained as tricksters and swindlers; other would-be oracles decried the guild's prophecies as false in an attempt to

discredit them and take their place, but the Shan'iatu remained unswayed for reasons they never revealed.

The Oracles' two-sided nature was in large part due to their crafty guildmaster, who was *not* one of the Shan'iatu, but managed to win power from them through a series of long games and gambles that paid off in his favor. Eventually, he became more or less one of them — not quite their equal in sorcery or status, but close enough to satisfy him. He uplifted his guild as well, and their already-dubious reputation exploded into rumors of debauchery, fraud, and corruption. The Wadjet-Itja didn't technically participate in the Rite of Return, as the Shan'iatu declined to share their most secret magics with the Gamblers' master. Being the sly opportunists they were, though, they used their predictive magics to manage a clever, if weaker, ritual that rode the great Rite's coattails into eternity.

The Wheel Turns

The Wadjet-Itja count themselves among the Arisen, but their immortality is imperfect. They require not just Sekhem to sustain their Descents, but also the years they steal from mortal lifespans. They do so with a devious array of sorcerous games of chance with which they win those years from unwitting dupes or people willing to gamble with more than coin; or by manipulating mortal futures through their divinations, guiding these poor souls to untimely deaths, and supping on the lost years their victims should have had left.

The Oracles serve the Judges like any mummy, but their guild has no sacred vessel of its own. Thus, to satisfy their masters' demands and empower their tombs, they barter, win, or steal relics from the other guilds. The core of their cults are psychics and spiritualists who experience prophetic visions to predict the best path forward through the millennia, with dream interpretation and various methods of ancient divination that plunder answers from Fate with their unique brand of borrowed half-sorcery. Other cultists include cardsharps, bookies, casino owners, and others who push humanity into relying on luck, accepting uncertain futures, and putting their fates in the gods' (or the guild's) hands; as well as fortune tellers, mediums, and mystics of every kind. Actual abilities are welcome, but not a requirement; plenty of hucksters and con artists fill the Gamblers' cults alongside legitimate seers.

Fate Is Written; the Future Is Malleable

The Oracles differentiate between Fate itself and the futures it lays out. They agree with the Tef-Aabhi that it carries a blueprint for Irem's eternal legacy, but they believe the particulars are theirs to manipulate. The Maa-Kep and the Su-Menent sometimes decry them as heretics — after all, who among the Arisen has the authority to gainsay the dictates of Fate and the Judges? The Thieves of Eyes argue that nobody is gainsaying anything. Fate doesn't send neon signs to point the way, so someone has to interpret its hints and make judgment calls to nudge civilization toward its ultimate destiny. That someone might as well be those who can see the possibilities ahead, and who excel at taking chances that pay off. That this happens to neatly coincide with their need to cheat mortals out of years of their lives, they say, is no reason to brand them troublemakers.

Among the Arisen

Though the Wadjet-Itja pursue the same goals as the other guilds — working to perpetuate the Judges' ideals and shape human civilization in Irem's image according to their guild's purpose — other Arisen view them as upstart usurpers rather than an actual guild, loathe to help them

acquire relics. Their reactions to the Gamblers usually range from indignation at the temerity of their stolen power, to contempt at their underhanded methods, to arrogance as they lord their superior immortality over their weaker counterparts. Despite all that, rivalries between merets or nomes, shared enemies, and mutually beneficial agreements with the Oracles occasionally lead to partnerships.

Decrees

Duat doesn't break souls. It strips them bare, layer by layer, leaving every spiritual nerve exposed. Excruciating pain is the price of beholding the gods. Eyes scrutinize every flaw, wounds fill with salt, and sand scours mind. Fiends dismember the soul for the Judges' pleasure, isolating then maiming the shadow, spirit, heart, essence, and name, leaving nothing intact.

We Arisen have endured these torments a thousand-fold. Instead of resigning ourselves to oblivion, we rebuilt our souls, one Pillar at a time. Our decrees are the first Pillar we raised in Duat's sands, the foundation grounding the rest of our soul. Uttering a decree is a sublime moment, when the soul declares itself worthy of the gods' blessings. A Pillar emanates from the ritualist, a solar disk lighting up all Duat and holding the fiends at bay. Through our decrees, we reclaimed our souls as none did before the Rite of Return and none have done since. We proved ourselves worthy servants of the Judges and inheritors to the Shan'iatu legacy. Do not make the mistake of trifling with us, for even gods have acknowledged the fortitude of our souls.

Ashem

The Eldritch Decree of Shadow

Jackals, Torchbearers, the Eldritch

Death is inevitable. Do you want to know a secret? Being immortal doesn't mean not dying, it means perishing again and again. You should be grateful. The inevitable has come at last, and you only have to endure it once.

Throw every ghost and demon you can at me. I will not bend a knee. I will stand here, my Shadow rooting me in place, and show you no fear!

Why We Endure

A journalist once asked George Mallory why he insisted on climbing Mount Everest time and time again. He told them "because it's there." Why do we return to the world time and again? Because we can. We have the resilience to endure in the face of untold horror, so we endure. There is no ego in the matter for us.

Other Arisen suggest our occult knowledge became the foundational Pillar of our soul when we stood before the Judges. They are mistaken. We value knowledge, but wisdom fortifies us against the horrors we witness.

Our persistence and constant exposure to reality's cruelty cultivates our wisdom and perspective. We know the universe does not care about us and even the glories of Irem will be ground to dust. In our wisdom, we do not shudder nor flinch. This is our strength.

Our Curse

Knowing the universe doesn't care doesn't make time's slow grind any easier. It is like a marble slab pins us in place. We can fight against it, but we can never lift it up and time adds more slabs on top, crushing us beneath their weight. Our Curse is to scream at the infinite void and to hear nothing echoing back at us. In our darkest moments, even the most sadistic fiends are a warm comfort compared to the inevitability of fate. A million cuts defeat us, each one a grain of sand in the suffocating summer storms, reminding us of our eventual fate. Regaining memories reinforces the inevitability of our struggle and how, in the end, we lose despite all our power.

Why You Will Serve Us

Being perfect all the time isn't the same as being successful. Success is working hard, even when you fuck up. If fate deals you an unfair hand, you flip fate the bird and get the job done. The Eldritch offer resilience. You make mistakes and we will let you suffer the consequences, but in the end, we'll also get you back on your feet. The pain of failing makes you stronger and tougher. When we're through, nothing will be able to knock you over.

The Guilds

Maa-Kep: The Spies share an unflinching resolve to fulfill their duties with the Ashem. Jackals make loyal retainers, accompanying their patrons through any hardship, but they unleash bloody judgment on anyone suspected of heresy. They refuse to agonize when betraying a close ally, viewing it as one more trial for their soul to endure.

Mesen-Nebu: Revolutionary Jackals investigate dedwen's evolution after death, observing how flesh and blood change when converted to ghostly ephemera. The afterlife is beautiful in its own way and possesses esoteric resources. It would be a crime to settle for mundane materials when occult ones are so close at hand.

Sesha-Hebsu: Ashem Diplomats are philosophers through and through. The pursuit of wisdom motivates these Lorekeepers above all else, but wisdom does not come from the living alone. The Ashem record the dead's deeds to the Scroll of Ages, giving them unique insight when making their pronouncements.

Su-Menent: Death is a double obsession for Necromancers who declare the Eldritch decree, making them cognizant of the dangers waiting in Duat. Solemn and dutiful, religion is the mortuary tool the Su-Menent use to purify both the shell and soul before they face the grimness of death.

Tef-Aabhi: The Ashem know reality is cruel and merciless, but the Geomancers anchor themselves to their Lifewebs and stand their ground. These Jackals use sympathy to create meaning in a meaningless universe, binding disparate occult forces into a powerful whole.

Cults

Tenacity is less a desired trait for Ashem cults than it is a fundamental prerequisite. Jackals are grim lieges who expect their minions to stoically endure when faced with adversity. Their edicts are harsh, but the Jackals see themselves as wise, uncompromising mentors.

- Every few years, Professor Francis visits the university, teaches a semester on death and the afterlife, then disappears. Francis' pupils are a global cult of archeologists, historians, and theologians taught by their deathless patron. Each cultist was once a promising student whose practical experience in the occult prove invaluable to their current careers.

- War is an industry. Anywhere killing people makes money, Apepi Corp employees fight on the highest bidder's behalf. Battle holds no spiritual meaning for them, but spreading as much death as possible does. The Arisen CEO of this private military corporation trains her soldiers to endure pain and hardship on the battlefield. Her mortal cultists fight through bullet wounds, while her immortal soldiers are terrors to behold.
- During medical crises, everyone hopes the Westside Emergency Center is the ER caring for them. They see the worst of the worst and manage to bring their patients back from the brink of death. Their chief surgeon is ancient and mysterious, but when he is on call, the ward can work literal miracles. No one questions how many of his staff were once patients on his operating table.

Eternal Purpose

One lives if another guides her and it is the dead's responsibility to guide the living. The Ashem take this duty seriously, sure the world needs their wisdom if humanity is to stand any chance of surviving. They are the stern teachers lurking in the shadows, teaching the lessons gentler souls cannot stomach.

The Eldritch are the Arisen's unflinching guardians. When the Judges need to hold the line, they summon the Jackals. The Eldritch are the most stubbornly loyal mummies, fulfilling their duties come hell or high water, even if they find their assigned tasks distasteful. This is doubly true when a Jackal pursues a vessel. To the Ashem, vessels represent life's defiant majesty in the face of universal horror. Each vessel recovered is a tangible sign of the Jackal's endurance.

Recovering memories is a profound experience for the Jackals, reaffirming their ability to withstand any torment, but memory doesn't have to be a personal experience. Jackals encourage other mummies to seek out their memories, supportive in the face of adversity and jubilant when their comrades recover themselves.

Favored Attributes: Composure and Stamina

Defining Pillar: Sheut

Regaining Pillars: The Eldritch stand firm in the cruel and uncaring face of the universe, allowing others to do the same. The Eldritch regains one Pillar point of his choice after any scene in which his wisdom helps a cultist or another mummy confront their fears, or in which he shows no fear in the face of possible destruction.

The Ashem believe truth is preferable to deceit, even when the former is painful and the latter is pleasing. Once per chapter, the Ashem may fully restore his Sheut Pillar by unravelling a serious deception or a profound lie.

Affinity: Jackal's Shade

Effect: Ephemeral and solemn, the Jackals act as guides for living and dead alike.

- Any ghost can summon the Ashem from henet as if they were the mummy's cultist.
- The Jackal projects his soul into Neter-Khertet. Spend a Pillar point to make a Composure + Occult roll. On a success, the Ashem separates his soul from his Sahu, gaining the Disembodied Condition. He touches his Sahu again to exit Neter-Khertet. If something destroys the Sahu while the Jackal projects his soul, he enters a death cycle.

- When touching an object or person, the Jackal knows if it is a ghost's anchor.

Deshret

The Dauntless Decree of Spirit

Falcons, Talons, the Dauntless

I will not lose. I am better than you. I am stronger than you. I am smarter than you. This glory is mine!

If a mountain stands in my way, I climb it. If a river bars my path, I ford it. My Spirit neither bends nor breaks, it conquers all obstacles!

Why We Endure

Children say a shark who stops moving can't breathe. The shark must always swim to keep water flowing over its gills. Drag it backward and it drowns. If it stops, mud and sand cover it as it sinks to the ocean's floor, forgotten by the world. It's not true, but we empathize with the shark nonetheless.

Action defines us. We seek the next summit, we crave the highest accolades, and we never stop striving to improve ourselves. Paralysis is oblivion, death is the greatest paralyzing agent, and the Rite of Return is our antidote to immobility. Drifting through life without achieving greatness is a sin beyond all compare. To us, immortality is a reprieve from inactivity, an opportunity to once again win glorious triumph against all the odds. Challenges waiting for us to conquer them fill the world.

Our Curse

The Descent always drags us back to our tombs. As vibrant and enthusiastic as we are to get our hands dirty after awakening, we always end up gathering dust behind a stone door when everything's said and done. Immortality allows us to return again and again for all eternity, but the reality is we spend most of our time doing nothing. As our memories return, we can see the gaps between our Descents, the wasted time and potential as we lay immobile and worthless like any other corpse. In dark moments, we even regret trading away our mortality. Mortals have the lifespans of insects, but at least they possess continuous lives.

Why You Will Serve Us

It's hard to stand out. You are a little fish in a big ocean. Sure, you have good ideas and talent, but so does everybody else. Nothing makes you unique. The Dauntless provide you with the means to make a name for yourself. Our cults offer you a glorious future. Write your best-selling novel, become a respected politician, or have a species named after you. Through us, you will achieve your full potential and, more importantly, everyone will recognize your greatness.

The Guilds

Maa-Kep: The Dauntless appreciate the Maa-Kep instinct for getting their hands dirty. Infiltrating dangerous and hostile organizations is exactly the front-line leadership Deshret prefer. Doing so without drawing attention remains a challenge for the Dauntless. A good Spy keeps their glorious deeds a secret.

Mesen-Nebu: Revolutionaries know power is dedwen transmuted from one form into another. Falcons reinvent themselves to accumulate power, never becoming stagnant or fixed in routine. The Deshret aren't as established as other Alchemists, but no one rivals their adaptability when the shit hits the fan.

Sesha-Hebsu: Thoroughness defines Lorekeeper Falcons. They pore over the River of Truth, focusing on a topic and then mastering everything there is to know about their area of expertise. This confines them to the guild's lower ranks, but the Dauntless' dogged pursuit of every scrap of information earns them respect.

Su-Menent: When events unbalance the holy cycle of death, it is the Dauntless who restore order. They seek out the Deathless and perverse sorcerers but also put down other Necromancers who have lost their way. Many of these mummies are Falcons who sought to test their craft's limits — an irony lost on no one.

Tef-Aabhi: The Falcons are the visionaries within the New Pharaohs, always initiating new projects. The Dauntless don't leave their work undone, but they are happy for their cultists and trusted allies to finish the grunt work. They have too many ideas and never enough time, so why waste what little they possess?

Cults

Dauntless cults are smaller than those of others mummies. The Deshret do not lack the charisma required to sustain a large cult, but they are discerning recruiters and prefer quality in their minions over quantity. Deshret can and do led armies of thousands into battle from atop a chariot, but in these cases the senior officers are cultists and everyone else is just a pawn.

- Come rain, shine, sleet, or snow, the Blue Devils rugby club is out on the university fields practicing every evening. They devote themselves to winning glory on the pitch by out-running, out-hitting, and out-working their rivals. Their head coach is mortal, but the team's president is Deathless. When awake, her players benefit from millennia of tactical experience, just as she benefits from their fearlessness in overcoming any obstacles in her way.
- The photography meetup doesn't have a name, but its members obsess over finding the perfect shot. Climbing skyscrapers, fording rivers, and getting personal with wildlife are matters of course for the Photographers. When the master awakens, he joins in their exploits, challenging himself to adjust to new technology and techniques. After pushing themselves to the limit, they all gather in the pub to decide who got the best photo and to plot how to eliminate their rivals.
- Murder is just another hurdle in the way of the Brooks Crime Lab. They take on the toughest cases, meticulously searching for the evidence conventional investigators miss. Dead ends and false starts are frequent in forensics, but the BCL adapts and overcomes. When it turns out the criminal is something other than human, they awaken their lead pathologist.

Eternal Purpose

Ambitious, motivated, and full of zeal, the Deshret strive to become the best at everything. That they are already undying terrors capable of dragging the stars down from the sky is irrelevant. They can always be better, stronger, or smarter. In their mind, all the magical might in the world is meaningless if you can't do anything with it.

When the Judges require a mummy to mount the chariot of war and crush Irem's foes, they call upon the Falcons. The Dauntless are the Judges' champions, holy warriors unswerving in their duty to the Nameless Empire. A Falcon sees their purpose done, no matter what obstacles are in their way. If forced to choose between fulfilling their first purpose, advancing a personal agenda, and recovering a vessel, the Dauntless finds a way to do all three.

Memory is a tricky thing for the Falcons. They pursue memories with the same zeal they chase every other achievement and recalling the glories of past days affirms their greatness. At the same time, their Memory makes them second guess their actions. Would they make a better decision with access the memories they now possess? Most Deshret engross themselves in their plots, brushing this question aside. Some fanatically pursue Memory to ensure they don't have to second guess their actions again. Yet doubt haunts all their minds.

Favored Attributes: Resolve and Wits

Defining Pillar: Ba

Regaining Pillars: The Dauntless challenge themselves, craving the rush born of pushing their limits. The Dauntless regains one Pillar point of her choice after any scene in which she chooses to mentally or physically challenge herself. The challenge must contain some risk of failure, but she regains the Pillar point even if she fails.

The Deshret thrive when they know they have beaten the odds and achieved glory. Once per chapter, the Deshret may fully restore her Ba Pillar by triumphing over a challenge that entails severe consequences if she fails.

Affinity: Soaring Falcon

Effect: The Falcons drive themselves to achieve ever greater glory and often elevate others along with them.

- When someone close to the Deshret's tomb experiences a desperate need or obsession that they cannot voice, she rises from henet with fulfilling that need as her purpose.
- Once per chapter per dot of Ba, the Deshret may gain the Inspired Condition when she makes a contested action against an enemy, regardless of whether she fails or succeeds.
- When helping another character fulfill an Aspiration, the Deshret achieves an exceptional success on rolls with three success.

Kheru

The Ardent Decree of Heart

Lions, Enticers, the Ardent

Of course I will love you forever. I will love you until the mountains crumble to dust. I will love you when the world has long forgotten your name. I will love you even when I have forgotten my own.

My Heart bears no witness against me. Listen, and it will say the same as I. Duat cannot hold me. So long as I love, so long as I hate, I have not died!

Why We Endure

I recall my first love. Not her face or name. Not the events of our lives. The sensations. Her touch upon my breast. The flush of excitement, the nervous laughter. Beads of sweat pouring down my back. Sometimes the scent of her hair. Always the heartbreak to follow. I've never let that go.

We are creatures of passion, swift to love, quick to anger. Every single emotion is a sacred gift, anchoring our very existence. You think the eternal cannot know fear? When the ravaging Lifeless harry every frantic step, tell me then. We feel everything. When we anger, our rage is implacable. In our sorrow, we are inconsolable. Our laughter is infectious, our courage unshakeable. We love a thousand times, and each for an eternity. Our passion is undeniable and undying.

The world flourishes, moving forward whether we live in it or not. When we awaken, we chase every attainable sensation, living with an intensity both alluring and daunting. In our brief periods of activity, we live more than most mortals in an entire lifetime. Perhaps we are impatient or easily distracted, but can you blame us? A profusion of wonders awaits us, many present for only the whisper of a heartbeat. We want to try everything.

Our Curse

Our Descents never last long enough. There are billions of things to try, people to meet, but never enough time for all. We struggle to cram in as much as we can, terrified it will be lost forever when our hourglass depletes. It's worse when our memories return. That's when we realize the lie. There's nothing new under the sun, no surprises left. We've already done it all and moved on. Every thrill becomes lost in a nostalgic haze. With our passions dimmed, our final days drag on. We embrace the tomb with somber weariness. It isn't that we don't want to do it all over again. We will. Every chance we get. We just hope that, maybe next time, we won't remember.

Why You Will Serve Us

There is something beautiful in eternity, permanence and intensity inextricably entwined together. Do you see it when you gaze upon me? The Ardent offer the world. Wealth. Beauty. Danger. Forbidden pleasures. Above all, we offer a promise. Your heart will never beat so intensely as it will for us. The rest of your life will pale in comparison. You will be consumed by passion, the purpose we offer the only you need. Service to the Kheru may kill you, but it will never be boring.

The Guilds

Maa-Kep: Drawn to peril and intrigue like moths to flame, Kheru make excellent Spies. Charming but easily dismissed as shallow hedonists, Enticers insinuate themselves into a target's emotional support system, frequently acting as lovers or confidants. When called to upset a target's plans, they disrupt social bonds, placing key allies at odds with the target at critical junctures.

Mesen-Nebu: The wealth and luxury available to the Alchemists appeal to the Lions, but it is the Mystery itself that beckons them. With their love of change and discovery, the search for beauty captivates the Ardent. Transmuting their efforts and those of their cultists into real change in the world brings more pride than mere treasure ever could.

Sesha-Hebsu: Lions among the Lorekeepers exhibit a passion for history, especially how it relates to the human condition. They scribe records couching facts within emotional and narrative flourishes, rendering such documents informative as well as engaging reads. When acting as Diplomats, the Kheru never shy from innovative solutions.

Su-Menent: Kheru Shepherds shroud their passion in somberness, diligently maintaining their composure. This facade crumbles when engrossed in their work. Ardent Necromancers engage in bizarre experiments with the dead, while their Priests exhibit religious fervor and determination to enforce the will of the Judges disturbing even to their guildmates.

Tef-Aabhi: Despite their obsession with novelty, Kheru work as diligently as any other Architect to shape the future. Cultural values and societal norms are their chosen tools, molding society itself to willingly build and preserve structures required by the New Pharaohs. The Enticers and their cults spin elaborate webs of social influence, wielding obligation and scandal to ensure victory.

Cults

The Ardent seek enthusiasm and loyalty in their cultists. Useful skills are prized, but secondary to passion. Almost invariably, the rites of the Kheru bring their cultists to emotional extremes and ecstatic experiences, often employing music, sex, violence, or drugs to bring altered states of consciousness.

- Once a month, the Fairview Stream Book Club meets, ostensibly to discuss the latest bestseller. In truth, they gather to worship their host with utter hedonistic abandon. After the sex and drugs have run their course, they return to their prim and proper lives, grabbing a new book and fantasizing about the next meeting. They are oblivious to the fact their club is merely the latest incarnation of an order stretching back into antiquity.
- In an abandoned subway station, the men and women of the Legio VII Fortis gather at midnight. Their master, still wearing the face of a Roman gladiator, watches as they revel in combat against each other, heedless of pain. He silently judges the prowess of each combatant, winnowing the strong from the weak. Whether he builds an army for the Judges or against them is yet uncertain.
- Divided in two, each half of the Sunset Sophists claims true lineage from lost Irem, and to hold the truth of what awaits beyond death. For generations, these philosophers have waged brutal battle against their rivals. With increasing hostility and advances in weaponry, the two cults threaten to wipe each other out entirely. Their Arisen masters, lovers through the ages, eagerly await the conclusion of their game.

Eternal Purpose

Kheru hunger for novelty, gaining lovers and rivals with equal ease in their quest for the next great thrill. Often reckless, they throw themselves headlong into peril, embracing instinct over logic. They adopt new bodies readily, each an opportunity to experience life from a different perspective. With the entire gamut of emotions to experience, change is eagerly welcomed.

The Judges call the Kheru when they require heralds in the world. Their allure easily draws in new cultists, and those unskilled at inspiring mortals can easily intimidate them into embracing a Judge's will. When their first purpose interests them, the Ardent pursue it with reckless abandon. When their own goals conflict, they often become distracted, putting in minimal effort to slow

their Descent while they pursue their own objectives. Vessels provoke similar reactions. While Enticers chase Relics of personal interest, they favor their own goals.

The Lions have a complicated relationship with memory. While most eagerly seek to uncover the experiences of their past, success often leaves them in the throes of regret. The novelty of their experiences becomes muted when they recall countless similar ones, leaving many wistful for their ignorance.

Favored Attributes: Presence and Strength

Defining Pillar: Ab

Regaining Pillars: Creatures of instinct and passion, Lions find their souls nourished through the indulgence of their whims. The Ardent regains one Pillar point of their choice after any scene in which they are able to revel in victory over a rival, or overcome challenges by appealing to others' emotions or through improvisation.

The Ardent thrive on excitement and adventure, eternally seeking the exhilarating highs and grievous lows of the heart. Once per chapter, the Kheru may fully restore their Ab Pillar through an intense emotional experience, provided the event seems novel to them.

Affinity: Lion's Pride

Effect: Emotion and desire are the domains of Enticers, molding like clay in their hands.

- When someone close to the Kheru's tomb experiences intense emotion and intends to act upon it, the mummy rises from henet with that intent as their purpose.
- When the Lion improves a character's impression of him during Social Maneuvering, he learns one of that character's Aspirations.
- The Ardent absorbs the emotions of others. Spend a Pillar point while touching another character to make a Resolve + Empathy roll. If successful, the Ardent take an emotion-based Condition from the affected character. The character loses the Condition without resolving it, and the Mummy gains the Condition.

Nesrem

The Stalwart Decree of Essence

Bulls, Monoliths, the Stalwart

Did you think escape was an option? Stop begging for mercy. You betrayed me. I am unmoved by your plight.

I endure. Shatter my bones, bind me in chains, burn the very world around me. This does not change me. My Essence endures for eternity. So shall I.

Why We Endure

What is the essence of ice? Ice can be fragile or strong, large or small, jagged or smooth. None of these are its essence. The essence of ice is cold. Tear everything else away, and that is what remains. We are much like ice. We have our core, our Essence, something which endures, underlying everything beneath the superficial details. We are like ice, except for one thing. We do not yield to the heat. Our endurance is eternal.

We are relentless. We are more unmoving than the mountains, more incessant than the waves upon the shore. Call us stubborn or obsessive, we won't deny it. Our convictions never waver. No Nesrem will compromise their Essence. We can't. Call your Essence loyalty, but betraying a friend proves it a lie. We can no more exist betraying our essence than ice can exist without being cold. Find something you can't destroy without destroying yourself, and you have discovered your Essence.

People are always willing to die for something. A cause, a country, a pharaoh... It doesn't matter. Imagine something worth more. Imagine something worthy of existing eternally, something to live and die for time and again. We live to make an indelible mark upon the world, whether it means building a great monument or spreading our philosophies through the hearts of humanity. No matter what obstacles arise, we hold to our nature, our Essence, and follow it into eternity.

Our Curse

Time robs us of all we hold dear. Not just the people. We can never hold on to anything. No matter how carefully we build, no matter how valiantly we defend, nothing truly lasts. Nothing is permanent. Kingdoms, religions, and philosophies all fall. Monuments crumble to dust. The seas devour the shores. Our Curse is to strive for a lasting legacy, knowing we are doomed to fail, knowing we will keep striving anyway, because it is our nature.

Why You Will Serve Us

Your life is fleeting. When I blink, you'll be gone. It terrifies you, doesn't it? The thought you will be gone, as though you never were. Such is the lot of mortals. You want so desperately to make your mark, to make something lasting. I understand. That's where the Stalwart come in. We offer you meaning. Relevance. Through us, you become part of something magnificent. Something stretching back into antiquity and forward into the distant future. Together, we build something eternal, something so wondrous you cannot even conceive of it. We were there in the beginning, and we will be there in the end. Through us, your efforts echo through the ages.

The Guilds

Maa-Kep: When the Spies require agents under deep cover, they send the Stalwart. Their unnatural patience and dedication to achieving distant goals make Nesrem well-suited to long-term infiltration. Their greatest challenge is remembering which loyalties are true and which belong only to the role.

Mesen-Nebu: It requires imagination and resolve to reconcile the Stalwart conviction in immutable essence with changes wrought through alchemy. Nesrem Alchemists invariably conclude *dedwen* is the true essence of all things, developing a fascination with the implications and applications of this philosophy.

Sesha-Hebsu: Driven by a desire for continuity, Nesrem embrace the role of Lorekeeper, collating valuable records for the betterment of the Arisen. As Diplomats, the Stalwart patiently hear all sides before arriving at an unbiased judgment, though they are loath to reconsider their decisions.

Su-Menent: Obedience to the Judges and devotion to tradition are sources of great comfort to the Stalwart. When pursuing the Judges' goals, few exhibit more dedication, diligence, or

humility than the Bulls. Nesrem Priests brutally enforce edicts of the Judges, tracking heretics with implacable resolve.

Tef-Aabhi: Stalwart Geomancers painstakingly plot every line and angle when crafting their legacies. For them, patiently planning for the future and making an indelible mark on the world are as natural as waking with the Sothic Turn. While slower to adopt new approaches than other Architects, the Monoliths compensate with discerning insights and unwavering dedication.

Cults

The Stalwart value dependability and loyalty in their cultists above all else. Cultists desiring to climb the ranks must prove their competence consistently, and unreliability is treated as a moral failing. Nesrem often recruit new cultists for useful skills or to help them adapt to the current age. That Bulls are often too stubborn to heed their advice is a source of constant frustration for these cultists.

- Scattered through museums and historical preservation societies around the world, the Chroniclers work tirelessly to preserve artifacts of every age. Their Arisen masters hope to forge a complete record of the world's history through these, believing the process shall unveil the true essence of the world itself.
- The Quiet Harbor holds small chapters in every major port city in the world. The seafaring cult leaders travel from port to port, keeping the floating tomb on the move. Whenever she awakens, their mistress takes comfort in the timeless sea. Returning to land can wait until she is prepared.
- Weakened through generations of inbreeding and feuds with rival cults, she's the last surviving member of the Blackwode Family. With no child to carry on their lineage, she searches desperately for her master in the rugged mountains he chose for solitude. As much as she dreads disturbing his peace, she knows she must, or their legacy will be lost.

Eternal Purpose

Stubborn, practical, and obsessive, Nesrem are loath to change. They take comfort in tradition and prior experiences, favoring familiar methods over experimentation. They implacably pursue their goals, whether it is building their legacy or vengeance upon a rival. Those who earn a Bull's respect find them unwavering in their loyalty, and steadfast in their protection. When they grow attached to something, they despise letting it go. Most find themselves frustrated when required to change bodies, despite their conviction that these changes are purely superficial.

Dedication to purpose comes naturally to Bulls, and they toil tirelessly to fulfill their missions. The Nesrem act as the Judges' laborers, ignoring minor distractions or short-term goals as they shape the world in accordance with their Judge's wishes. Most Monoliths fulfill their first purpose with single-minded devotion, unless it runs counter to their long-term endeavors. When the Stalwart's eternal legacy is threatened, even the whims of Judge or cult must yield. If a vessel captivates a Nesrem and doing so poses no risk to their legacy, they pursue it relentlessly, destroying any impediments in their path.

The Stalwart treasure recovery of their memory, seeing continuity of their Essence through every Descent. They pursue it with the same single-mindedness they dedicate to any other task. Many find themselves forced to move with greater urgency, as uncovering their secrets reveal forgotten projects and neglected rivalries requiring their attention.

Favored Attributes: Resolve and Stamina

Defining Pillar: Ka

Regaining Pillars: Nesrem have little time or tolerance for overcomplications, preferring to strike directly at the heart of an issue. After any scene in which the Stalwart overcomes a challenge by tearing away extraneous details and breaking the issue down to its basic essence, they regain one Pillar point of their choosing.

The Stalwart desire above all else to create a legacy, a monument carrying their Essence through the ages or a philosophy disseminating their ideas to future generations. Once per chapter, the Nesrem's Ka Pillar is fully restored by building or defending their legacy, or by witnessing the lasting impact of their legacy upon society.

Affinity: Guardian Bull

Effect: The Monoliths relentlessly build their legacies, refusing to see them torn down.

- If someone harms one of the Nesrem's Touchstones, the mummy rises from heret to protect the Touchstone as if the aggressor disturbed her tomb.
- When the Nesrem successfully opens Doors during Social Maneuvering using intimidation or violence, she gains the Steadfast Condition.
- The Nesrem benefits from 1/0 armor (which stacks with any other armor she possesses) while sealing the flesh. If the mummy defends a Touchstone, her general armor rating is equal to her Ka dots instead.

Usheb

The Cunning Decree of Name

Serpents, Whisperers, the Cunning

How did I beat you? Well, the coroner is my high priest, I know where the chief of police hides her mistress, and all your allies? They like me better than you.

Strip me of everything else, but you will not have my Name. Through my Name, I know myself. Speak my Name and I live!

Why We Endure

Upon becoming the bishop of Rome, a newly elected Pope changes his name. Why? He is already one of the influential people on the planet, names possess magic so potent even mortals cannot ignore it. I endure because I know my name and I know who I am.

Self-knowledge is a simple thing, but it carries unlimited potential. It isn't just intelligence. If I understand who I am, I know what I am capable of, but I also appreciate how I relate to the people around me. My name embodies my identity, my experiences, and my status. It is the core of who I am.

Why stop at knowing myself though? By learning the names of the people and things around me, I come to understand their potential. I know how to direct their movements on the political chessboard, so they become clay in my hands. Immortality means I never have to stop. Each discovery teaches me new names and unlocks new possibilities. There is always more to learn.

Our Curse

I know my name, but I don't always know all my names. I recall when I was "the Great" or "the Magnificent" but forget being "the Bloody" or "the Terrible." Our fractured Memory robs us of our actions' context, for we stay true to our natures even when we forget what they are. We think we are dispensing justice when sadistic tyranny is our true nature. As Memory returns, we have our illusions about ourselves dispelled. If we cannot understand our own identities until it is too late, how can we expect to understand the people and world around us?

Why You Will Serve Us

Give me a lever, and I can move the world, yes? We are offering the lever. We understand how people think and react. We have researched the most obscure scientific topics. We know you better than you know yourself. Imagine what you can do with such knowledge. You'd win a Nobel Prize or take the Hollywood social scene by storm. The experience we offer is the lever, and our cults are the fulcrum. All you must do is make use of them.

The Guilds

Maa-Kep: Obsessed with knowledge and identity, the Usheb excel as Spies. Through careful observation and study, they come to understand the needs and desires of those they serve. Conveniently, it also allows them to build extensive dossiers on everyone around them. When heresy compromises the Arisen, the Cunning are the first to know.

Mesen-Nebu: Dedwen is the most fundamental aspect of identity for Serpents within the Alchemists. An object or person's potential determines what they are, even if the potential is hypothetical or years in making. The Cunning are patient, preferring to invest time in materials that remain flexible, be they reforged precious metals or ever-adaptable human minds.

Sesha-Hebsu: The stereotypical Serpent is a Lorekeeper, sequestered in a library full of dusty tomes with millennia of accumulated knowledge. The stereotype isn't wrong, though modern Serpents are happy to use a phone with an internet connection. It would be easy, but incorrect, to assume these Lorekeepers focus on famous and influential names. Their rulings and histories are nuanced and consider the impact of culture, economics, and identity on the Scroll of Ages.

Su-Menent: Cunning Necromancers understand magic by studying the identities of the mortals once contained within their shells. They are the seekers of the strange and the macabre, always searching for ever more bizarre and unique bodies to study. They consider a shell Claimed by a vengeful ghost to be a gift from the Judges, although most other mummies are just grateful the Necromancers hunt such monstrosities.

Tef-Aabhi: Usheb Geomancers concern themselves with the identities of Lifewebs. They primarily focus on occult influences such as ley lines and sacred geometry, but they are cognizant that Netit-Sekhem pervades everything. The names of people and places create unique eddies in the Lifeweb for the New Pharaohs to exploit.

Cults

The Cunning prize curiosity and ambition in their minions. Wealth and power are valuable assets, but a patent clerk driven to explore the unknown has much more use than a lazy CEO. The Cunning recruit minions who can obtain results without having a mummy staring over their shoulders. Sycophants and hangers-on need not apply.

- Officially, the Uxbridge Library Association coordinates between the municipality's public, private, and university collections. Unofficially, they cataloging knowledge and track down antiquities to serve their founder. When the founder requires them to use diplomacy to convince collectors to part with their valuables, the ULA has found that looking at the books people have checked out says a lot about them.
- Blue Nile Laboratories works with all the volatile chemicals. Azidoazide azide, batrachotoxin, chlorine trifluoride, and sulfur trioxide — the names on their requisition forms read like a who's who of other chemist's worst nightmares. Despite Blue Nile's hazardous work staff turnover is low and the scientists know they can conduct riskier experiments than any university would tolerate. Shareholders must drag the CEO away from her research to attend attends board meetings and between sessions, she preoccupies herself with synthesizing, naming, and indexing the world's most reactive compounds.
- Data mining is the next big game, and NefertiTxt stays on the industry's bleeding edge. Scores of cultists sort through oceans of metadata before forwarding the most pertinent information to their Arisen Mistress. NefertiTxt know who has vessels, who is an incognito sorcerer, and who is susceptible to their corporate recruitment drives, as the company is always hiring. They refuse to stoop so low as identity theft, viewing such crimes as a perversion of ren, but they have no qualms about using the information they gather as blackmail to ensure the cult gets its way.

Eternal Purpose

The Usheb view knowledge as both a means to an end and an end itself, making no distinction between book learning and street knowledge. Modern buzzwords label them as proponents of holistic education, but the Usheb boil this down to a simple principle: analysis and experience are both essential to knowledge. A name without education is blind, while lack of social connection castrates an identity. Even the most bookish Serpent is a political animal capable of manipulating their allies and confounding their foes.

Judges requiring tacticians who acts with deft hands call upon the Serpents. They serve as manipulators and chess masters, arranging every piece on the board according to the Judges' designs. Thorough and meticulous, Serpents focus on the details when fulfilling their first purposes.

For the Serpents, understanding a vessel's history just as crucial as obtaining it. Even after consigning the vessels Duat, the Cunning research the Relics they recover, hoping their true names provide valuable insight into other vessels.

Prizing self-knowledge above all else, Memory is everything to the Cunning. An impenetrable fog of amnesia traps the experiences shaping these mummies identities and the Cunning go to any length to burn it away. It is a massive blow when a Serpent's Memory subverts their sense of self, but the vindication they experience when reaffirming their identities makes it worth the risk.

Favored Attributes: Intelligence and Manipulation

Defining Pillar: Ren

Regaining Pillars: Nuance wraps names in layers of secrets for the Usheb to unravel one at a time. The Cunning regains one Pillar point of her choice after any scene in which she uncovers an unknown historical truth or proves the mind's superiority over the heart and the body.

Nothing reinvigorates the Usheb like discovering their own identity. Once per chapter, the Usheb may fully restore her Ren Pillar by going out of her way to learn additional information about her current purpose that she does not require to complete her duties.

Affinity: Serpent's Tongue

Effect: Clever and sly, the Usheb's words move mountains.

- Anyone who permanently sacrifices a significant memory may summon the Usheb from henet as if they were the mummy's cultist.
- When engaging in Social Maneuvering, if the Serpent's goal would be a breaking point for the character she is trying to influence, add one Door instead of two.
- When the Serpent improves a character's impression of her during Social Maneuvering, she gains the Informed Condition regarding that character.

The Judges of Duat

Each and every loyal Arisen serves one of the Judges of Duat, the 42 assessors of Ma'at who weigh the souls of the dead and determine their ultimate fate. The mummy declares his Decree before the Judge who most closely resonates with his own ideals, who looks for the heavy burden of a particular sin that the Arisen himself finds repugnant or deeply important in some way, and in doing so binds himself to the demonic Judge as a Timeless servitor.

Each of the 42 claims authority over a specific crime or sin, and from these 42 condemnations comes the code of laws that underpins the legacy of Irem. To the Arisen, the 42 Judges represent a fundamental morality inherent to the cosmic cycle of the gods themselves. However, many among the 42 concern themselves with narrow or conceptual transgressions, and so few Arisen find resonance with their judgment. Only a few of the Judges claim a significant number of Arisen servants; most of Irem's Deathless pay allegiance to the seven most powerful and active Judges.

While loyal Arisen will always serve a Judge, the pronouncement of Decree does not chain the Deathless to that Judge forever. It is possible for a mummy to move his allegiance to another, and some Judges will try and sway or force their rivals' servitors to their own side. The Judges demand a tithe of Sekhem from the living world, a rightfully-due sacrifice to the gods, and the more Arisen a Judge possesses, the more Sekhem is poured into its grasp.

The 42 assessors of Ma'at are strange and nightmarish entities, utterly dedicated to the enforcement of external morality and civilization on the unrolling scroll of history. They do not empathize with those they condemn, let alone sympathize; they can often seem capricious or actively malevolent in the way their alien protocols direct their actions, and on the rare occasion that one issues forth an emanation or true avatar into the world, the results are often apocalyptic. A mummy's Judge is always with him, but it is a distant and impersonal force ready to reflexively scourge away Sekhem for his transgressions, and a channel for overwhelming divine imperatives with no room for intimacy or gentleness in how they are delivered. Nevertheless, the Judges represent the divine order of the cosmos; to most Arisen, the notion of disobeying the Judges is unthinkable.

Am-Khaibit, the Eater of Shadows

DROWN THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS IN BLOOD

The Eater of Shadows is a night-dark terror, its awful grandeur stark against the rasping sands of Duat's wasteland. The monstrous jaws of the canine Judge's three heads can rend the skin and flesh of reality; each mouth drools a tide of hot ash, stirring to a billowing storm of smoke when the beast roars or speaks.

This Judge claims the assessment of those who perpetuate crimes against humanity, primarily mass murder. It does not condemn every act of slaughter; indeed, Am-Khaibit deems state or community-sanctioned killing to be acceptable or even laudable under some circumstances. In the eyes of the Eater of Shadows, a fine line divides monstrous transgression and righteous action; war and conflict are fundamental to the architecture of civilization that the Judges would enforce. Am-Khaibit reserves its loathing for wanton slaughter and butchery that threatens to undermine the foundations of society.

Why We Serve Them

To many Arisen, the world's become sick with violence, suffocating on the charnel cravings of humanity turned inwards in autocannibalistic chaos. By comparison, Am-Khaibit is a source of unending, righteous violence that brings bloody vengeance against the deserving — no limits, no hesitation. To the servants of Am-Khaibit, the notion of an eye for an eye is laughable; you sever the transgressor's head and stick it atop a spike for all to see and learn from.

You're a would-be savior bringing divine judgment so the innocent can live without fear. You're a cultivator of humanity's martial soul, pruning away the sick branches so that the civilized aspects of war can be better nurtured. You just want an excuse to lash out, to use your strength and rage with no limitations against a target who has been condemned by the highest authority so you can feel righteous about your fury. The Eater of Shadows doesn't care what drives you, as long as you fight fire with fire and accept no compromise.

Who We Judge

The Arisen servitors of Am-Khaibit have a reputation for excessive violence and self-righteousness, but the Eater of Shadows encourages an investigative bent to its followers. Often enough, the instigator responsible for a mass murder is clear — the serial killer terrorizing the city, or the sadistic officer who orders his troops to hunt down and slaughter refugees. However, the guilty party isn't always the person who wields the knife or presses the button; Am-Khaibit is only satisfied once *all* guilty parties have been tracked down and dealt with.

How We Worship

The Eater of Shadows encourages bold, uncompromising approaches that carve hard lines between transgression and righteousness. Servants of the Judge are allowed to use stealth, trickery, and cleverness to prosecute their condemnations, but Am-Khaibit particularly prizes public lessons and delights in the terror of those who know justice is coming for them and that it is *unstoppable*.

Cults built around the Eater of Shadows and its Arisen servitors cling to tenets of vengeance, retaliation, honor, and a belief in the notion of the 'just war' and the righteous kill. They're often militant in nature, whether a band of vigilantes dealing out rough justice in dark alleys, a paramilitary or revolutionary society riling themselves to violence in rowdy assemblies, or an outright military conspiracy embedded in the armed forces.

Like all Judges, Am-Khaibit craves the acquisition and oblation of Sekhem vessels from the living world. The Eater of Shadows is particularly interested in vessels and relics of a martial nature, used in killing, or made from the aftermath of slaughter or massacre.

Arem-Abfu, the Final Judge

DEBRIDE, EXCISE, EXTRACT, AND THROUGH DIVISION ENSURE PURITY

The Final Judge is so terrible in aspect that it cannot be truly witnessed, not even by the burnished soul of the Arisen. To see its nightmare majesty is to know that it is beyond comprehension, let alone description. Last but perhaps greatest of all its siblings, even the echoes of Arem-Abfu's divine voice weigh heavy in the mind of its Arisen servitors.

Arem-Abfu is Judge of a lofty but profound transgression — that of crimes against the cosmos itself. The Final Judge concerns itself with sorcery and science turned against the righteous order of Duat and civilization, setting Arisen against those who try to defile, warp, or reshape the fundamentals of reality to suit their arrogance and hunger. Arem-Abfu serves as guardian to the pillars of existence, and its servitors challenge those who think themselves worthy of shaking such foundations.

Why We Serve Them

Chaos has crept into the world where order should reign supreme. The great cosmic cycles of reality grind and stutter as the corruption of the unfurling ages clogs the divine engine of existence. Mysteries slither and multiply in the shadows. All would be in harmony were it not for the transgressions of those who think their own will and design superior to that of the gods. If the body will survive, the surgeon must cut away the gangrenous rot; if the flock is to flourish, it requires a shepherd. Arem-Abfu offers the understanding and the power needed to set all things right.

You're a fervent believer outraged by the sacrilege of those who would try to seize control of the levers of the world with their crude sorcery. You're a craftsman even now, fascinated by the workings of the cosmos and keen to keep them running in smooth order where even the Judges have failed to keep the gears turning properly. You're driven by a desire to learn the same secrets that lure those you condemn in the Final Judge's name, desperate to finally peer behind the screen yourself and learn the truth of existence. Whoever you are, you'll face the temptation of forbidden knowledge in your service to Arem-Abfu — and the Last Judge will be watching you closely.

Who We Judge

The servants of Arem-Abfu deal with those who wield magic to defile reality or reach beyond their rightful place in the cosmic order. Petty uses of sorcery to gain moderate temporal power or even extend lifespan are usually of little interest to Arem-Abfu, but concerted attacks on the Arisen and the Judges themselves, or abuses of Sekhem-rich vessels for purposes other than oblation to Duat, draw the Final Judge's attention swiftly.

Though often seen as witch-hunters, the Arisen of Arem-Abfu also lay judgment on an entirely different brand of criminal — those who wield more conventional forms of science, or who combine such with the occult, to push into realms that the Final Judge deems beyond humanity's prerogative. Some branches of cutting-edge science catch the ire of the Judge's Arisen, as do potentially transhumanist efforts to fundamentally change the path of humanity into something

else. The rapid acceleration of technological progress is witnessed with alarm by Arem-Abfu's followers; they fear that soon the species will try to rise above its station and wrestle control of the cosmos from the gods.

How We Worship

Arem-Abfu considers there to be a correct, pure form of reality, and asks of its followers that they protect this sacred state. The Final Judge's Arisen look at things through the lens of this struggle between the holy and the corrupt, and seek to hold back that corruption where they can. Many practice extreme ritualistic behavior in the form of purifying ceremonies or the symbolic rejection of the profane, often via washing.

Cults of Arem-Abfu further reflect this focus the dividing line between the cleansed and the unclean. They espouse occult or ritual practices of 'good' magic or thought, and are relentlessly antagonistic to those who do not conform to their standards. A cult of the Final Judge is likely to lean into eldritch or intellectual pursuits; one may be a coven of sorcerers under the harsh tutelage of an Arisen, another a society of engineers or doctors or scientists trying to build a moral and ethical framework for their cutting-edge practices, and yet another a local sect of ferocious guardians entirely dedicated to protecting all the holy tombs of the Arisen from desecration.

Kenemti, the Penitent

*IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO CUT AWAY THE ROTTEN FLESH; PROVIDE
CORRECT ACTION AS AN EXAMPLE*

Kenemti does not present the nightmarish majesty or divine glory of many other Judges. Its appearance is, by comparison, restrained; a simple figure draped in a spotless white robe that shines with inner luminescence, inlaid with wondrous decorations of lapis lazuli. Beneath the hood, the Penitent's face is hairless, its skin a blue mottling that suggests scales, and its yellow eyes punctuated with the slit pupils of a serpent.

Kenemti assesses the crimes of blasphemy and desecration against the sacred, as interpreted through the doctrines of Duat. To Kenemti, the sacred is often found in sources of spiritual strength that reinforce communities, bring hope and purpose to the populace, and help guide and shape the flow of civilization itself. Just because a mortal religion declares something holy does not make it truly so in the eyes of the Penitent and, indeed, the facade of spirituality can hide utter profanity behind its mask.

Why We Serve Them

In every era, the Arisen awaken to see the world despoiled and lessened beneath the boot-heel of those who crave only dominion, riches, or power. The righteous order of Duat and the veneration of the gods are set aside in favor of personal gratification or corrupted to unvirtuous purpose. Unsurprisingly, Arisen often have a deep-seated sense of the sacred and the divine, and feel outrage or despair at seeing communities drained of spirituality, left unmoored from a sacred anchor that binds them together and gives them purpose. The Penitent, then, offers the impetus to make whole the wounded soul of humanity.

You're a shepherd in search of a flock, reveling in the light of awe and wonder that gleams in the eye of those who have had hope and faith restored. You're a zealot without compare, raging still at a world that should be turned entirely towards veneration of the divine. You fear your own

blasphemies, the questions you yearn to ask but know that it is not your place to doubt the gods over, and hope that you too can find penitence in service to Kenemti. The Penitent accepts all Arisen into service, asking each of you to judge the world's soul through the lens of your own Pillars.

Who We Judge

The servitors of Kenemti see little difference between the physical and the conceptual when it comes to threats to the sacred. A tightly-bound community *is* the church where they worship; desecration of that community might be a charlatan or demagogue subverting the spiritual heart of the congregation, or it could be the iconoclast who takes a sledgehammer to the focal altar; both are transgressors. The participants in religious conflicts, the architects of societal changes that weaken faith, and the looters who sack a temple for its goods are all worthy of condemnation; so is the priest who builds a church that only echoes with empty lip service and the aggrandizement of the clergy. Anyone who dares steal from the tomb of an Arisen is particularly guilty.

How We Worship

Arisen who follow the Penitent are particularly pious, at least outwardly. The faith of Irem is not the same as that of successor civilizations, and that is as it should be — but these newcomers must be shepherded appropriately. The Judge's servants involve themselves in matters of faith, community, and politics, actively undermining religions and movements that they believe to be unworthy in one way or another.

Cults of Kenemti aren't just religious sects; they're cults *about* faith. They infiltrate the board of the local church community or the ranks of the religious police. One cult is made up of wealthy philanthropists with deep pockets, while another counts theologians and philosophers in its ranks. Some hide themselves in the guts of construction or architecture firms, raising new monuments to lost Irem by working symbolism into their creations. Arisen who serve this Judge often control a mystery cult, where their true followers sit at the top of a pyramid over innumerable lesser sects and congregations, all following different tenets or beliefs and all watched vigilantly by the inner circle to see how their spirituality develops.

Nebha, the Flame

*UNDER THE LIGHT OF TRUTH, THE MINDS OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS WILL
FIND SOLACE OR THEY WILL BURN*

The Flame is an impossibly bright presence, a shining white fire that casts sharp illumination across Duat's cruel expanse. Its form is inconstant; it is a congeries of spheres, or a line of lights stretching out towards an infinite distance, or the shadow cast by something even brighter.

Nebha is the Judge of truth and lies. Its harsh light burns away all deception, leaving only the hard reality of veracity in its wake. It does not loath lies so much as it is the antithesis of such; its very being rebels against the concept of communicating *that which is not*. The Flame does not oppose secrecy, and those who merely withhold knowledge do not rouse its ire. Only the propagation of falsehood, intentional or otherwise, calls it to bring burning revelation to the world.

Why We Serve Them

Much of the Arisen experience is shrouded and hidden; the decaying weight of Memory shackles each mummy in an eternal struggle to accrue truth and understanding. Lies, then, are anathema to many Arisen; each falsehood spoken is a drop of poison into the crucible of history, another lie that the mummy must evade while plucking out the precious grains of truth. This poison turns the world to chaos, unpicking the tapestry of time and knowledge. Better to cleanse the veins of discourse and community with fiery purification.

Who We Judge

Anyone can lie; it's such a common sin. The followers of Nebha frown upon all falsehoods, but accept that deception can, itself, grease the wheels of human interaction even though they reject its convenience themselves. Instead, the Flame's chosen Arisen reserve their fury for those whose lies actively cause harm. They hate the lying politician whose blithering falsehoods turn the order of the court to venal and chaotic corruption, and the false scholar who propagates self-serving deception. In a modern age of media and memetics, Nebha's servitors have much work to do.

How We Worship

The Arisen who follow Nebha often employ symbolic and literal representations of their Judge. The Flame encourages a truthful approach to all things, and its servitors seek to purify themselves of all lies; they also like to burn that which offends them, branding a liar's tongue with hot metal or incinerating texts that bear profanely mendacious claims.

Cults that arise around the activities of Nebha and its Arisen believe they bear the illuminating torch of truth. Some are activists espousing freedom of information and rigorous fact-checking, or even firebrand revolutionaries who want to take more direct and incendiary action against the corrupt and lying establishment. Often enough, though, cultists of the Flame want to preserve and protect the truth from the unworthy — and it is, of course, the cult that decides who is worthy. The mummies of the flame gather hacker collectives, societies of archivists, and bands of thieves to seek out and snatch secrets away into the grasp of the Arisen.

Neheb-Ka, the One Who Unifies

*BRING THEM LOW, AND MAKE THEM AS THE CUR WRITHING IN THE
MUD*

The One Who Unifies is a monstrous sphinx, a chimera with the head of a leopard, a flicking snake's tongue, the forequarters of a lion and a hind-body of immense, serpentine coils. It is as repulsive in aspect as it is wondrous; its contorted form slithers and twists in perspective-breaking motions, and its entwined tail seems infinite in length.

Neheb-Ka concerns itself with the iniquities born from human pride. It claims purview over those whose arrogance brings discord and strife, who harm others through their overweening pride, and who steal acclaim rightfully due to others. The Judge is, perhaps, less concerned with the stunted development of the individual who suffers from such hubris; it cares for the damage done by foolish pride to the structure of society and civilization, the way the overly powerful and excessively arrogant wound the shared customs of the community, or the manner in which they fail to duly submit to authority and righteousness.

Why We Serve Them

The Arisen know the risks of pride and the importance of humility. Every mummy is a servant to the Judges, and this is good and right; it is their correct place in the harmonious order of the cosmos. The world is in disorder because so many do *not* adhere to their appropriate station; they trespass against society and the gods through their self-aggrandizement. The Arisen wield the power of the Rite of Return, which makes evident mockery of any mortal's delusions of grandeur. Neheb-Ka asks the Arisen to make such humbling their very purpose, and such indulgence of karmic justice is an attractive proposition for many.

You're a sneering monster from the distant past who takes gleeful pleasure in showing arrogant upstarts the wild miscalculation of their sense of self-worth, and incidentally bringing an end to their excesses. You're a harsh meritocrat with no tolerance for over-inflated opinions of self-worth. You just want to drag everyone down to the same level, because it'll bring humility to all or because you want to see the whole human race on their knees. The One Who Unifies is an *honest* monster, and it lets you be a monster too, to terrorize and sabotage in the name of righteous order.

Who We Judge

The politician who grasps for ever more power, believing the mere plebs aren't qualified to direct their own destinies; the cruel doctor thriving in the power she holds over victims, choosing who lives and who dies; the rising star who steps on everyone between him and his desires in the belief that he alone matters — these are some of the condemned whom Neheb-Ka's followers bring low. Many Arisen flock to the Judge's service because transgressors against its code are so common, making duty to the One Who Unifies seem so very *easy*.

How We Worship

The One Who Unifies doesn't mandate humility from its own servitors, but such Arisen often watch themselves and their fellows carefully for the telltale signs of pride before a fall — after all, they've seen the consequences of arrogance enough times to learn from it. Perhaps in compensation, Neheb-Ka's followers heavily emphasize piety and the gods, building great temples to the Judge and Duat.

Cults of the One Who Unifies are often vindictive, close-knit little affairs — a band of vigilantes keen for vengeance, or a social circle of veritable high-society harpies picking the next bloated ego that needs puncturing. Some Arisen move from one brief group to another, forging activists or wronged parties into brief cults to see through their actions against the target of their ire; others build longer-lasting organizations, from self-help or spiritual businesses commodifying lessons in humility for personal growth, to gangs of corrupt cops committing extrajudicial executions of criminals who arrogantly consider themselves untouchable by the law.

Unem-Besek, the Eater of Entrails

*AS THEY HAVE SALTED THE EARTH, SO YOU SHALL SALT THEIR FLESH;
AS THEY HAVE BEEN LOCUSTS TO THE LAND, SO YOU SHALL EAT OF
THEIR BODIES*

Called the Eater of Entrails, Unem-Besek is a grotesque mass of reptilian flesh from which sprouts a crown of writhing snakes. The constraints of size and mass hold no authority over it; the Judge simultaneously looms over the horizon as a colossus, slouches within the grandeur of its temple, and waits in the thin spaces between the walls.

Unem-Besek's pronounced purview is the theft of land or territory that belongs to another, but its reach is far greater than this might at first indicate. To the Eater of Entrails, land matters because it is the underpinning of sustenance and civilization. To take farmland is to deny a community their food, and to seize a place that a community has dwelt in for long ages is to disconnect them from their spirituality and their ancestors. Unem-Besek, then, concerns itself as much with famine and starvation, the misuse of the land's resources, and the severing of established ties to a place as it does with the direct conquest of land.

Why We Serve Them

To be blunt, the Eater of Entrails is *terrifying*. Some Arisen come into its service because it demands they do so, and they are too afraid to deny it. For many, though, the Judge resonates with their understanding of state and people, born from the days of Irem. The two are tied intimately together; the very basic foundations of life come from what the land gives up to its cultivators. The idea of territory, then, is the building block upon which civilization is built, not necessarily through ownership of land but through continuity of existence upon it.

Who We Judge

The servants of the Eater of Entrails find fault in bickering neighbors who squabble over land, whether the power struggle of rival states or the greed of rich farmers who each want more of what the other has. They condemn landowners who wield the coin and the word to abuse or drive off inhabitants and to destroy that which has come before. Perhaps more pertinently in the modern world, Unem-Besek's servitors judge those who misuse the resources of their land — unsustainable deforestation, soil poisoned with chemicals, and fertile earth locked away under groaning concrete.

How We Worship

The servants of the Eater of Entrails gather their own estates and properties, and fiercely defend their territory. Unem-Besek encourages productivity in all aspects of existence, whether the use of land or the scheduling of the Arisen's limited time on the Descent. The Judge's mummies are always striving towards the next goal, trying to get the most out of every second they have in this cycle.

Cults of the Eater of Entrails usually focus around attachment to a place or location. They're the insular and xenophobic locals who don't like outsiders, the archaeologists who lovingly prize the city's history out of the soil, and the activists trying to protect the wetlands from destruction at the hands of industry. Many such cults fold the symbolism of hunger and famine into their rites, whether through extravagant banquets of grotesque gluttony, the self-mortification of fasting, or offerings of sacrifices' entrails to sacred animals who are treated as intermediaries to the divine.

Usekh-Nemtet, the First Judge

*IT IS BLASPHEMOUS, TIMELESS SLAVE, TO BELIEVE YOURSELF OUR
EQUAL IN JUDGMENT*

The First Judge is fickle of form, often shrouding itself in shapes familiar to the viewer as father figures or mentors. Those lucky — or unlucky — enough to see Usekh-Nemtet in its true form claim it to be wrought of hollow masks and empty void, but even this manifestation may just be another veil.

Much like the Last Judge, the First Judge concerns itself with lofty matters of the cosmos. In the case of Usekh-Nemtet, it condemns those who aspire to the position of the Judges themselves, as represented through either seeking to dictate the nature of sin or through breaching the limits of their existence and seeking immortality. Some claim it sees even the Arisen as highly suspect, and only grudgingly tolerates the Rite of Return.

Why We Serve Them

Usekh-Nemtet is the highest authority when it comes to the very nature and purpose of the Arisen, for their existence lies within the Judge's purview and, ultimately, every single one of them has passed beneath the First Judge's baleful gaze. Some Arisen seek to serve Usekh-Nemtet for this reason alone, seeing it as the greatest of Judges and the purest example of their reason for being. Arisen who find particular resonance with the details of its purpose are those who have witnessed the hubris of humanity in seeking immortality, who believe that humanity fundamentally does not possess the perspective to determine its own framework of morality, or who fear their own kind and suspect that the Arisen are imperfect creations and, ultimately, a threat to the harmonious order of the gods.

You're a hunter of other immortals; you catch them, pull their limbs off, take them apart to see how they tick in the hope that one day you'll truly understand your own nature. You are the implacable face of the cosmos, delivering judgment to remind humans that it is the gods, not them, from whom all righteousness flows. You think this is all a terrible mistake, unable to break free from the cycle of your own immortality, and you want to warn those who would violate the First Judge's laws that life without end isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Who We Judge

The world's not short of idiots trying to bootstrap themselves up to immortality, a process that often involves a dozen other crimes along the way. Servitors of Usekh-Nemtet go after the cults and cabals of such sorcerers and parasites, bringing an early ending to their attempted eternity. Sometimes, the First Judge sets its Arisen against other Deathless who have transgressed in some way.

Although more abstract, the First Judge's followers also condemn those who seek to define the nature of sin despite it being beyond their station to do so. Spiritual figures or secular authorities attempting to fundamentally alter the deep-rooted values or ethics of a community can run afoul of the Judge's followers, and no amount of philosophical justification is likely to sway such bearers of divine judgment.

How We Worship

The First Judge encourages its worshipers to strip away humanity's self-deception and face the horrible truth of their place in the cosmos; that each person faces only a brief and mortal existence, and that they dwell amid a greater order that they cannot truly perceive or appreciate but can only submit to. Its Arisen servitors are usually eloquent and erudite, seeking influence and control over others — after all, mummies possess a cosmically-privileged position of power by comparison.

Cults of Usekh-Nemtet tend towards the bizarre. One is a death cult, embracing the inevitability of the end and the cycle of rebirth; the members of another seek insight and revelation in exposure to the inconceivable truths of the First Judge's mind. Some are abjectly submissive, offering total obedience and the suppression of their own will to their Arisen master and the

cosmic order that the First Judge represents. Most feature a strong vein of acceptance of divine authority, and the punishment of those who stray from obedience to that perceived power.

From Chaos, Order

Most Arisen hold firm to the belief that the Judges are exactly what they seem — the 42 assessors of Ma'at, granted their macabre thrones in bleak Duat to judge the souls of the dead. It's all a part of the eternal, cosmic order.

Some Timeless claim a deeper knowledge of the Judges' origins, gleaned from ancient texts, the confessions of undying beings, or echoing fragments of broken time. These mummies claim the Judges emerged from formless chaos, each given a splinter of the fundamentals of morality and civilization around which they coalesced and took coherence. They crawled from the bedlam and built their thrones, taking their place in a new order that rose with their appearance.

This story doesn't necessarily contradict the Iremic belief in the afterlife, in Ammut and Aaru, but it does raise disturbing questions among those Arisen who believe it. Did the Judges seize their conceptual space by dint of being the first, or did another, greater power give them their meaning? Do they reflect the existing nature of human morality, are they a parasitic attempt to ape it, or are they the external enforcers of something greater? If they were once beings of chaos, given shape and purpose, might they one day return to their former turmoil — and to what extent might the rivalries, bickering, and erratic behavior they display reflect the cosmic order breaking down, and their slide into corrupting disorder?

Chapter Two: Life When Deathless

Immortality will come to such as are fit for it; and he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Nameless Empire

Close your eyes and listen to the wind as it howls over the sands. It cries for Irem, long gone, near-forgotten. The proud city stood at the heart of the Nameless Empire, and all the world trembled at its might. Hear, in the wind's wail, its memory of dancing down Irem's streets, of skirling about the Pillars that rose over it. Perhaps we stand where the city once did, though the kepher doesn't stir beneath our skins. We might tread where a temple once stood. What if the bones of a craft-house lay far beneath our feet, would you know?

What if it's the bones of our brethren, slain to fuel Shan'iatu rites?

Irem lies lost beneath the sands. Once, its pillars cast long shadows across the mighty city, which in turn cast its long shadow over an empire. Its bronze-armored soldiers marched beneath the sign of the scorpion, their weapons strengthened by sorcerer-priests' arcane workings. Death proved no barrier to the Nameless Empire's ambitions; the corpses of the fallen were merely one more resource for the necromancers to exploit.

None of Irem's survivors know how it fell. Their bodies lay entombed while the empire collapsed, their souls wandering through Duat unaware of happenings on the mortal plane. The Deathless arose when Sothis next ascended, when their bodies were disturbed, or when Judges forced them awake, emerging into a world that had already forgotten their magnificent city. Its Pillars were gone, fallen or crumbled or carted away. Its ancient magics were lost, dead and buried with the sorcerer-priests. What stood in Irem's place was a poor imitation of its wonders.

Over 6,000 years ago, before Egypt's Old Kingdom rose, desert tribes named the Black Land that sustained them *Kemet*, "the heart of the world." They lived alongside the River — later civilizations would dub it the Nile, but for Kemet's people no other rivers could compare to its wide, rushing waters. The tribes didn't yet have the trick of fire, and subsisted on what they gathered along with the River's bounty. The Black Land and the River protected them from the surrounding desert, where few ever ventured. The stories passed down from their ancestors said scorpions guarded the searing white sands. What their stings didn't kill, sun and thirst would claim.

Sometimes the dead walked, their corpses rising to attack the friends and family who mourned their loss. Elders laid heavy stones atop the deceased to prevent them from such a return. Spirits haunted the night and the ghost-winds sowed terror wherever they howled.

Then, from a land beyond the tribes' kenning, the sorcerer-priests came conquering. Those same stinging horrors that stalked the desert curled along the Shani'atu's scarlet robes, embroidered in golden thread. They brought with them their gods and their necromantic magics, and shaped Kemet and its people to their wills. All things obeyed the sorcerer-priests: they commanded fire; they bound the wind. At their behest, corpses stirred and set to building walls. The first stones they laid were the ones that had held their lifeless bodies down.

Though they never dared speak it aloud, the people of Kemet suspected the Shan'iatu weren't entirely *human*. They wore human shapes, but while humans were born of earth, some sorcerer-priests claimed to be made from fire. They were children of the stars, their essences shaped by magic. Those necromancers who spoke of their origins believed they sat somewhere between the gods and mortals, tasked with protecting their lesser cousins from the Devourer's hunger.

That "protection" often took monstrous form — the dead weren't the necromancers' only slaves. Legend says the Shan'iatu raised the city in a single night, though the Arisen know no sorcerers' hands grew calloused from the labor. Perhaps Shan'iatu magic alone called the pillars forth from the sands and placed them just-so around the city in accordance with sacred occult architecture, but human hands raised the city's walls and constructed its temples and palaces. The Shan'iatu forced the living to toil alongside the dead, day and night, while the city grew. Basalt columns loomed against the sky in any direction one looked. The obelisks' shadows were an ever-present reminder of Shan'iatu prowess: their shades crept across temple floors and darkened audience chambers. Though the city had no name, its inhabitants and visitors referred to it as the City of Pillars.

The name "Irem" came much later, a word that means *false paradise* in a tongue as dead as the Nameless Empire itself.

Reshaping

With the city built, the necromancers set about reshaping its people. They declared the tribes of Kemet to be a single nation and crowned themselves its princes. Of the Shan'iatu's pantheon, they worshiped Azar as the highest among their deities. Long before they invaded Kemet, Azar had charged the Shan'iatu with teaching his Laws to mortals, and set them over the humans as their guides. The sorcerer-priests raised a Pharaoh from among their ranks, a king who served as both Azar's high priest and the bearer of his *bau* — the god's power made manifest. The Shan'iatu were the only ones allowed to fully worship the gods, though they might be persuaded to collect commoners' prayers and intercede on their behalf.

Other gods stood alongside Azar in the pantheon. Among them were the Nameless Serpent Sutek, whose sacrifice helped create other gods even as his goals stood in opposition to the Judges; Anpu, who ruled Duat before abdicating his throne to Azar; and Ammut the Devourer, whose hunger would consume all of creation. Souls of the dead traveled to Duat, the Underworld, where the Judges weighed their worth. While the Judges differ from the gods, the lords of Duat wielded divine power, setting forth Laws that governed whether a mortal soul ascended to A'aru after death.

The Shan'iatu sifted through the tribes and selected the most gifted among them. Only a small number of Kemet's people were deemed worthy of the knowledge. The sorcerer-priests taught these hand-picked prodigies the secrets of their ancient magic, showing them how to bind spirits into fetishes, or charm a blade so it would never grow brittle. They tended the bodies of the dead, performed funerary rites, and oversaw the corpses the necromancers raised.

The Shan'iatu further sorted people, divvying them up by their professions and skills. They restructured society into castes, breaking up the tribes and redistributing their people. The Shan'iatu split up the command of artisans and laborers, and made craft-houses to train them in. The craft-houses weren't only useful in focusing the workers' attention on their professions; they also kept them separate from their loved ones and isolated them, making it harder for the

displeased and displaced to rebel. Those who refused to conform were punished, not by the Shan'iatu, but by their own people. The sorcerer-priests created a guild of spymasters who reported on anyone who hinted at insurrection.

The newly-minted artisans augmented their works with sorcery. Smiths churned out weapons inscribed with scorpions and holy imagery. Magic made the ink writhe on scrolls scribes copied down. An amulet let its wearer know if their contact was lying. Alchemists saw the potential in base objects and transformed them into perfect versions of themselves. Sometimes they used those arts on people rather than things. Architects planned temples and tombs and ensured that sacred energy flowed properly throughout Irem.

These specialized workers coalesced into the City of Pillars' guilds. Membership remained exclusive, and each group guarded its secrets jealously. The knowledge they wielded brought them one step closer to the Shan'iatu, and lifted them above Irem's common citizens. Where the Shan'iatu acted as emissaries between the people and the gods, guild members became the link between the lower class and the sorcerer-priests. They served as bureaucrats and law enforcement, medics and funerary priests. Those guild members who could read and write offered their services to merchants and dignitaries.

While raising their city, the Shan'iatu also raised an army, conscripting its soldiers from among the tribes. As they'd done in making the craft-houses, the Shan'iatu drove another wedge into the remaining tribal society. Their people were subsumed into their various regiments, forced to let go of their old ways to conform to the new. The Shan'iatu used the armies to crush rebellions and slave uprisings, often making soldiers slaughter their own people. Loyalty to one's brothers- and sisters-in-arms took precedence over the family with whom you grew up.

At every turn, the Shan'iatu destroyed the tribes and their traditions. The Nameless Gods replaced any worshiped by the people of the Black Land. Their stories died out, the songs fading away like water spilled on the desert sands. Over the course of a few generations, the many peoples of Kemet were swallowed up by Irem. Only faint echoes still survive, buried deep in the memories of Arisen whose families held on to their elders' tales and passed them down at the risk of death.

The Empire Expands

In its hundredth year, the City of Pillars stood as a marvel against the desert sky. Its craft-houses churned out wonders. The sorcerer-priests studied magics to prolong their legacies. However, Irem's masters wanted *more*. The artistic and sorcerous feats to which they aspired required resources beyond what Irem could provide. The alchemists needed precious metals and hard-to-find ingredients. The builders were in danger of exhausting the quarries and begged for stones to shore up tomb walls and erect new palaces. They'd need horses to haul it all.

Thus, the Shan'iatu turned their ambitions toward empire. First, they looked to the south, sending Irem's armies to conquer the tribes on the outskirts of Kemet. When they came marching across the sands, the people they encountered had no strategies to counter such a force — this kind of warfare was utterly alien to them, much like the Shan'iatu's appearance had been a century before.

Some tribes put up a meager resistance, but the Iremites' weapons always proved superior. Even the plainest swords were sturdier than anything the people of Kemet could craft. Many troops carried swords enhanced by Irem's guilds: the bronze had been alchemically strengthened, the

edges alight with spells that prevented them from growing dull. Not all soldiers wielded blades; some were armed instead with spells woven into their robes, others held spirits bound in amulets, ready to unleash upon their enemies.

The army swept onward like a scarab swarm, taking every inch of land they marched upon for Irem. They seized resources and shipped them to the sorcerer-priests in the City of Pillars, but demand only increased. From their captives among the defeated peoples, those deemed useful were sent back to Irem to join a craft-house or to serve as slaves. The legions absorbed the sturdiest fighters into their ranks. Even among those the sorcerer-priests rejected, the Nameless Empire was anything but wasteful: Those who had no use as slaves or soldiers were killed, and their bodies sent back to the necromancers.

Within a year, the Nameless Empire's armies had conquered the lands that would become Libya to the west and Ethiopia to the south. Militias that tried to make a stand fell quickly beneath Irem's disciplined troops. They were as implacable as the city's grand pillars, as swift-moving as the winds of the khamsin. The Nameless Empire continued its conquest, unstoppable and undefeated.

Until it set its sights to the northeast, to the land of Canaan.

Canaan maintained its own legions of professional soldiers, the *Ki-En-Gir*, who had heeded the warnings of Irem's relentless campaign well in advance. Seers and wizards aided the *Ki-En-Gir*, predicting the Iremite army's maneuvers and giving the defending force time to plan their counterattacks. While they weren't sorcerers on the same level as the Shan'iatu, the seers' lesser magics were still costly for Irem. Feeding and outfitting an army was expensive. Only the necromancers profited, from the steady supply of the dead streaming back to the city.

After months of fighting, the nations reached a stalemate during the siege of Ubar, the *Ki-En-Gir's* citadel. Rather than continue bleeding away troops and funds in indecisive battles, generals from every legion in the Nameless Empire's eastern force met with Canaan's leaders. None knew what transpired in that cursed place where the veil between worlds was thin as gossamer. Perhaps the two sides attempted to forge a truce, only to have talks break down. Maybe the *Ki-En-Gir* laid a trap, intending to hold Irem's generals hostage or slay them outright. Or it might have been that Irem never planned to make peace at all, seeking an opportunity to enter their enemy's stronghold so the sorcerer-priests could unleash their assault where it would do the most damage.

In the end, Shan'iatu sorcery destroyed Ubar utterly. The citadel crumbled until nothing but rubble and ash remained. The sorcerer-priests emerged from the ruins unscathed; most of the wizards who had stymied them perished in the onslaught. Irem's generals sent the unfortunate survivors back to the City of Pillars, where they were delivered into the necromancer's eager hands and never seen again.

Ubar's fall marked the end of Canaan's resistance. Though Irem's scribes dubbed the accords The Pact of Ubar, the *Ki-En-Gir* had little power to negotiate. They could accept the Nameless Empire's demands and approve their proposed trade routes, or suffer the same fate as their seers. The Pact sent goods and precious materials flooding back to Irem. With the east finally open to them, The Nameless Empire acquired horses and slaves and other riches. The necromancers acquired, eventually, those cowardly seers who foretold Ubar's fate and attempted to escape.

The Golden Age and Irem's Fall

Resources poured into the City of Pillars. The Shan'iatu devoted many of them to making the grand city even more sublime. More pillars rose from the sands to tower over Irem and its new inhabitants. As the empire stripped its outlying territories of food and material goods, new temples rose in the capital. Its population swelled with immigrants and captives — more artisans for the craft-houses, more laborers to build their monuments.

The Nameless Empire entered into a Golden Age, and the sorcerer-priests, never content with their utter control over their subjects in this life, turned their sights on ensuring their servants would attend to them in the next. They envied the Judges' position in Duat, and wanted their power and authority for themselves. After all that they'd done for the Nameless Gods, didn't they deserve such a reward in death? If mortal souls could ascend to A'aru, didn't the Priests of Duat who'd guided them on the proper paths warrant the same? Yet, the Shan'iatu *weren't* human. In place of souls, they possessed *temakh*, which barred them from the afterlife they so desired.

If the gods wouldn't grant them immortality, the necromancers decided, they'd find a way to take it for themselves. They sacrificed countless captives and slaves in their experiments. Victims of failed rites suffered unspeakable horrors. Their servants' agony mattered little to the necromancers. What did temporary pain matter, if it opened the door to eternal life? Each time they grew a little closer to thwarting death, until, finally, the Shan'iatu perfected the ritual that would become the Rite of Return. Some whisper that the Rite was truly an act of rebellion, that its ultimate goal would force the Judges from their thrones in Duat and seat the Shan'iatu in their places. Whether they succeeded or not, no Arisen knows.

Though mummies have attempted to piece together the fate of Irem in its waning years, the century or so during which the Rite of Return was performed is where most Arisen memories of the Nameless Empire end. While some Arisen attempt to gather their fellow Deathless' recollections and piece them together into a single narrative, the results are far from cohesive and often contradictory. Memory is unreliable, and what few Iremite texts and fragments remain rarely leave an Arisen's tomb... if they haven't been sacrificed to the Judges in Duat.

When the first Sothic Turn woke the Arisen from their slumber, the world they emerged into was a faint echo of the one they'd known. Those whose bodies remained in Egypt found a country resembling Irem, but significantly changed. To the mummies, it seemed like a pale copy, as though an inferior hand had tried imitating a masterwork. They recognized architectural styles, and spoke a language that evoked Irem's tongue. Even the gods stood in the Nameless Empire's shadow: Osiris reigned in place of Azar. The Nameless gods had been named, their rites led by priests who were poor successors to the sorcerer-priests of lost Irem.

The Shan'iatu, who the Arisen expected to serve upon waking, were nowhere to be found. If they'd gone ahead to Duat, there was no sign. They left no instructions, no clues for the Deathless to follow. What had befallen the Nameless Empire? Why wasn't it flourishing in this new era? Had someone betrayed the City of Pillars, or had it simply faded away? No one living could tell them. No one living remembered.

Every turn of the Sothic Wheel carries the Arisen farther and farther away from Lost Irem, though they can still see ripples of its influence spreading out to cover the world. Some Deathless devote their Descents toward discovering the Nameless Empire's fate. They sponsor archaeological digs, or direct their cults to search for mentions of the City of Pillars in ancient

texts. Others look forward rather than back. They accept that Irem, as it once was, is lost forever. Instead they aim to build a *new* Irem, creating a modern-day empire in the image of the old.

The Guilds

If civilization is the masterwork of Irem, then its guilds guide the world's viral structures, direct its dreary pomp in ways imperceptible, invisible, vital to those humans who mistakenly claim control over it. These specialized factions of bourgeois guardians once served the Shan'iatu directly, appendages dedicated to sustaining social standards of class and progress, a pentagonal pyramid holding aloft the golden rays of the Nameless Empire. Since the Rite of Return, they still serve, albeit surreptitiously through eternity and for new empires — vague mirrors of Irem, mirages of the City of Pillars. From guildhalls of engraved stone to those secured in subterranean nuclear bunkers, these sects grow and evolve to this day. Ancient and archaic they are, but the guilds, much like the epithet of Irem's most renowned monuments, are truly deathless.

Evolving Structures

Irem is gone. Long live Irem.

Occultists scroll through rituals on touchscreen displays and electronic tablets engraved in pixels of new tongues, embossed within liquid crystal screens. The first Alchemists constructed the sacred formulas now running through Swiss digital servers. Pyramids laid by Irem's Architects are replicated in steel and glass and filled to the brim with mortal relics. Iremite political theories pave the way to an Earth leveraged by trade agreements and held hostage by thermonuclear proliferation. The Information Age has come, mortal minds still falter to grasp it, and the Deathless postulate whether anyone can.

Spears and Submachine Guns

The Maa-Kep believe they can keep control. All that is required is for the Arisen to hold true to their purpose, and the Junta wields many ultramodern tools to ensure this adhesion to Irem's path. Cults keep tabs on potential threats using GPS tracking and satellite surveillance from an old police dispatch center, sparking concern among some nomes, and total outrage among others. Hackers and identity thieves infiltrate Alchemist infrastructures searching for blasphemous transactions and wield power enough to bring cruise missiles down upon more hardened heretics.

Shareware Rituals

If Gutenberg's printing press shook the Lorekeepers' columns, proliferation of word-processors brought them crumbling down. Nowhere has the modern era been more felt than in the guildhalls of the Sesha-Hebsu, forced to reconstruct their written monuments on the information superhighway. Still, the Word accelerates through the infrastructures of the world. Some within the guild embrace the technology for its ability to spread information and power with little more than an instant message or email chain, all stored in libraries no longer susceptible to the fires of Alexandria. Others lock their servers in secured vaults or within the confines of their tombs, seeing the easy transfer of rebellious ideas as a pathway to heresy. The Scribes all agree on the hard truth of history, however — no matter the records engraved or scripted, mortal memory turns everything to legendary exaggeration, or forgets it all in exchange for lies, agreed upon.

Digital Gold and Silver

Money rules all mortals. Even now, ducats of plastic dominate once sanctified solstices, and digital markets ebb and flow in accordance with plans and prospects too nuanced for most humans to comprehend. The Alchemists do, however, and use pooled resources to thrust their dealings into a worldwide economy unready for their emergence. The Mesen-Nebu manipulate financial markets, coordinating flux and bubble-burstings as dissidents cry foul about how this superfluous misplacement of assets is careless at best, or abhorrent blasphemy at worst. If the Shan'iatu's children cannot wield the power of money to enact the objectives of Irem, the mortals claiming mastery over the world will surely relegate those goals to the dimly lit corners of mythology. This cannot come to pass.

From Limestone to Steel

Towers of steel and stone dominate skylines once deserted, and the Tef-Aabhi struggle to remedy this obfuscation of Sekhem and the Lifeweb with gaudy mortal monoliths. Skyscraping financial institutions please the Architect in the boardroom, but most Mesen-Nebu find the littered Roman arches and corporate coffee chains in the background sickening, and seek relocation. The capital city of the United States provides them with some assurance that the sacred geometry of ancient architecture still emanates from what they perceive as New Rome, but even the sacred Rubicon was crossed, and the Appian Way crumbles where global tourist organizations are unwilling to repair it. Where will the Geomancers go next?

The Unchanging Shadow

The Necromancers require no evolution. Their dedication to knowledge of the Underworld is eternal, beyond the whims of whichever mortal civilizations claim false hegemony over small scraps of earth. At least, that's how the traditionalists see it. Irem's theology is quite literal, and only those who wish to abuse it for personal gain would see it warped. Still, cults strategically plant medical examiners in modern hospitals and morgues for easy notification on especially gruesome or monstrous attacks, and swathes of audio engineers in their employ listen intently to frequencies of white noise for any disruption from beyond the veil. Some see this technology as a tool to be wielded just as the wand or scepter, while others see it as the end to justified means.

Conformity and Rebellion, Collapse and War

The Arisen are powerful, but most of the work maintaining Iremite infrastructure falls to their cults. The flow of humanity waxes and wanes like the Nile floods, so it's no wonder the traditions of Irem take as many forms as there are mortal factions interpreting them. Who keeps the guilds on the right path? The nomes are the first line of defense in dealing with heresies, but when the best laid plans collapse under crumbling columns, apocalyptic Judges manifest in material reality, and the world is altered. Toads rain from the sky, winter turns to summer overnight, and cemeteries become empty fields pockmarked with empty graves and overturned headstones. Knowing what's coming for them, rebellious Arisen grow nervous, and heretics react dangerously in the face of their worst fears.

The guilds are consistent in their dealings, but conflicts between them are not unheard of, especially during Sothic Turns. Mummies form intense rivalries, and competitive scrambles for power often turn to violent ordeals across millennia. Arisen awaken at war, or thrust into peacekeeping missions to prevent such conflicts. Alternatively, they might find themselves alone, their cult completely devastated by the enemies currently breaching the tomb.

The Apotheotic Movement

On the surface, the guilds' most threatening enemy is the loosening of the yoke around Arisen necks, the breaking of bonds between Deathless and the Judges of Irem — the abandonment of their purpose for freedom and the fabled destiny of godhood.

But this is no true threat. It is part of the formula. As civilizations rise, they too attempt to achieve godhood, a placement in the eye of the pyramid, to gaze over all the world and aim it towards new destinies. By the time a rebellious mummy unfolds its scroll of memories, it realizes at the end of its search for self-deification and liberation that civilization has been further built onto the foundations laid by Irem, and they have merely once again served their purpose as an integer in the formula. These memories vanish at the end of the Descent, leaving only moments for the mummy to ponder its tragic fate.

Ties Through Eternity

How do guilds maintain themselves when their chief members slumber while the world evolves, grows, collapses, dies, and evolves all over again? Once they've begun their Descent, how do Arisen recognize their guild companions, or those mummies from other guilds? Spotting relics with kepher is a fine strategy to discovering nearby peers, but more nuanced signals and rites among the Arisen emerge and evolve through time. Some cults maintain more than one tomb, staying alert to guildhall locations in the eventuality that masters must be summoned. Even fickle memory ensures the softest word, the smallest signet, the slightest glance at Sothis in the sky are enough to bring forth rushing memories where before there were none.

Amulets of Ink and Stone

With some help from their cults, and through the vague blur of distant and fading memory, the Maa-Kep rediscover those in their caste using symbols strung around their necks, insignias pinned to collars, and press passes dangling from lanyards. Their chests are tattooed with amulets of ink, and enormous rings bear gaudy signets upon their fingers. These badges are not always so blatant — the senator's campaign manager decorates letterheads with bygone symbols, and the mob boss trusts their advisors to decorate illicit crates with similar icons. Once found, the symbols reunite the Maa-Kep, and once reunited, they see their cosmic rising as a sign that the world needs a hard redirection — a task only the trusted Dapifers can accomplish.

Call of the Geomancers

The Tef-Aabhi deliver omens and intricate signs to their members, often on a large scale. Cultists scan satellite imagery displaying strange geometrical formations absent only a week prior. Meetings are called and merets formed in sacred causeways the Tef-Aabhi just feel *drawn* to, relics pique Arisen senses from hiding places among the marble pillars and reaching obelisks of Washington D.C. Provoking graffiti appears overnight, a signal to all merets in the surrounding area — something is amiss, a gathering is needed. Signposts along trade networks paved by ancient New Pharaohs still direct those in the know to chapter houses where relics need returning, or occult excursions require planning. When the Geomancers want to get your attention, the world takes notice whether they know it or not.

Golden Chains and Credit Unions

Time passes and the products change, but the formulas remain the same. Builders raise new and brilliant structures from the same raw materials, fused and conjured in innovative ways. New objectives present themselves with every Descent, no matter the guild, but they always demand financial backing. Modern economic and alchemical structures make it easy to deposit funds into rogue accounts, sometimes as a simple message saying they are ready to invest, or requiring a rival's removal from the picture before doing so. Scrolling stock ticker abbreviations awaken something in Mesen-Nebu mummies seeking their guild, and blackjack dealers on the Luxor's casino floor pass chips encoded with vital information leading to the tomb in the vault.

Codes and Cryptograms

Old habits die hard, and the Sesha-Hebsu have always used archaic passcodes, ciphers, and riddles to deliver information or introduce themselves to their own kind. Tattooed glyphs run along forearms and decorate the corners of the eyes while newspaper cryptoquips and crosswords alert nomes to occurrences. Runestones stand as ancient path markers guiding the way to frozen burial chambers where warm hearths might be lit, resurrection rites conducted. Keep wary eyes on the linguistics professor's letter, the braille letterhead, or the sheet music dotted with telling melodies. When the Scribes call, you'll have to be paying attention.

Eternal Rites

The priests of Irem display their allegiances without color or emotional interpretation. Ghosts and spirits summoned during messenger rites deliver to the recently the details of this Descent's mission to the awakened mummy. Guild prophet ceremonies reach out to servants in dreams and visions, alerting the Sadikh or sorcerers to an urgently required awakening. Visions of Neter-Khertet are conjured in corporate Russian headquarters and manors on the Thames alike, delegating authority to nearby Necromancers, or calling all to attention in times of dire need.

Why do Merets form?

Few causes to form merets are more potent than a common enemy. Cults summon aid from others during emergencies, and form lasting pacts against Lifeless onslaughts — two Deathless are always better than one. When allied mummies rise in their powerful forms, they are guided toward problems in need of obliteration, and consistent threats lead Arisen to entomb themselves in groups of three to five, or more — powerful squads prepared for anything. Small parties become hardy legions, companionships after epochs of service in Persian cavalry brigades, Roman rank and file, Amkhat hunting parties, or SWAT teams breaching Shuankhsen tombs with devastating modern charges.

The bonds of the Arisen are difficult to fray once formed, no matter the guild, and when the members of a meret Descend together, they awaken feeling an immediate bond of shared trial and trauma.

The Rite of Return

I don't remember much. In fact, I'm not sure why I'm here or who I am. Who I was. My purpose is clear, and unearthly powers pull me in the direction of the Judges and their divine plans. But my memory of how I became what I am now is fractured. If I close my eyes and listen to what is left of my previous life, I can hear a man's laughter, feel his hands around my waist, wind in my hair. The voice of a child, no older than eight or nine giggles in the background. Was I in love?

If I was this happy, why did it have to change? I only remember the trance-inducing medicines they gave me right before changing. The blades shimmering in the light of torches, displayed on a stone table beside my bed. The smell of dampness and the air so thick I felt as if suffocating. When I woke up, I was the way I am now. A monster, some call me. I prefer the term 'Deathless' though, as that is exactly what I am. Without rest. Without death. I just am.

After my life was taken from me, I went on a journey no imagination could conjure up. The Underworld, what we have been warned about, learned to fear, that's where I was. Although, it seemed very familiar to what I have always known, just slightly... off. A river ran through mounts of sand, but its water was crimson, staining the sand at its banks. There was no end in sight. No sun. No moon. Darkness, but I could still see. I felt as if the Judges wanted me to walk and search, as if I was being guided without knowing why. For reasons unknown, the next part of my journey is too discordant for me to recall, but I know it involved torture and trial, and each of my organs — my Pillars — were tested. Finally, I stood before the Judges. Eyes from beings beyond any nightmare observed me, judged me, sized me up, and by then I knew exactly what I was and an eternity serving their words followed.

Now I am awake in a world rushing past me. Perhaps I have been awake before, perhaps not. I might wake up before, during, and after this line of time. For I do not follow it in any linear manner. I awake when the Sekhem beckons me and when the Judges command me.

The Call of the Judges

The creation of a Deathless can only be maintained through the sacred Rite of Return, a ritual sending its participant into the depths of Duat to face the deepest parts of their soul, twist it around, split it apart, only to put it together into what becomes the mummy. During the ritual the Judges test and evaluate the Arisen's Ab (heart), Ba (spirit), Ka (essence), Ren (name), and Sheut (shadow). Through their unrelenting powers, the Deathless know what they truly are, which Pillars shape their powers, and to which decree they belong.

Duat is much like the world from which the mortal hails, but utterly different. Rivers twist through grassy landscapes, mountains shoot into unbelievable heights, lakes and mountains share familiarities with what the mortal might already have experienced. At first glance, Duat looks to be an exact copy of the world of the mortals, but travelling through its vast territory, the true nature becomes obvious. Lakes are not full of water, but scorching and bubbling lava. Forest critters are replaced with monstrous cavern deities. Spit-fire snakes and nine-headed jackals await the slight misstep of its visitors. Mountains are impossible to climb, as they are ever-expanding, rivers roar with thick-blooded streams, and there exists no sky, no night, nor day. Time is no longer a factor, and this is often the first step for the mummy to understand their existence. Time as they knew it ceases to exist. Now there are only the whims of the Judges.

This visit to Duat takes place the first time the mummy was slain as a mortal, and every subsequent time they Descend, they each journey and experience differs.

As the mummy wanders through Duat, their overwhelming feelings are of fear and despair. They do not know where they are, where they go, and what their purpose is, but they feel an increasing power with every step of the way. Sekhem, the power of the life, the source of existence, courses toward them. They feel stronger after every trial, more intellectually brilliant after every torment, filled with wits and alertness with every challenge they conquer. Sekhem surges through their entire being, and suddenly they stand in control of life itself. This is the moment they know their

Pillars and decree. This is when they stop in front of the Judges, and when their true nature shines through and becomes visible. As the rite completes, the world once again turns dark.

When they open their eyes again, it will be in another place, another time, another body, but mind and soul remain similar, but altered. They can no longer remember what they once were and, to begin with, struggle with what they are. However, as in Duat, the mummy's Sekhem and the Judges direct. The Arisen slowly regains Memory and understands their calling, but must once again battle the flow of time belonging to the world of mortals. As time passes, they gradually lose their powers, unless fed through relics and vestiges. They may have been given a chance of life, but the world takes no consideration to what they are or their goals. It simply continues in linear time, and the mummy must either accept the world's will or alter the world around them.

As the mummy faces death and resurrection many times during its existence, Duat slowly grows grimmer and strays further away from its similarities with the mortal world. Every return sees a new alien vista, a fresh terrible danger, and a new feeling of release and freedom come the awakening.

The Five Pillars

Although the power of the five Pillars is represented in the Deathless, some are stronger and more meaningful to the mummy than others. Throughout the Arisen's journey in Duat, they gift their soul to the Judges, allowing those gods to bend and shape it into its full potential and return it to them in the shape of powerful Sekhem. By then, the mummy knows which of the five Pillars is their decree. In order to determine the faith of the Deathless, the Judges create a trial or challenge representing each Pillar. Depending on their success, the five Pillars are set.

The First Descent

The first assessment of each mummy happened thousands of years ago, and for most Arisen, they only have their decree determined that single time. It can still be roleplayed however, either through flashback, or the non-linearity of the **Mummy: The Curse** storyline. A player might wish to recount how their decree was first inscribed on their mummy's soul, or a Storyteller could take the group through a scene for each character, establishing why one was deemed fit for one decree, and why one was awarded another. Alternatively, the reasons behind why a mummy is of a certain decree can be left mysterious.

Ab (Heart)

The heart is one of the body's most powerful organs, constantly providing its host with nutrients and oxygen. When a person feels lust, hatred, fear, and joy, the heart beats with increased tempo, and responds to emotions and desires. The Deathless followers of this decree are therefore in touch with their emotions and feelings, and still in their Deathless bodies, yearn to care for something or someone. The Judges might place vivid recreations of the mummy's mortal family or friends in distress over their death, or form simulacra to display their sacrifice over and over, carefully watching their reaction. Is the mummy responding emotionally? Are they allowing their feelings room to develop? Or are they retracting, sheltering themselves for what might be potential pain of loss? The Judges set up trials of horrific nature, forcing the mummy to choose between the lives of two loved ones, to murder a brother over a sister, or even a child over the

other. They evoke false feelings of hope and happiness just to rip it away in the same instance, watching the Deathless cry out in distress. They make the mummy relive memories of torture, trauma, and even joy just to have them experience the loss of not having that happiness any longer. Ab can also come in the shape of a creature living in Duat, suddenly falling ill and in need of aid. Here, the Judges observe if the mummy comes to the animal's aid. If they respond to these trials, it often means this Pillar is strong within them or this is their decree.

Ba (Spirit)

Upon the Rite of Return, and transformation from mortal to Deathless, certain traits normally used to define personality, like memory and mortality, are removed. However, the spirit is never truly removed, only reworked. This part of a being defines who they are and how they carry themselves. It also plays a part in what codes and morals they live by. The Judges test their subject's ability to stay true to themselves and trust their own intuition in every situation they face. When surrounded by hundreds of hellish beasts spawned from the depths of Duat, will they stand and fight, use tactics, or flee? When illusions of ghoulish hands breaking through the crust of the earth to pull them into a black abyss appear, will the mummy let common sense keep them calm or panic? An outgoing character who loves to be the center of attention might suddenly find themselves at a revel with none of their friends or family. Here the Judges observe if the Deathless' initial reaction is to be who they truly are. An introvert character could be placed in the exact same position and observed.

Ka (Essence)

Essence is what pushes anyone to take the next step. It is the base of motivation and drive, and without it, stagnation is inevitable. Every living being needs to develop in order to survive in a world otherwise moving on without them. The Judges are aware some Deathless are less in touch with Ka than others, but they all know the importance of Ka. Mummies with this decree are excellent vessel hunters, as they do not let anything disturb their path to their goal, but they also run the risk of single-mindedness and unnecessary stubbornness. A soon-to-be Deathless' Ka is assessed in straight-forward, hands-on tasks. She might have to pass through a mountain pass guarded by a slumbering serpent with the head of a jackal to complete her journey. The serpent might task her with ridiculous or mind-numbing disciplines, like digging a hole and filling it up again or counting thousands of pebbles for no reason. The task inevitably takes a dark twist, as the mummy realizes as children start screaming for help from the deep hole, and the Arisen slowly becomes aware they're filling a mass grave. Depending on how they complete their task, the Judges will know the power of the mummy's Ka. If they complete the task with gumption, their Ka is strong. If they give up or refuse to complete the task, it will be one of the mummy's weaker Pillars.

Ren (Name)

The power of Ren is based in knowledge and wisdom. Deathless with this decree know the best way to gain control over yourself, the world, and the Sekhem within it, is by obtaining knowledge about what you pursue. Unlike Deathless with a Ka decree, Usheb get stuck in their own ways once they find something to believe in or investigate in an obsessive manner. Once they do fascinate themselves with a certain facet of life, they become pure experts on their subject. Whatever information exists, they constantly strive to find. As a part of the Rite, the Deathless' Ren is assessed, often by presenting the mummy with different opportunities for learning. Books and scrolls explaining what Duat is, what creatures can be found within it, and

most importantly the Book of Death and Scroll of Ages are presented on their journey. The Book of Death is the only known guide to Duat. The books can be found in libraries of scrolls and deep grave chambers, with some texts presented as artwork on sarchophagi and tomb walls. A Deathless' Ren can also be determined by how they interact with the creatures of Duat. Does the mummy ask questions and act with curiosity toward them in order to gain knowledge on the situation or do they miss the opportunity?

Sheut (Shadow)

Deathless with this decree separate themselves from the rest of their peers. Their focus is predominantly on rational thinking and embracing the shadows everything in life casts. Instead of denying the existence of malice and hardship or pretending like it does not affect them, they understand the darkness. Much like the Pillar of Ren, they seek to understand and explore what balances out goodness. Their frankness and nihilistic view on life is not welcomed, and therefore these Deathless spend much of their existence alone. However, they exude immense amounts of vigilance and stamina, as they embrace what is feared and thus take control over it. The Judges present the mummy with ethical dilemmas where they are faced with choosing a route based on emotion and morals, or a route based on logical thinking and practical interaction. A mummy might face a dilemma where they either have to save themselves or a group of innocents or even their family. The Arisen might stumble upon a person lying on the ground with wounds they know will kill him, but he begs the mummy to take him along and save him. The mummy's pragmatism and emotional response are evaluated and play a substantial part in this Pillar.

The Rite of Return when Arisen

The Rite of Return reoccurs several times during a mummy's lifespan, and both the journey through Duat and the purpose of existence in the mortal world changes. The Judges reassess the pillars already given to the mummy during their last Rite of Return, and determine whether the pillars still match with who the mummy is and what their purpose will be. Therefore, the pillars can shift and change every Rite of Return, changing the mummy's way of thinking and living. If during the last awakening a mummy had Ba as his main pillar, and used this successfully to obtain their goal, the Judges may decide this pillar now functions as a secondary pillar to a new pillar, Ka.

Depending on the mummy's power and the Judge's faith, they can also request certain Pillars and convince the Judges they feel stronger for one Pillar than the other. Ultimately, it is up to the Judges to decide how the mummy returns to the world. Changing Pillars can act as yet another confusion in a mummy's awakening, since their entire identity, which they barely know to begin with, has been shifted. If the Judges provide the Deathless with the same Pillar as the last Rite of Return, the mummy may have an easier time gaining memory, but will not gain the benefit of having experienced the influence of several different Pillars.

The Sothic Turn

Both the living and the dead have been fascinated by and dependent on the alignment of stars and planets. Time as we know it was designed after the movement of the cosmos, and the sorcerer-priests quickly grew to understand the Sothic Turn, the wheel of time and change, played part in Deathless awakening. Although they follow the general Sothic Turn, all mummies

waking when Sothis is in alignment, mummies also have their own inner beckoning. The Judges can call upon them and return them to life if they have a certain goal or purpose for the mummy to accomplish. Some Judges might have a task in mind, like retrieving a certain relic, while others want to see their servant arise because they believe they are more useful walking on Earth than dormant in a tomb or grave. Whereas the greater Sothic Turn follows the star Sirius, a mummy's personal Descent is determined by the constellation of their Judges' decree. The Judges do not harbor unlimited Sekhem to awaken mummies when they please, but have to await the energies of the world and cosmos to provide them with sufficient power. Deathless of the various Decrees are commonly awakened by a Judge in the time of year where their decree's constellation is the most prominent.

Orion (Ab): January to March

Lepus (Ba): March to May

Serpens (Ka): May to July

Lyra (Ren): July to October

Cetus (Sheut): October to December

The most recent Sothic Turn occurred in 2012 CE. Mummies awoke, many in a fury and fueled by frustration over their remains and sacred items meant as sacrifices to the Judges suddenly appearing in museums. Several Deathless crawled from tombs they were displayed in, breaking through glass cages, setting off alarms and killing security personnel. Their sudden awakening forced already integrated Deathless to make up cover stories of violent robberies in several mummy exhibitions throughout the world. Other Deathless awoke on archeologists' examining tables, destroying laboratories and valuable equipment in rage and confusion.

Since the most recent Sothic Turn, Deathless have had time to experience and gain an understanding of the world in which they now operate. While some enjoy its fast pace and pulsating development, other mummies feel as if they are falling behind. They regress into their own guilds, with creatures they know and can trust, instead of engaging with the world. This grants them a tighter bond with the world of the Deathless but detaches them from the mortal world. Balance is important for the Deathless to exist in both worlds successfully. To gain this balance, most mummies form cults that might act as guides.

Most newly awakened modern mummies do not comprehend their actions can be caught on video and shared with the world within minutes. Their guilds and their cult teach them to act carefully, and to remember their presence is best left unknown. The promise of fame and fortune presented through an interconnected world is as attractive to mummies as it is for humans, and some Deathless exploit the media without any regard for the consequences. They know a good way to track relics and artifacts is through engaging with a community, especially passionate young mortals. Other mummies sit as the CEOs of large, progressive companies based on everything from green, sustainable energy to successful haute couture empires. Most mummies put their mark on the world, and engage with its inhabitants to some degree, but others hide, disappearing into nothingness and letting their fears overpower their purpose.

Awakenings and Descents

The lifespan of a mummy is determined by the Judges, the mummy's decisions and actions, the world surrounding it, and if it succeeds in its calling. The Sothic Turn might call them from their

sleep, without any immediate purpose, and the Judges may decide on the awakening of the Deathless with one goal in mind. Already established cults can, through occult rituals, call upon the mummy, and unknowing disturbances of a mummy's tomb shake its soul into awakening. But through time, and especially with accumulated knowledge about other Deathless, mummies become aware of other methods of achieving the awakening or Descent.

The Awakening

You first hear the slight creak of a wooden hinge. A beam of warm light beckons your eyes to open, and soon after, you regain your power of movement. It does not take long, but while you lie there, it seems eternities pass before you go from flexing a couple of fingers to moving your arms, legs, and head. The world has not changed in your tomb. It is as when you left it last. Every bone, every wrinkle of skin, each fingernail and straw of hair suddenly rush full of life, and you feel as if power is your plaything. Sekhem forces every vein and cell back to movement, and you face a half-circle of mortals stopping their chant. Miniature candles placed around your sarcophagus dance in the light breeze from the open door down the hall. Your first instincts are fueled by animalistic urges and the pure energy from the Judges, but you manage to hold back from destroying the nervous cult. You are awakened, not alive, but fueled by the source of life itself. You are as powerful as you ever will be.

A newly awakened mummy is unaware of what it was and what it accomplished in previous lifespans, but it remembers in a blur of confused memories how it came to be and its journey through Duat. Although removed from what once defined it, the Judges burn the birth of the mummy into its Memory. This serves as a constant reminder of where it came from and what its true purpose is. The memory of Duat serves as a traumatic shadow always lurking over the Deathless, which some nevertheless treat as a proud and epic journey.

The Call of the Cult

The mummy's cult is a valuable factor during the Descent and for the awakening. It can, with preparation and the right equipment, call upon the Judges to bring a Deathless back to existence. This means the cult needs to gather information about the mummy, its decree, and what constellation it falls under. They need vessels containing Sekhem, and enough to pull the mummy from its dormant state, while also successfully calling the attention of the Judges. This can be done through dark rituals and necromancy, often described in ancient scrolls and writings. An appointed leader or priest of the cult must be present at the summoning and carry out the reading of the spell.

Some cults have allocated certain sites where they know Sekhem is powerful. This is often in or near places of great historic importance, like the basements of museums, sites of historic human slaughter, well-kept historic buildings, castle ruins, or old monasteries. If the cult manages to keep their site undisturbed, they succeed in caging the Sekhem for when they want to awaken their Deathless.

Disturbances

A mummy's resting-place often acts as a sight for tourists visiting ruins, school classes in museums, archeologists on the hunt for relics, and even journalists or TV show hosts looking for the next big story. Graverobbers occasionally make their way into catacombs they quickly regret entering. Even unknowing mortals, who did not pursue the hunt of the mummy, sometimes land in the hands of Deathless, never to escape again. In rare instances, something binds a mummy so

deeply to its Descent that mere disturbance will not rouse them. Sesha-Hebsu record how the Arisen named the Urfader, found by a peat digger in a bog outside a sleepy town, did not awake immediately even as he received a chop to the shoulder by the peat digger's shovel. The guild now protect his body for the time he does awake, as they have many questions. Regardless, countless examples of disturbed mummies awakening in a fury of wrath exist, and under normal circumstances, the disturbing party meets their demise. It is not uncommon for a cult to find its Deathless master with the body of a graverobber on top of it, or a group of scientists laying in broken heaps.

The Sarcophagus Text

This rare type of awakening is the only proven method outside of the Sothic Turn to wake a mummy without generating a bestial and dangerous physical reaction. When put to rest, Deathless — mainly those of the Sesha-Hebsu — sometimes carve hieroglyphs into the walls of their coffin, just as was painted there during the mummification process. Duat was not seen as a place of fear nor punishment, but a plane everyone must travel in order to receive peaceful rest or reincarnation. Therefore, a guide drawn in hieroglyphs was provided on the inside of the coffin, meticulously carved and painted to perfection. The Deathless do not remember the carvings, as she is already on her way to Duat and entering another state of being, but cultists or mortals who know the words and can speak them in Iremic (or Archaic or Old Egyptian) summon the mummy to a restful awakening.

What makes this awakening rare, is the mummy normally awakens from disturbances before the summoner gets around to read. Some rituals help the mortal create as little disturbance as possible, but it isn't a guarantee, and he will often risk his life performing the ritual. As the mummy awakens, it will be able to read the text on the interior of its coffin or tomb. The words will remind her she is not in danger and her awakening is performed in a controlled environment. This prevents her from reacting with fear and ferociousness, instead sparking a calm and collected awakening.

Necromancy

Arisen are creatures bound by potent death magic to fall and rise, again and again, with similar death magics tugging or tweaking something of their Sekhem into awakening. If necromantic rituals, bloodshed, or suffering on a grand scale is performed near a mummy's resting place, this sparks an awakening. A slaughter awakens the mummy since it was what made it Deathless in the first place, picking at deep wounds and relighting the fires of anguish and pain.

Mummies awoken through practice of necromantic arts or acts are Arisen at their most furious. Even cultists and fellow mummies aren't exempt from the mummy waking with the taste of blood and the smell of death surrounding them, taking them at least the duration of a scene to regain a measure of lucidity.

The Descent

When the awakening is successful, and the Deathless once again stands solidly on their feet, a countdown immediately starts. Despite their hazy beginning, where they barely remember what they are, the mummy is fully aware of the purpose bestowed upon their person. Even if the cult summoning them or the mortal disturbing them is not, the Deathless begins to pursue what they believe they were awakened to do. If not given a direction, the mummy's Sekhem will be powerful enough to guide them in the direction they need to head, whether to reform their meret,

find their cult, or protect a nearby relic in danger. A cult might have summoned them hundreds of miles away without purpose, perhaps in desperation or an emergency situation. Although they are not present near the mummy, they will know the general direction of where they need to go.

If following the paths of the Judges and successfully pursuing what they were awakened to do, the Judges grant the mummy Sekhem enough to survive and complete their task. This can take everything from months to decades, but as long as they are playing an active part in their own task, they will not feel the cold breath of the Descent upon their back. What they can gather through relics and vestiges is up to the mummy, and can make them even stronger and more powerful in an addictive manner.

The Deathless is not forced to pursue his calling. They can refuse to perform their tasks but soon realize the Sekhem and source of life washes away rapidly. They need to seek Sekhem from other mediums, and this will primarily be from powerful relics, and sometimes other mummies. These sources don't have to be hidden away in treasure chests or highly guarded chambers (although this often indicates the item is valuable and contains potent quantities of Sekhem) but can be anything from buildings to jewelry, as long as it contains Sekhem. An unlife not following the directions of the Judges is not an easy one, but an Arisen gains the power of free will, and some mummies find this more important than any gifts granted by the divine.

Why Am I Here?

Though she might not realize right away what her purpose is and why she is awakened, the Judges always attempt to pull an Arisen's strings — even if they are not the ones to awaken her. A cult might task her with a specific goal, but if the Judges decide her Sekhem-fueled existence is better used for another purpose, the mummy might be torn between two factors. She will not recognize the Judges' manipulations overtly, but she will feel an innate pull toward a certain place or certain task, despite being asked something else by her cult. If she obeys her inner voice, she receives Sekhem or Memory, but this will mean neglecting and possibly angering or losing her cult. If she helps her cult, she will have to constantly fight a pull in another direction and be dependent on the Sekhem the cult grants her for survival. Even if she awakens due to a Sothic Turn, the Judges never let her roam without a direction. They created her for servitude, and have no desire to waste time.

Isolation and Integration

A mummy awakened by disturbances around its resting place or a cult with abusive intent might fear or hate the external factors of the world, while a mummy awakened by a Sothic Turn, by the Judges, or a well-organized and prepared cult sees the world differently. Changing the mindset of a mummy when she is already determined is difficult but not impossible, and an isolated Deathless might change her mind with a cult or guild showing her how to approach the world. A Deathless left by her cult or experiencing trauma might in turn become isolated in a world she does not wish to understand.

Integrated mummies enjoy discovering the world and the living and dead inhabiting it. The Maa-Kep, being the known go-betweens when they're not policing the Arisen, enjoy shepherding a flock of mortals or other mummies. They stay relevant by taking up posts as middle managers, secret-police, and lawyers, and thus need to know and blend into the world they live in. They are also known for letting their rigid internal hierarchy get the better of them and can sometimes destroy themselves through becoming bound to a set regimen or refusing to explore certain

taboos. The Sesha-Hebsu seek knowledge and record history, and although they spend many hours in libraries studying and writing, field work is just as important. Unlike the Maa-Kep, they take up the role as a fly on the wall, in order not to interfere with the natural flow of time. They cannot afford to stay isolated. However, the current era of free will and improving standards of equality does not always comply with their understanding of morality and the laws of the Judges. Members of the Sesha-Hebsu therefore find themselves in awkward and unlucky social interactions and can even attract unwanted attention. The Tef-Aabhi feeds off the importance of heka, a sacred force found in creations and monuments they build. Architecture and great entrepreneurship have always been the main interest of the guild, which requires interaction with the world in which they wish to practice their skills. Their rediscovered interest in creating life from heka requires them to interact and understand the living around them. More isolated Deathless see these guilds' fascination with the world merely as a distraction. They fear these mummies' infatuation with mortals distracts them from the will of the Judges and leads them astray from their goals and paths.

Isolated mummies interact as little with world around them as possible. This might be out of fear and lack of knowledge but can also be because they simply do not care. The benefit of interacting with mortals is not more important than the safety hazard of doing so, and they believe mortals are often more in the way than helpful. They often attract a cult of immortals to run their errands and provide them with Sekhem — some even use force to do so and treat their cultists more as slave labor than partners. Members of the Mesen-Nebu know their status as those Born of Gold. They feel superior to other guilds and indeed mortals. They are experts in their fields, and know how to turn nothing into something of great value, which is important no matter what world or timeline they exist in. They rarely feel a need to interact with outsiders. Outsiders do not harbor the skills in craftsmanship to create wondrous items nor do they know how to utilize them properly. The Su-Menent, much like the Mesen-Nebu, do not see much of a point with integrating in mortal society, but for a very different reason. They favor sorcerer cultists, enjoying their hubristic footfalls into necromancy. The Su-Menent do not feel superiority toward any creature, for they know only the Judges determine who are higher and lesser beings. Several factors lead to their common isolation from mundane mortals. In a world, especially the modern Western civilization, where death and the rituals surrounding it are a great taboo, their practices of guiding and controlling death are not always viewed with acceptance.

Most Deathless do not enjoy speaking of their demise, although they have all, at some point, been through Duat. Members of the Su-Menent come off as emotionally incapable or cold, often not working well in conversations or social interactions. Additionally, their dogmatism is seen as archaic and ignorant in certain societies, especially ones where atheism is a dominating factor. The issue for the Priests is not their unwillingness to interact, but their incapability to do so. However, the lack of interaction provides them with surplus time to perfect their bonds with the Judges and they are often the Deathless other mummies seek if they wish to connect with their spirituality or understand the journey through Duat. Therefore, the Su-Menent hold a significant role in Deathless society. They might not seek to be an active part of it but are irreplaceable to many of their peers.

Cult Partnership

Although the Deathless is a potent creature, she needs the aid of the cult in order to stay relevant and survive. The cult helps the mummy back to life and is often the cause of an awakening. Cultists carry the power of life and death for her, but simultaneously worship her for her

superiority. The cult makes sure the world around the mummy is ready for it, often providing her with shelter and sometimes sources of Sekhem they gathered during her slumber. Cultists also teach her how to act and survive in the current era. Some mummies never gain a cult and have no interest in mortal contacts, and they still manage to survive, but a cult is valuable to nearly all Arisen.

Some Deathless, especially upon their first awakening, create a following on her own initiative, offering them protection. A tactic used by some, is stalking and indoctrinating mortals at their wits end, often recently fired, post-breakup, or in need of a miracle to gain what they truly want. Other mortals are persuaded through the security of having an immortal monster in their back-pocket. As the cult expands and word spreads, the mummy can gain enough reputation for the cults to form by themselves, even if they are not awake. The pure lore and legend of the mummy can sometimes be enough to gain a large cult following without having to lift a finger.

The cult might summon a mummy to fill a certain role or position in better manner than any mortal. Mummies serving their cults might use their abilities of strength as an Olympic athlete or social prowess to run a multi-millionaire company and utilize Affinities to tip the scales of fortune in the cult's favor.

Shared Immortality and the Lifeless

Deathless are not alone in their immortality. Although it takes centuries for a vampire to gain close to the same amount of power as a newly awakened mummy, they are greater in number and exist within a more integrated part of society. They rule entire cities and stand behind the back of world leaders, pulling strings with the flick of a wrist. Much like Deathless, they do need a constant source of sustenance to keep death at bay, but blood is easier to obtain than vessels of Sekhem. Despite all this, in the world of the Arisen, vampires are seen as lesser immortals, some even going as far as calling them false immortals. They have not gone through the depths of Duat or been delegated a divine cause. Vampires are nothing more than overbred rats left to their own demise after the disappearance of their creator. Some mummies dedicate their Descent to hunting down vampires and either overtaking what they have already created, or simply destroying them for their falsehood of existence. They are aware a handful of vampire elders own relics with great sources of Sekhem, and the Deathless intend to take back what truly belong to them. Others utilize vampires as powerful cultists, though a vampire's self-interest requires reciprocity from such a relationship.

Other immortals like Blood Bathers, who gain their immortality through sacrilegious blood rituals are also seen as not only dangerous, but also false in the eyes of the Judges. In turn, other immortals see the benefit of manipulating a newly awakened mummy with immense powers but perhaps a lack of knowledge on how to use them. The benefit to possessing an immortal as a cultist nearly outweighs their selfish hungers. Continuity of service appeals to many an Arisen, if they find they can trust the immortal in question.

The creatures that presents the greatest danger for the Deathless are eerily similar to the Arisen — the Lifeless. Still carrying the anguish and wrath from their past as sacrificial lambs, many seek the Deathless to destroy them. They also have the ability to feed off the Deathless and consume their Sekhem. The Deathless know the Lifeless are a constant threat, and they always have to be aware of their presence. While most mummies remain passive until confronted by them directly, others take it into their own hands to hunt them down and destroy them. If awakened during a Sothic Turn, and not with a set goal by a cult, the Judges might dedicate a

Descent to hunting down the Lifeless. Other mummies find their cults or important relics affected by the Lifeless and decide to hunt them on their own terms.

Memory

One of the most important aspects of life is the ability to store and process information and impressions, both on a daily basis and in the longer term. Memory is invaluable to everything living as well as immortal, and a creature simply cannot develop properly without the ability to learn and adapt from previous experiences. When a Deathless awakes, she has little to no recollection of her previous Descent, her life as a mortal, or how she was laid to rest. The only occurrence standing clear in her mind is her meeting with the Judges in Duat. This is what keeps her grounded, and what keeps her mind set on the task at hand. She knows what she is and what she must do. She can feel the Sekhem pulsating through her body, centering itself around the Pillar that is her decree. But in order to successfully maintain her sanity, regain control over her existence, interact with mortals and the world she is a part of, she must seek to regain what was lost. A mummy who remembers what it was like to be human and *care* has a much easier time of the world.

A part of the function of the guilds at any point in history is to help Arisen figure out what and who they once were. They dig into historical documents, codes, hieroglyphs, and tattoos — whatever links to the awoken mummy — and they frequently host meetings with other Arisen who might have spent time with others to seek similarities. The guilds encourage pilgrimages of self-discovery to seek out what was swept away by time, even with mummies existing across multiple times at once. The true curse of Memory is not what is lost with the lack of it, but slowly growing aware of what one once was. True pain occurs as the mummy slowly realizes what was once hers and she can never again reclaim. Because of the lack of humane thought process upon awakening, some Deathless react violently and destructively. Slowly regaining Memory helps them control their animalistic urges and a form of humanity, by way of remembered mortal identity, but never removes the monstrous acts they've already committed. Sins stick to their minds as a constant reminder of what they truly are.

When I Awoke

My name is something I don't recall. I wanted to start out with at least introducing myself, but I don't know who I am. I know my kind are unlike any other creature in this existence, and I have been told I wield powers unmatched by few. I do remember the feelings I experienced when waking up. It was such a familiar feeling of starting anew, or at least becoming someone else, but the time I last encountered this sensation is still beyond me. There are others like me, who have been through Duat and been tested by the Judges. Although my dominating feeling for now is loneliness, yesterday a group picked me up and told me they meant no harm and wanted to show me the world. Not knowing where else to go, I soon found out they have all been through the same as me, they all started out not knowing what they were. Some are newly awakened, like me, while others can vividly recall other lifetimes and even their days as a living and breathing being. I must admit my envy for them is great, and I seek nothing more than knowing who I was and thus who I am now.

Days and nights consist of confusion. I am learning how to do things I feel as if I should already know. I copy what I see. Other aspects and skills, like using correct terms in the correct time, how to gather a cult following (which is apparently important) and even how to tell jokes in a compelling way, I am being taught by my allocated mentors. I've been told making others laugh

or acting “with charm and confidence” is the cornerstone of developing relationships, and valuable relationships are key to survive. The guild, or as they call themselves, the Maa-Kep, are incredibly helpful, but they do not assist me for free, and I have to fully comprehend their hierarchical structure in order to not become indebted. I do not believe I am Maa-Kep, and so must question whether they are using me. I’m sure some members just think I’m in the way, which, most of the time, is probably true. I am determined to show them my worth.

What is perhaps the most frustrating is this constant pull I feel, baiting me away from my newly-found confidantes. I haven’t told any of the mummies around me yet, but I need to do so soon, as every day I don’t follow this instinct, I feel myself growing weaker. Perhaps this pull is the purpose of my awakening. Perhaps this is where the Judges want me to go.

As I Descend

Time has passed since I last wrote anything down. I’ve simply been busy. Busy learning who I truly am, what I want to be, and who I was. Immortality has, so far, not been easy. My first encounter with what can only be described as a sprouting memory, was when I rediscovered the difference between wrong and right or bad and good. Ethics. Such simple concepts. It comes natural to most; even small children have a sense of what they should and shouldn’t do. For a long time, I didn’t. But a couple of months ago, when walking down the streets in uptown Manhattan, an elderly human had his life taken from him by another of his kind. It was a faster death than I expected, but in a matter of seconds the deep wound in his chest made his heart stop. Here, I truly felt this was wrong. It wasn’t just another instant of knowing through intensive teaching something isn’t right, no, I knew this was wrong. I felt this was wrong. A sick feeling built up inside of me as I struggled to help the human, but it was to no avail. Although I would have preferred the elderly mortal to survive his encounter, I see this experience as the first spark to my human past. Suddenly I remembered seeing something similarly. More precisely, I recall being the one wielding the knife and taking away lives in a previous existence.

What I have discovered, which is quite remarkable and incredibly important, are certain items from the previous times I’ve been alive and the affect they have on me. Items from the old empire, Irem, especially help me regain my lost memory. For example, I have found items related to medicine, like a surgical tool formerly used for circumcision immediately gave me flashbacks of blooded fabric, flasks with alcohol, and deep concentration. Some prosthetics like artificial eyeballs and toes also gave me recollections, as I remembered how to properly attach them and even how to create them from materials like bone and wood. I have begun research into these specific items and hope to find what was my profession soon. This will undoubtedly help me understand how I lived my life as a mortal. Perhaps I was famous! Maybe I had a spouse or children. This fills me with excitement.

Remember that pull I wrote about? It has not disappeared. It was explained to me this is my calling, essentially my purpose. I must admit the thought of someone deciding why I exist and what I should use my Descent for is unappealing, and I would much rather use time rediscovering who I am. Regardless, I find myself on a train as I write this. I’ve grown aware I need to retrieve a certain item, a relic, which holds incredible amounts of Sekhem within it. The Maa-Kep of course were not opposed to the idea of being the owners of such an object, but as I prepared to leave for my journey, I still did not feel prepared to act unsupervised. Therefore, what can probably be seen as the beginning of my own cult is accompanying me on this journey.

As for now, they are only two, but they are here to teach me about their world, which still seems utterly alien to me at times.

What I Became

What I have learned through my fifth year awake on this turn as a Deathless, an immortal, is Memory is not only something you look back in time to gather. Yes, your background, what you have achieved and learned is a developmental must, but what you do with what you have, here and now, is just as important. Because it will turn into new Memory. The world is not just the things that were but the things that are and will be.

I know now what my mortal name was, and I was an embalmer of the Su-Menent. One who took care of the honored part of the burial traditions. I was what is the equivalent of a doctor in today's understanding, although I didn't administer much treatment. My role consisted of ritualistic endeavors and taking care of the things priests present at the ritual didn't want to touch. I was fortunate enough recently to meet one of the individuals who lay across my slab all those years ago, and to be frank, his recollection of me is unpleasant. Apparently, I was too engulfed with work to even care for friends or family, I didn't have a lover, nor did I reproduce. At least, that's what I gleaned from this so-called "Shuankhsen."

When I found this out, I was disappointed in what I was, and decided not to use more time understanding my past. It brought nothing but sorrow and regret. Some mummies use their entire Descent searching for every detail in their previous life, but not me. What I did learn, and what I have used on several occasions, are how to control my newly found powers and gain status within my guild. My cult now consists of eight members, and they have taught me much about the 21st century and its many colors. I have been able to return the favor on many occasions, so our relationship is valuable in both ends.

I set out to complete what the Judges awakened me to do, and I have settled down in Damascus, where I research these ancient objects to the fullest. I want to know how this tool was used by mortals and in turn how it can be used by the Deathless. The Sekhem this object holds is undeniable, which sadly puts me and it in the risk of other creatures' dangerous interests. I have encountered even more Lifeless entities, beings who are like us but harbor no humanity, no thoughts, no morals. They hunt us with the intent of destroying us.

For now, I can say what carelessness an immortal life may provoke can be negated and controlled by the memories of life, and I intend not to make nihilism and nothingness be the base of my existence. Nothing shall control me. Not Sekhem, not Memory, not cults, nor Judges — in this life and others to come.

The Gain and Loss

Memory is not a gift bestowed upon every Deathless or indeed something always pursued. Most are lucky enough to awaken with purpose, with a cult or a guild to guide them in the right direction and to help them regain lost thoughts and identity. These mummies will, as soon as they get a taste of their former selves, strive to find more. They also understand the value in societal participation and why humanity is important. But the Deathless who wake in isolation or without any mortal guidance, will more often than not see the world as dangerous or useless. Ethics do not matter, and humans are merely in the way of the goal set upon them by the Judges.

Gaining Memory can be achieved in several different ways. Some discover their former selves through coincidences, by touching an item once important to them, or speaking with a person

who has resemblance to someone they have met before. It can be anything from a tool reminding them of their occupation, an event so similar to something they have previously experienced, or a person who acts almost exactly like someone from a previous awakening. This makes mummies frequent visitors in museums and collections of ancient relics. Memory can also be gained through a landmark event, awakening something deeply within the mummy, for example a tragedy, a birth, or a death. Something reminding her of what humanity truly is, and the strong emotions usually connected with these events.

Even mummies who, after years, have gathered a substantial knowledge about what they were, run the risk of losing what they have. This can happen if they dedicate their Sekhem to servitude over self-development and examination. This seems counter-intuitive to many mummies, but cynical Arisen correctly assume the Judges want unquestioning demigods as servants; not reflecting Deathless. Deathless also run the risk of losing Memory if attacked and fed upon by a Lifeless, as some are known to feed on Arisen thoughts. Depending on the severity of the attack, they might experience anything from light confusion to large periods of amnesia, where they simply cannot recall what they have done. Some Lifeless are so trained in their skills, they can even leave the mummy unaware of who attacked them and get away with countless assaults.

Living Timelessness

Mummies are unique. The Deathless are never-ending travelers moving alongside other endless creatures, untouched by the ravages of old age. Creatures that fill their ever-stretching existences with whatever new experiences they can to fight off the inevitably growing boredom. The Arisen are transitory; living in the moment alongside mortals who also know the inevitability of the coming darkness, when the light dims and their experiences end. The ever-dwindling but always replenishing lives of mummies make them stand alone from their peers. The Arisen will always be apart from any but themselves, their experiences forever different to everyone around them except the other Deathless. The Rite of Return guaranteed this.

Immortal yet Transitory

The Arisen's experience is a mystery to most other beings. Even mummies themselves don't understand the nuances of their condition, or why they live the way they do. The Deathless experience their lives in segments. Other creatures find familiarity in this. The mummy rises, lives day by day, interacts with others and one day succumbs to the darkness of the grave and falls silent. This is similar enough to the mortal condition to be understood. Where the Deathless differ is the order in which these segments occur.

A mummy who awakens in the world of the 20th century between the World Wars may find herself confused by the changes that have occurred since she last walked the Earth in the 14th century. Technology has advanced, society and mannerisms are wildly different. The entire world is still recovering from warfare that was logistically impossible when she was last awake. Immortals find this easy to understand. After all, vampires and many other undying creatures of the world often have a similar 'life' cycle, consisting of patches of activity separated by stretches of unaware inactivity. The Sadikh, constant companions to the Arisen, experience eternity in this progressive manner, living each awakening sequentially.

However, the Deathless is just as likely to awaken immediately before the Second World War with her most recent memories of the early 21st century. Her memories are confusing; on one level she recalls that the world goes on after the war and the state of nations and world politics

from when she active. But what can she do with such information? Does her memory of events mean they must come to pass and the future state of the world is inevitable, or is it merely one potential future that she has the power to change? Does her mere presence in this time before cement the outcome she remembers or does it render events malleable? Even the most scholarly Arisen who dedicate themselves to the task can't provide a definitive answer.

The uncertain nature of the Arisen's reincarnation cycle, the unreliability of memory, and the fact that mummies experience the present much like everyone else are the main obstacles to this understanding. Though mummies rise in many points of time they don't experience it as a totality. Only in Duat's timeless sands do they have the chance to understand the whole. However, the price for departing that place always includes sacrificing the knowledge of what was learned.

Like most other creatures, the Deathless move through each day second-by-second, living from moment to moment. When a mummy awakens from her death-like sleep she only has so many days to accomplish her goals before she returns to the grave. She can carefully tend her resources, preserve her strength for important issues, and take steps to improve her longevity, but ultimately it all comes to an end. In this, mummies are much like everything else.

Never Ending, Always Dying

The similarity of the Descent to the span of a life separates mummies from other immortal beings as much as the uncertainty of when they'll rise. The failure of memory inherent in the Arisen's cycle also sets them apart. While mummies are timeless, other immortals are better described as endless. Most endless beings are world-weary travelers with their long days stretching into eternal nights, marching ceaselessly onward toward whatever fate eventually befalls them. The ennui of expired experience accumulates as everything seems the same no matter how much it changes. Fantastic new technologies or horizons offer some glimmer of novelty before all-too-quickly fading into the background noise of familiarity and boredom. Often these apparently novel experiences that excite prattling mortals are just something old in slightly new packaging. Immortals quickly see beneath the paper-thin veneer and their sparse enthusiasm once again fades to disappointment and bitterness.

Unlike these endlessly bored creatures, Memory's curse keeps the Deathless from fading to such bland despair. For the Arisen, each awakening is a rebirth, a blank slate through which they rediscover the world and take wonder at the things within. Only as Sekhem fades and Memory returns do they begin to understand and discern the known from the new. Familiar faces, old friends, ancient enemies and more are all new to a mummy each time she returns from her tormented sleep. Each Descent is a chance to refresh and begin anew, to take joy in life's pleasures and despair in its sorrows. For a brief time, each mummy has a moment to take pleasure in their existence before the crushing weight of Judges' expectations and the needs of Sekhem again fall upon them.

Eternally Together, Forever Apart

Fractured Memory also forces the Deathless to carry a burden their immortal peers are unlikely to ever know. The bonds of family, friendship, and guild must be rediscovered and reforged anew each time from incomplete information. In each Descent, mummies almost invariably have to decide how to incorporate remembered information as it returns, and how to deal with the immensely complicated emotions that accompany the recollections. What of two Deathless who rise together and forge a bond of companionship and shared goals, only to later discover they

have been immortal enemies for most of their existences? Do they leave their past behind in the hope of forging newer, better memories, or do they return to old habits despite the positive emotions they've since constructed? And even if they choose to forget and forgive can they continue to trust as more information returns to them? This also supposes that Memory returns to mummies at the same rate, which isn't a fair assumption. More often, one mummy begins to sour on a newfound relationship quicker than the other as bleak recollections return more quickly.

The unpredictability of when mummies rise also impacts relationships between the Deathless. The path each mummy takes through existence is hers alone. Even Arisen within a meret with many shared times and experiences suffer the challenges of different Descents. A group of Deathless may awaken and work together in 1936 and then again in 2019, but this doesn't mean they all arrived by the same path. One mummy remembers no interim between the two Descents, whereas for another the meret met in the 12th century in the interim, a third recalls them together in the dying years of the 21st century, and the fourth member has experienced so many shared Descents between the two periods that 1936 is a barely remembered glimmer far in her past. Even among such as group with considerable trust in their shared bonds, what does one of them remember that the others don't? What if those memories include the betrayal of the meret? Can an individual change what is to come, or will her actions lead to the outcome she fears? And how fair is it to hold an individual accountable for slights and crimes she has no memory of doing, that are possibly from an age she won't reach until much later in her existence?

In this moral and emotional uncertainty an Arisen's life can be like a waking dream, moving from scene to scene without apparent rhyme or reason, cutting from one experience and period to another without logical transition or causality. After the fog of ages passes, the mummy faces each period with memories of a future that may or may not ever occur, interspersed with a past that did happen but may not have led to this point.

Taking Control

Though the realities of the Descent and the demands of the Judges means that Arisen's lives are never fully their own, this doesn't totally cast them in the role of eternal slaves. No other creature has the same experience with time that the Deathless do. No other creature lives cast adrift on twisting, swirling currents in the temporal ocean. No other creature's life is in such rigid order while everything else is out of order.

The Rite of Return accomplished its goal, but whether the Shan'iatu understood the side effects it would inflict upon the world and the Deathless may never be known. Timelessness paradoxically gives the Arisen an awareness of time's flow, from the inevitability of slowly draining Sekhem across a Descent, to knowing when they have awoken in a place moves faster or more slowly than usual, casts a course adrift from the rest of history, or whirls back to itself. Always being slightly apart from the flow of events around them, mummies can draw upon the inviolate certainty of their existence to impose their own time upon these wayward flows, to take greater control and gain benefit from doing so. They can even work to identify the anchors drawing the alternative flows away from the weight of history, choosing to counter or encourage them in their path.

Whether this aspect of their existence was intended to fall on the children of Irem and if they are meant to pursue it is unknown to the Arisen. If the Judges have an opinion they haven't deigned to make it known. Perhaps the responsibility is a price enacted by the universe against those who

once broke the world, forcing their servants to fix the damage caused. See *Storytelling Timelessness* (p. XX) for more information on the relationship between mummies and time.

The Shepherd and the Flock

A mummy is a living monument to Irem: built to withstand the test of time, but not built to stand alone. Even with vast miracles at her command, the loss of Memory that accompanies the Curse renders a mummy (probably) unable to speak the local language when she rises, or recognize the vast metropolx surrounding her tomb as related to the small hamlet she fell to repose in. Every monument needs caretakers, and a mummy's servants may range from a multinational corporation's CEO to the ex-convict who works in that corporation's mail room — ideally, both and everyone in-between, to ensure the mummy's will can reach every level of society. Like any monument, the mummy draws onlookers, and eventually followers. The need to work communally was ingrained within the Arisen psyche when they were shuffled into guilds during their first lives. Any time an Arisen wakes, they seek out followers, people who will be subservient to an immortal's will. And those who would follow are drawn by Fate to the mummy, to beg favors from that immortal in turn.

A mummy's cult works her will while she slumbers, tends to her relics, and awakens her when there is a great need for the manifest might of the Arisen. But they are rarely mere implements to be used at a whim. An undying monster is at the center of the cult, the top of the pyramid, but she is supported by any number of thinking and feeling people, many of whom have their own supernatural powers and reasons for being in the cult.

The Core of a Cult

Sociologically speaking, cults are groups defined by unusual religious or spiritual beliefs, holding a deviant view of the world compared to mainstream society. The word is used as an insult, but many religions started as small cults of believers. It's perhaps ironic that the last vestiges of a mighty imperial state religion can only be found whispered in small groups. Serving the Judges and the extant remnants of Iremite culture, mummy cults exist as an alternate, ancient social structure underlying the common bureaucracy and social stratification of modern civilization. If you need something, the cult will help you, but only if you help when you're needed in return. And when you are called to do something extreme or miraculous, you're still expected to show.

The world is riddled with such cults. Some serve esoteric powers, others are different fingers of a single hand that grasps the entire globe, but all promise power in exchange for a measure of service. The cults of mummies have a shared heritage: the Iremic language, service to the particular Arisen, and knowledge of the ancient gods of Irem.

Eternal Legend

The nature of mummy power, expressed through cults, is encoded into the Rite of Return. Should a mummy's cult be reduced to scattered members, bloodied robes, and completely destroyed temples, it will reconstitute itself: through Fate and the vagaries of coincidence, if not through the mummy's own efforts. Even should the Arisen be trapped in henet without a valid body in which to begin the Descent, their cult continues worshiping and serving, whether consciously or not.

Designing a cult requires at least three things. First is a purpose: the defining reason the cult exists. Usually it's tied in with the Judge and Arisen the cult serves. Second is the physical relic that grounds members' faith; this is often the same as the Arisen's Lifeweb-grounding relic, but may be the mummy's remains if nothing else serves. The last is a doctrine: every cult is defined by its rules and traditions, and this typically conforms to the specific commandments of the mummy's chosen Judge.

Cultists of importance must take the Scorpion Cult Initiation Merit (see p. XX)

Loyalty and Sybaris

Following the doctrine of a cult faithfully and possession of the Scorpion Cult Initiation Merit grants immunity to Sybaris; logically, it should be simple to tell whose heart does not beat in time to the voice of the Judges. The Shan'iatu saw the way of things, though: humans are ever fickle, and long shadows cast by faulty memories shift and obscure the recollection of truth. It is easy for mortal and immortal alike to cite precedent and experience as justification for oathbreaking, twisting their vows into tortuous forms in order to avoid what they promise. This is why Memory is so precious to mummies, but cultists rarely lose their recollections so easily. So long as they can justify to themselves that they're not *really* transgressing the Arisen's sacred commandments, or are doing so for the greater good of the cult, a cultist is still considered faithful no matter how wayward they get. Obviously, an angry mummy will probably disagree.

The other element that warrants consideration is that immunity to Sybaris can be conferred by serving *any* mummy faithfully. Taking the Initiation Merit beyond the second dot in *another* mummy's cult, be it another Arisen or even the Shuankhsen, confers the requisite clarity of mind. Treat your servants well, lest your rivals tempt them into betraying you.

Foundations

The foundations of an Iremite cult determine how the cult sees itself, how it operates, and the methods through which it works. Cash, chores, and protective camouflage are all benefits of belonging to a cult, but their structure runs the gamut between secret and completely public.

Tribal

The oldest cult models are tribal, and many — if not most — still hew to this form. The Arisen determines the cult's doctrine, strictures, and the mechanisms for reward and punishment that will keep the cult intact during long years in henet. Often hierarchal and always authoritarian, tribal cults present the Arisen as an object of worship and veneration, a servant of higher knowledge and the secret laws of the Judges.

Many tribal cults exist as long-term family structures, with clans passing down the secrets of Arisen worship from parent to child. Often, this gives rise to multiple families jockeying for power and favor from the mummy, an element that prohibits close cooperation but renders them easy for the Arisen to exploit and control.

Cults with tribal foundations tend to be intimate and close-knit, but fundamentally draining. As a parallel societal structure, they use both legal and illicit methods of fulfilling the mummy's will.

Conspiracy

Power is the reason for conspiracy cults, and they're run more like spy agencies or criminal cartels: around a watchword of "deniability" and the principle that if one element gets compromised, the priests can cleanly sever it without endangering anything else. While tribal conspiracies are invariably open and interconnected, conspiracies are anything but. Nobody joins a conspiracy for religious meaning or spiritual growth.

Conspiracies are built to hide and obscure their true size from everyone save their leaders — and even they're compartmented and sectioned off, designed to be severed or forgotten or destroyed at a moment's notice. A mummy with a conspiratorial cult manages a decentralized and diffuse power structure, comprised of dozens of cultists spread out across long communication chains. Often the mummy will give instructions through their hierophant, who will consult with bosses and underbosses, who then instruct a web of associates. This leads to a fairly difficult time keeping the cult together and functioning during long periods of repose in henet, and a mummy who spends a long time in slumber may find that her conspiratorial cult has grown stranger and roamed far in her absence. While this type of cult gives the mummy scalpel-like control over her servants and their duties, many find it annoying to have to spend the first few days and weeks of their Descent finding and reigning in their wayward followers. For tribal and enterprise cults, the mummy can just show up to a ceremony or board meeting and yell really loudly.

Cults with conspiracy foundations tend to have fairly extensive means of getting things done in an illegal or quasi-legal fashion, but can be extremely difficult for the mummy to precisely target upon their specific needs.

Enterprise

The opposite of a criminal conspiracy is an open enterprise, where the mummy's cult operates under a veneer of legitimacy, complete with tax documents, company picnics, and payroll. The cultists may not even be aware they're serving the mummy for a completely different reason than the conspiracy: Not for protection, but simply because it's not relevant to the overall enterprise. Most often, these companies work towards acquiring Egyptian antiquities, propagating translated Iremite texts into society, or simply acting as a front or shell company for one of the mummy's other cults. A philanthropic enterprise that works on issues of just law or bringing philosophical balance to society doesn't need the quasi-religious background of serving a bandaged monster.

Cults with enterprise foundations resemble the close-knit cadre of core cultists found in tribal or conspiracy structures, the ones who directly serve the mummy. Since they operate as legal entities, they excel at working through legal means but are typically prohibited from illicit methods of getting things done (at least compared to criminal conspiracies or sectarian fanatics).

The Levels of the Pyramid

Power radiates downward from the watchful eye of the mummy, even while that eye is closed in slumber. This power diffuses itself among those who have sworn obeisance to the power of the Arisen and the Judges through them. The more individually powerful the followers of the mummy, the more the Arisen may invest her power within them. In turn, this grants mummies greater power and facility with Guild Affinities, expressions of the immortal's fivefold soul that stem from being the focal point of many souls working in concert. It also provides a measure of security; in an emergency where the Arisen's *khat* is destroyed, a mummy may engage a cultist in a battle for their soul, eventually consuming it and fully possessing the cultist's body.

A pyramid's levels define how powerful the members are and how many Pillar points the mummy may invest, but don't reflect the actual hierarchy or rank of the members. It's entirely possible to have a mortal high priest overseeing various immortals or ordering around the Sadikh, though this frequently leads to friction and a measure of powerlessness on the part of the mortal. This powerlessness often comes with a high measure of personal loyalty to their Arisen patron. Supernatural power flows towards the top of the pyramid, and cultists with their own sorcery or source of immortality are more dangerous, harder to handle, and generally less loyal to the Arisen. Cultists on the higher levels are more likely to serve the mummy out of practicality or shared goals rather than true and fervent belief.

The presence of cultists who have undergone the Rite of Investment affects what Guild Affinities the mummy may power (see p. XX).

Base: The Mortal

Mortals, or at least humans who don't have a large number of supernatural powers, join mummy cults for any number of reasons: money, power (both temporal and arcane), sex, or genuine belief in the Judges or the Arisen. Mortals tend to be the most populous members of a cult, or even the sole members in particularly small cults or ones in the process of rebirth.

Certain Merits may increase a mortal's standing in a cult, and exposure to relics, vessels, or Sekhem energies may provide a justification for taking Supernatural Merits. Despite this, cultists at this level are still fundamentally human, unless and until they actually master the basics of sorcery or achieve immortality through some other means. Most are deeply tied into their mortal lives, and thus of paradoxically more versatile use for the mummy. The cultist who works airport security can wave through other cultists or the mummy with no hesitation, while the graduate student can take a break from her dissertation to translate a particularly interesting document written in the mummy's own hand, but in a language he's forgotten.

Second Level: The Sorcerous

The servants of the guilds have ever been the backbone of scorpion cults, dating back to the Nameless Empire and the controlled method the Shan'iatu used to their followers of the manipulation of Sekhem. Once a mortal has learned the sorcerous rites of controlling Sekhem, they become better able to channel a mummy's soul, and further empower the Guild Affinities of the Arisen (see p. XX). Besides this, they bring considerable magical might to bear.

Sorcerer cultists are rarer than mortal ones — an unsurprising fact, given the drive and talent necessary to master an Open Rite. This dedication also comes at a cost to the cultist's daily life, as they're less able to provide prosaic and temporal power to the cult when they're pursuing arcane secrets. Taking a sorcerer into a cult displays a measure of trust; sorcerers are capable of using the Arisen's Pillars to power their Rites, fueling their magics with the entrusted elements of a mummy's soul.

Third Level: The Sadikh

There are many innate powers available to the knowledgeable Arisen. During the First Sothic Turn, many Arisen discovered the hidden powers encoded within the Rite of Return. Utterances were among them, as was the Rite of Investment, but none were more personal than the Rite of the Engraved Heart. With this, the mummy could enshrine a loyalty freely given with its own semblance of immortality, granting a favored and willing servant the ability to serve the mummy

forever. Many Sadikh watched over their masters as they slept in their first tombs, only stopping to lay down their burdens after many more years of service.

Only the Sadikh may accompany their master in undeath, and thus only the Sadikh may truly share in the Arisen's power. The Rite of the Engraved Heart (see p. XX) gifts the mummy with an eternally-loyal yet half-alive companion, immortal by virtue of obeisance to the Arisen rather than dependent on some mechanism of supping Sekhem outside the mummy's purview. Consequently, there is no challenge to the mummy's dominance at this level; the Sadikh even derives greater benefits from the Rite of Investment than most cultists, and may manifest Soul Affinities.

The Sadikh tends to occupy a subservient or secondary position outside a cult's hierarchy. While both ultimately serve the Arisen, the Sadikh rarely obeys cultists unless they see the immediate benefit to the Arisen by doing so. Their loyalty is to the Arisen and the Arisen alone, and this blind loyalty often renders them incapable of recognizing the nuance of indirect benefit.

Pyramidion: The Immortal

Only the Rite of Return provides forever and without renewal, and even that mighty magic came with a Curse. How much more insurmountable are the weaknesses of those lesser immortals, then? How right and proper must it be for them to serve truly eternal?

An immortal cultist isn't reliant on the mummy for their power; they channel Sekhem in their own lesser, esoteric ways. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, an immortal cultist often serves the Arisen out of some shared goal. Perhaps the Arisen keeps the relic the immortal has bound themselves to safely ensconced in a Lifeweb, or perhaps the Arisen grants the immortal their choice of bodies chosen from mortal cultists. For the Deceived and the Shuankhsen, having immortals in their cults insulates those down the pyramid from the corrosive, destructive nature of their power. The immortals work with the Lifeless because it suits their needs, but they're also a more stable being of power for the cultists to worship and interact with.

Some in the Su-Menent theorize that tapping into other sources of Sekhem, embodied by these immortals, is what enables the most powerful Guild Affinities and full expression of the Arisen soul.

Beings such as vampires are immortal, though. The question will arise naturally: Can a vampire be a fourth level cultist, and thus a valid recipient of the Rite of Investment? Other supernatural beings like abmortals are capable of extended lifespans, or even prolonging their natural deaths indefinitely. What about them?

The short answer is yes, with a caveat. The various immortal or long-lived protagonists and antagonists of the major game lines in the Chronicles of Darkness tend to serve many different agendas, most of which don't align with those of the Arisen — at least, not beyond some highly transient objective. Even those who might have some connection to mummies through myth and aesthetics alone — Hollow Mekhet, or Osirian Prometheans — typically have their own elders or motivations, and aren't interested in playing second fiddle for eternity.

Many of the immortals in Chapter Five aren't enthused about this either, but they derive myriad benefits from the Rite of Investment, of which Affinities and Utterances are but a part. Eternals may find their place of power exists in the same area as a mummy's tomb, and the additional power of Affinities and Affinities brings Their power ultimately derives from Sekhem and thus can be contained and utilized, however, whereas the other protagonists of the Chronicles of

Darkness have weirder and more esoteric sources of supernatural might. The Rite of Investment and the spiritual burden of holding a piece of an immortal's soul weighs on them in ways unexpected and sometimes volatile. They don't always result in miracles. More often, they result in greater monsters.

The Rite of Investment

The Arisen aren't limited to simply performing tasks for cultists in order to empower the cult and ensure their loyalty. The bindings aren't simply ones of loyalty and integrity, but mystic in nature, should the mummy choose to reinforce them. The Rite of Investment is encoded into the mummy's soul, allowing them to apply spiritual mortar to the bricks of the soul.

The actual mechanism is quite simple, even somewhat innocuous. All that is required is that a being swear fealty, loyalty, and veneration to the Arisen, and truly mean it on some level. The Arisen lays a hand on the cultist and passes a portion of her soul into them, flowing along internal lines of *heka* and exchange to invest the cultist. While this is all that's required, the procedure is very often accompanied by pomp and circumstance, with the Arisen descending down stone steps to address kneeling cultists.

The cultist is fully aware they're carrying some portion of their patron; the weight of Pillars can be felt behind the heart, like a small thin core of burning stone leaning across the spine. It feels differently, according to the Pillar. Ka Pillars feel empowering, while Sheut Pillars feel oily and slick. If the Pillar also matches the mummy's Decree, the cultist receives a supernatural benefit.

There's an insidious reason for the Rite of Investment, far beyond the benefits of empowering one's cult. As the Arisen diffuses her power among the cult, she finds her personal stores of Pillars refilling, and her awareness of the cult and their condition grows, until they are an extension of the mummy herself. Should the mummy perish, her *sahu* and canopic jars destroyed, she may treat a cultist with a Pillar as an active means of reincarnation — by claiming their body. Such an event pits the Arisen's soul against the cultist's, but the Arisen has been through Duat, and their mettle has been tested. The vast majority of cultists cannot withstand the might of an immortal soul, and are subsumed utterly.

The mummy who consumes their cultist is changed by the experience, and not simply in the ephemeral sense of carrying the guilt of destroying a willing servant's soul. The memories of the mortal color those of the immortal's, melding their personalities in a blend that is heavily weighted towards the mummy but still represents a fundamental change to their core principles. The cultist's memories filter into the mummy's, and are subsumed into the greater Memory of the immortal, though they're more easily accessible within the short term. At low levels of Memory, the fresh and powerful memories of the mortal may overwhelm the ancient memories of the mummy, and it's not uncommon for a mummy who claims the body of their cultists to believe they *are* the cultist for a potentially long period of time, only to revise and integrate this identity as Memory rises.

The Rite of Investment's system is detailed on p. XX.

Relics and Vestiges

Senet game

Period: date unknown (estimated pre-3300 BCE)

Materials: faience, ivory, and knucklebone

Any writing carved into the box's sides has worn away, but it appears to have been well-used, as several game pieces are made of different materials than the rest, and were likely replacements for tokens the game's owner damaged or lost.

The Arisen are drawn to relics and vestiges, pulled toward them by the Sekhem stored within both mummy and vessel. The precious mystical resource pools inside, reflecting the life force all around it. Relics, crafted by the great sorcerers and smiths of Irem, refine Sekhem, distilling it into a perfected, potent state. Vestiges are rougher, less pure, but no less valuable for the emotions and memories they hold. Both may become part of an Arisen's Lifeweb, empowering the sacred geometry of her tomb and assisting her high priests in the Call.

The items are also tangible memories of a world long lost, proof that a mummy's hazy recollections of Irem are real and true. Occasionally vessels spark those Memories, unlocking a piece of the puzzle that makes up an Arisen's Descent. They show her who she was, for good and ill. They may give her insight into her ancient enemies, or remind her of a betrayal a traitorous cultist hoped would stay forgotten.

Draining Sekhem from relics and vestiges allows a mummy to regain lost Pillars. Likewise, she can use them to imbue her followers with a fraction of her powers.

Recovery and Sacrifice

Discovering and reacquiring vessels are imperatives an Arisen can't quite shake. Once she's aware of a relic's existence, she might be able to put off its pursuit awhile as she ties up other business. Still, the desire to add it to her collection persists like an itch between her shoulder blades. Relics and vessels — and the Sekhem contained within — belong to the Judges. Delivering prizes back to Duat at the end of her Descent is proof of a job well done. It's simultaneously a sacred duty and point of pride.

Sometimes a mummy fulfills the purpose for her awakening before her Descent ends. If she finds herself free of obligations, often an Arisen begins actively searching for relics and vessels with the time she has left. She seizes the opportunity to fill in gaps in her Memory, seeking artifacts from lost Irem, or vestiges imbued with pieces of other lives she's lived. The hunt for such vessels is a hunt for the self.

On occasion, the desire to seek out a vessel becomes an all-encompassing need. Most often, this happens when an intruder steals a relic from the mummy's tomb, awakening him from his deathly sleep. In that instance, he *has* no other purpose than to retrieve the item. Nothing distracts him from recovering what was taken, and he cares little about what or who might be destroyed in the process. Other times, he's racing to keep the relic out of enemy hands: a Shuankhsen who'd defile and destroy it, a Timeless who'd use it for crude, lesser rituals. He's more in control, then, able to strategize, to set traps and wait for his enemy to spring them.

No prohibitions exist preventing one Arisen from raiding another's tomb. Though there's no "right" way to utilize a vessel (aside from eventually sacrificing it to the Judges), a mummy who believes his peers are misusing or wasting a relic's potential may decide to recover it for himself. Others want control of artifacts they're convinced belonged to them in Irem, or were theirs during prior Descents. Stealing from another Arisen is a dangerous undertaking. No mummy parts with their vessels willingly, and waking one from her henet with the theft is as perilous for an Arisen as it is for any mortal.

Some disputes over who can claim a vessel span millennia. A Maa-Kep and a Tef-Aabhi vie for ownership of a cylinder seal from Irem. It resonates with both, but neither is willing to cede it to the other. Their two cults have clashed for generations, stealing the cylinder seal or planning heists to steal it *back*.

The raw power contained in a relic or vestige bends the world around it to reflect the Memory it contains. Arisen, due to the Sekhem in their own bodies, can to some degree resist the curse that comes with unleashing a relic's power. A regular human has no such innate resistance, leaving them open to both the temptation that comes with wielding the vessel and the curse it lays upon them. Mummies try to intercept vessels *before* they can wreak havoc on mortal lives. For those who view themselves as humanity's protectors and guides, they're fulfilling their duty by keeping dangerous toys out of reach.

Retaining Vessels

Amulet of a winged scarab

Period: Pre-dynastic

Materials: Serpentinite, bone

On loan from a private collection. The amulet's original owner claimed wearing the item close to her heart promoted a sense of happiness and well-being.

Not all Arisen sacrifice the vessels they recover to the Judges. A Maa-Kep holds on to a sheriff's star worn by an Old West lawman, filled with the passion for his duty and the searing hatred for a particular gunfighter. The Sesha-Hebsu pores over a scrap of parchment, certain the Iremite symbols are written in her hand. She can almost smell the ink. Another few weeks and she might remember the rest of the passage. A Su-Menent keeps the ritual knife where she can see it upon rising. It wasn't hers, but its wielder understood death and dying.

All vessels belong to the Judges. The Arisen know this intrinsically, and are well aware of their duty to return them to Duat. Still, they know that once the sacrifice is made and the Sekhem gone, all that remains is a mundane object. If it's an item of historical significance — the hilt of a ceremonial blade, an ushabti from a royal tomb — they might sell it to a museum or a private collector. Vestiges with no monetary value — a flower pressed between the pages of a wartime nurse's journal, a mass-produced wristwatch — become little more than trash. Who can blame the mummy who wants to hold on to the feelings the vessel evokes just a little longer, to study it until she's sure she's gleaned all the memories that might be lurking therein?

Relics and vestiges that make it back to an Arisen's tomb become part of its Lifeweb, enhancing and strengthening the occult latticework. A strong Lifeweb makes sorcerous rituals easier, as the cultist performing it draws on the Sekhem-rich energy flowing through the tomb. Keeping a substantial relic collection carries risks as well: some bold souls dare to invade Arisen tombs and steal the treasures within. The Timeless need them to give their gruesome longevity rites a boost. Sorcerer cults would weaken the Arisen while increasing their own power and influence. The Lifeless sees a chance to deprive her enemy of Memory *and* increase a Pillar by draining the Arisen's hoard.

Delaying the sacrifice is a minor infraction compared to the Arisen who claims a relic's Sekhem for himself. The Judges rarely distinguish between an act of selfishness and one of desperation: Whether a mummy drained a relic to help him further his Judge's influence, or whether he

simply did it to extend the length of his Descent, the end result is the same. He risks his Judge's displeasure and a harsh punishment.

Digging up the Past

HAUNTED?! Silver-plated comb, brush, and handheld mirror from the 1920s.

This gorgeous set will add beauty and sophistication to anyone's vanity table. Comb and brush are normal. Mirror sometimes reflects a different person than the one holding it.

Must buy the whole set, no exceptions.

Serious inquiries only, please.

Relics of lost Irem lie forgotten beneath the sands. The Timeless keep vestiges under lock and key, in secret chambers and passcoded safes. Sorcerers lay wards on vessels and set supernatural alarms clamoring if they're tripped. Most of the time, vessels remain hidden until the Arisen's kepher flares, and places the item front and center in his consciousness. Once he's aware of it, his adversaries' barriers can only keep the relic out of his grasp for so long.

Sometimes, however, it's the Arisen who's stashing a relic or vestige away out of his opponent's reach. The idea of a Blood Bather using a canopic jar for her gruesome rituals disgusts the Su-Menent, so he seals it in a vault, behind several layers of security measures. A sorcerer-cult hears whispers of a spell carved into a clay tablet, but the Sessa-Hebsu knows they'll use it for malicious purposes. When he traced his fingers over it in his craft-house in Irem, the spells were meant to heal rather than hurt. He buries the tablet where they'll never find it, and lays a few traps of his own.

The option to sacrifice the vessel to the Judges always remains, but for some Arisen it's a last resort. Perhaps he needs the relic to fuel a ritual of his own, or the refined Sekhem stored within will come in handy for investing his cultists with Pillars. The artifact may hold memories she has yet to unlock. It could be one piece of a larger collection she's spent centuries amassing, and damned if she's going to break up the set before it's complete. Sacrificing or draining the vessel's Sekhem is an irrevocable action. Why take such an extreme action when time is your ally? Deny the relic to the immortal, and she'll either find another suitable container or die because she's failed to complete the ritual sustaining her. Keep it from the sorcerer-cult and they might still find a way to cast the spell, but the destruction it causes isn't on the Arisen's conscience.

Arisen who hide vessels from other mummies present a much more complicated problem. They know how others of their kind detect relics via kepher, and the methods they use to acquire them. They don't have to wonder how best to shield their treasures from other Arisen; they already know. Any mummy attempting to hide a vessel from other Deathless must first consider what obstacles would stymie himself, his own meret, his cult, and his guildmates. He must also accept that it's an unending endeavor — he may spend Descent after Descent improving his security measures. Which his adversaries, in turn, will spend Descent after Descent learning how to defeat.

Lastly, some Arisen hide vessels from *themselves*. The loss of Memory that accompanies Descent is normally frustrating and painful for the Deathless, but on some occasions, it's a mercy. Every time she rises, the mummy must work to rebuild her image of who she is. Her Sadikh and cultists can fill in some of the information, and the collection of relics in her Lifeweb offer deeper, more personal insights. Some of those glimpses show the mummy in an

unfavorable light. Few mummies make it through their many lifetimes unscathed. Survival requires sacrifice, and many Arisen make choices during their Descents that cause pain — either to the Deathless herself, or to someone she's come to care about. In this case, forgetting is more balm than bane. Hiding relics and vestiges that evoke her shameful memories lets a mummy conceal her true past from her future self.

The Arisen creates what she considers to be the best version of herself, selectively editing her own story by excising this chapter. She might not recover the vestige for centuries, but nothing remains locked away forever. Sometimes, the Arisen herself senses its kepher and tracks down the lost piece of herself. Reclaiming the memory might be devastating, and call into question everything she thought she knew about herself. Other times, she's not the one who uncovers the vessel. Another Deathless may discover it and simply sacrifice it to his Judge, or a Shuankhsen could uncover it and drain it of Sekhem, either way eliminating the threat forever. Worse, one of her enemies may find it, and use what he learns as leverage over its original owner.

Enemies All Around

The Rite of Return bestowed immense power and immortality on the Arisen, gifts that other entities covet and wish to exploit. Some of the mummies' enemies are ambitious and long-lived, hunting the Arisen to steal their Sekhem, or glean the secrets of the Descent. Others were their contemporaries in Irem, travelling a parallel but violently different path down the millennia.

Some are the very gods the Arisen worship.

The Shuankhsen

The Shuankhsen *remember*.

The Arisen aren't the only children of Irem still stalking the Earth. Though many were slaves themselves, pressed into service by the Shan'iatu and forced to work, their deaths had a measure of dignity to them — an importance. Fear and pain might have followed, but they came with *meaning*.

The Shuankhsen met with no such honorable ends. They were slaves as well, in service not only to the Shan'iatu, but also to the craft-houses and legions. They were prisoners and thieves. They were captives taken from nations the Nameless Empire conquered. They were the workers not quite deemed worthy enough to learn the trades, but not quite worthless enough to be killed and raised as corpses for the necromancers' needs.

The Lifeless' greatest value, as far as the sorcerer-priests were concerned, was in their deaths. They were fodder. They were fuel. They were stepping stones on the path to the Rite of Return. When they died, no Judges waited in Duat to test their worth. Instead, Ammut the Devourer consumed their souls.

Without the Shuankhsen's sacrifice, the Arisen would have lain dead and cold in their tombs, never to awaken with the turning of Sothis' Wheel.

But most of the Arisen don't remember, and those who do take this sacrifice for granted. To them, it was their due as the heirs to Irem. Mass murder was merely the cost of doing business. The Shuankhsen were beneath the Arisen in Irem, and are beneath them now, even though the empire is long dead.

The Shuankhsen harbor a burning resentment toward the Arisen, a grudge they've spent 6,000 years nursing. In Irem, the Arisen were workers as well. They were closer to the Shuankhsen than to the Shan'iatu, class-wise, but never for a moment considered this. They never stood as allies to the Shuankhsen, never spoke out in their defense. Together, might not the Arisen and Shuankhsen have risen up against the sorcerer-priests? Imagine, if the blacksmiths had smuggled spell-enhanced weapons to their brothers and sisters, if the spies had relied upon other household servants rather than reported on their misdeeds. Instead of quashing rebellion, those who would become the Kher-Minu might have led it, and together they could have overthrown the Shan'iatu.

Yet, the way the Shuankhsen see it, the Arisen were content to be the necromancers' pets as long as it bought them relative comfort. Today they do their Judges' bidding rather than resist. They've learned nothing.

Driven by their rage and Ammut's hunger, the Lifeless hunt the Deathless. The rituals that created the Shuankhsen left them inferior conduits for Sekhem. They covet Arisen mastery over Utterances and Pillars, and tear the knowledge from their enemies' flesh, consuming it to make it part of themselves. Shuankhsen likewise compete with the Arisen for relics and vestiges and the Sekhem contained therein.

Snatching a relic from the Arisen pursuing it serves a secondary purpose for the Lifeless: destroying such an item denies the mummy a chance at reclaiming a lost memory. Perhaps the statue sat on her altar in lost Irem; maybe the filigreed pendant belonged to a lover during his last Descent. Either way, the Shuankhsen puts the past — and the answers the Arisen seeks — that much farther out of reach.

With each awakening, the Arisen have to relearn which of the people petitioning for their attention are allies and which are their enemies. Shuankhsen use this to their advantage. They place their own followers in Arisen cults as spies and saboteurs. They take aim at the Deathless' earthly assets: embezzling funds from a hundred-year-old corporation, killing the last scions of a bloodline that's led the cult since Egypt.

Some Shuankhsen know exactly what things her enemy can't resist, and will leave them as traps to draw her prey in close. So what if vengeance takes years? The Shuankhsen have the same millennia the Arisen do to enact their plans, only they never forget where they left off.

Knowing how precious memory is to the Arisen gives the Shuankhsen some measure of satisfaction, though it's a limited pleasure. They might be tempted to lord their knowledge of Irem over the Arisen, dangling it before their enemies but always denying it, were it not for the Silence Ammut has imposed upon them. Acknowledging their creation in Irem, alluding to the Shan'iatu or their rituals, harms the Shuankhsen and robs them of precious Sekhem. They've already suffered enough for the Arisens' comfort. They'll chew out their own tongues before doing so again.

When the Mighty Fall

Fear of becoming one of the hated Shuankhsen is very real for the Arisen. What happens when you're lost to the shadow? When the things that make you *you* fall away? When your Judge relinquishes your soul, and the Devourer opens her maw?

Conversely, the Lifeless have complicated feelings about Arisen who become Shuankhsen. How demoralizing, to be the subject of someone else's cautionary tale,

to *be* the very thing their ancient enemies fear they might *become*. Some are contemptuous of those Arisen who were once their oppressors, now slaves to the Devourer like themselves. Others attempt to break the cycle of hatred, embracing their new brothers and sisters.

Immortals

The Arisen aren't the only entities whose lives span centuries, though with rare exceptions, the others must all perform certain rites and rituals on a regular basis in order to maintain their longevity. To the Deathless, this is evidence of flawed and inferior magic. Only the Shan'iatu knew the secrets of the Rite of Return, and only the Arisen enjoy its benefits. They intend to keep it that way.

The Timeless, as the Arisen have collectively dubbed these imperfect immortals, covet the mummies' power and seek to steal their secrets. Others care less about how Arisen immortality works, and simply desire the Sekhem-rich items stored in their vaults and accruing power in their tombs. Sekhem is, after all, the very life-essence most Timeless require to keep themselves young and hale.

Throughout the millennia, the Arisen have had the most dealings with Blood Bathers, Body Thieves, and Eternals. Other immortals who cross their paths and run afoul of Arisen cults include the Reborn, the Purified, and the strange alien beings who call themselves the Visitors. Both the Deathless and the Timeless recognize the advantages they share, leading lives that span epochs. Some Timeless dedicate their lives to creation: they help shape nations, build legacies, support the arts and sciences, and take a guiding hand to history. Nothing these lesser immortals build will ever rival the glorious achievements of the Nameless Empire, but Arisen appreciate those who try.

Other immortals squander their years. They accumulate wealth and power, but spend the proceeds only on themselves and their earthly and immediate pleasures. These Timeless infuriate the Arisen, whose ambitions are secondary to their Judges' desires, and whose legacies are never entirely ensured. If an Arisen strays too far from her path and sees herself as a god among mortals, her Judge is likely to not only tear her down, but also dismantle everything she's worked for as part of her punishment. How can the Timeless be so wasteful? How can they take such freedom for granted?

Immortals live consecutively, acclimating to societal changes and technological leaps simply by existing day to day. The Arisen often awaken to a world sharply changed. Even if only a decade passes between their Descents (a mere eyeblink in their millennia-long spans), what was an impossibility before might be a common item now. Getting their bearings takes time. The ease with which the Timeless navigate these changes only adds fuel to the Arisen's fire.

Sekhem as a Resource

While some Timeless learn occult magic or gain arcane gifts with their immortality, none can match an Arisen when it comes to sheer supernatural power. Body Thieves are especially aware of this, and some devote considerable resources toward figuring out how to exploit that power or take it for themselves. Just because no one's ever succeeded in swapping places with a mummy doesn't mean no one ever *can*, as far as those Body Thieves are concerned. They just have to figure out the how of it, whatever that entails.

Blood Bathers submerge themselves in the very essence of life to prolong their own. While many Arisen have bloodied their hands for vengeance or at their Judge's behest, they're horrified by the body counts Blood Bathers rack up — after all, they're not killing for a Judge's righteous agenda, but for their own personal gain. Disdain for the Blood Bathers' methods doesn't stop the Mesen-Nebu and Tef-Aabhi from being curious about their rites, a temptation some Bathers have used to lure in Arisen victims.

While an Arisen may be too powerful or well-protected for an immortal to reach, her cultists often make easier targets, especially those chosen as a mummy's Sadikh. Those imbued with a portion of their master's power shine with Sekhem, causing Blood Bathers to take notice. Sadikh draw Body Thieves' interest as well: these loyal servants are willing to give their bodies to their Arisen, should the mummy's body be destroyed. Learning the secrets of the rite involved would be valuable indeed.

Relics and Vestiges

The idea of Arisen sacrificing relics to the Judges in Duat frustrates immortals. It's a waste of precious Sekhem, handed off to an absentee deity for a pat on the head.

Most Timeless learn early on that breaking in to a mummy's tomb and stealing the artifacts keeping her company in her repose is a foolhardy plan. Mentors pass stories on to their students of those who tried it and died. They've learned instead to be clever and patient, to befriend Arisen cultists, or infiltrate the inner circle on their own to get access to a tomb. They have all the time in the world, after all, and can wait until their target's Descent nears its end, when she's vulnerable and her powers are on the wane, before springing a trap or staging a heist.

Most of the time, it's easier for immortals to focus on recovering relics that are out in the world, unclaimed by any Arisen. Much better to risk a museum guard firing off some shots than a mummy's relentless, single-minded pursuit. Racing *against* an Arisen to recover a relic is far preferable to fleeing *from* one. Some immortals keep tabs on an Arisen's movements, piggybacking onto their innate ability to sense an artifact's proximity.

Among the immortals, the Eternals do their best to avoid the Arisen entirely. Their immortality is tied to one single artifact, and its destruction means their death. While they're content to leave the Arisen alone as long as they receive the same courtesy, an Eternal fights like hell to protect her anchor should a mummy set their sights on it. This isn't always a physical confrontation. Many Eternals amass sizable fortunes over their centuries, and can turn their considerable wealth toward destroying those Arisen who threaten their existence.

The Judges

Declaring oneself before her Judge was, for the Arisen, an act of triumph. After all her trials in Duat, with everything she thought she was pared away and pared away again, she held up the last shred of herself and said *This is who I am*. It was a moment of clarity, of defiance, of ultimate understanding. Her Judge's hand clasped her shoulder in acceptance and approval. There it stays through all her Descents, a psychic weight guiding her in the right direction. Maybe it was a comfort, once. Sometimes it sits lightly on her psyche, and sometimes she can barely sense it at all. But sometimes those fingers flex, talon-tipped, when she drifts too far off course. If she insists on continued defiance, her Judge's hand yanks her violently back on her path. The hand's weight has grown oppressive, steering her away from Memory, dragging her down when she tries to build herself up.

Though an Arisen understands at a visceral level what her Judge desires of her, its greater plans are often opaque. Another mummy in service to the same Judge may carry out plans that at the least seem to contradict her counterpart's schemes, or oppose them entirely. Rarely does a Judge explain its reasoning, leaving the Arisen to work out the dispute between themselves.

Some mummies wonder if this is less the result of an ineffable plan at work, and instead simple proof that they're a source of amusement for the Judges. Humanity is their game board, reenacting the history of lost Irem. The Judges imbue relics with Sekhem and move them about like pawns, requiring the Arisen to hunt them down. So what if a mummy gets harmed trying to return a vessel to Duat? She'll be placed back on the board soon enough.

While occasionally the Arisen *are* little more than pieces in the Judges' cosmic game, the rulers of Duat take a keen and active interest in the plans their servants set in motion. Many Judges give their servants free rein during their Descents, allowing them to pursue personal agendas as long as those dovetail with their Judge's ideology... and as long as the Arisen continues to sacrifice relics to Duat.

Occasionally, the world runs afoul of a Judge's plans. An Arisen may not know it until strange events begin occurring in her vicinity, warning that her Judge is keeping a baleful eye on the proceedings. Should she ignore the signs of an impending emanation, she risks the Judge taking a direct hand in matters, manifesting its avatar in the mortal world and laying waste to what she's worked so hard to build.

Carrying out a Judge's will keeps the Arisen from pursuing her own goals. Even those mummies whose Judges remain mostly aloof feel the call to serve. It delays discoveries about who they were, in Irem or in past Descents. It forces them to choose between duty and Memory, and the price for defiance is steep. Once in a while, an Arisen realizes their interests no longer align with that of their Judge. For a while, they may be able to hide it, continuing to dedicate deeds to their patron while quietly putting their own plans into motion. How long can they sustain the façade? How much are they willing to risk to keep it going? Sometimes, another one of Duat's rulers seeks them out and makes an offer, if they're willing to pledge allegiance to a new ideal. It's tempting, but not without its risks. The Arisen isn't only reinventing themselves, they're turning their back on a cosmic power. When a mummy finds themselves caught in a power struggle between two Judges, they're the one who suffers for it.

The Arisen further anger their Judges when they lose sight of their place in the hierarchy. Judges allow — and often encourage — their subjects to create great works, as long as they do it in their Judges' names. Arisen manage media empires, whisper into politicians' ears, and design municipal spaces humming with sacred architecture. When a mummy proudly declares, "*I made this,*" rather than dedicating it to her Judge in all its glory, she risks retribution. If she dares consider herself on the same footing as the gods themselves, those same gods will readily show her how very small she is in their eyes.