

MUMMY RUSTLERS - SESSION SUMMARY II/06/2016

TODAY'S EPISODE: HOUSE OF PENTHERU

Our heroes are tomb raiding in Wati's necropolis under the permissions of the Church of Pharama. They have been assigned their second archeological site – the House of Pentheru.

Our 1st and 2nd level heroes are:

- Patrick as Usif bin Adeen, Osirian human Immolator 2
- Tim as Denat, ifrit Cleric 2
- Chris as Murdus Sangaree, Osirian human Fighter 1
- Ernest as Khaled, Keleshite human Burglar 2

The House Next Door

Never one to pass up on more burglary, Khaled departs from the group with the excuse, “I’ll catch up in a moment. Diarrhea.” Everyone nods and moves on as Khaled makes a show of “diarrhea”.

Khaled waits for his friends to depart then moves off to scope out a nearby house to see if they can loot multiple sites without attracting the Pharasman priests’ attention. He climbs the wall and immediately encounters a trio of short humanoids wrapped tight in rags against the sun. Dark eyes and hooked noses peek out from behind rags. They hide in shadows. Sensing kindred spirits, Khaled also hides in shadows. A tense conversation ensues:

Who are you? We are from Clan Xotl. This surface place is ours. Mistress Unwrapped Harmony rules here. Leave.

Well, watch out for priest patrols and adventurers. The priests know we are here.

Oh. Well, can you recommend any... rich places nearby? Gaunt Cadaver, a necromancer, dwells (and kills) from nearby Kowab villa. He is rich.

Hey, what about trade or swapping stuff? You know surface stuff that you don't need or want. We can trade... do you like tasty foods? Oh, that sounds good. But Mistress Unwrapped Harmony must agree to it or else we'll end up digging to the Purple Sun. Much digging to be done.

Sounds good. Take me to her. The trio starts to pull out ropes and a bag to which Khaled adds, "I want safe passage." The ropes and bag disappear back into packs.

Eventually, one of the trio departs to get the mistress' promise of safe passage. The other two remain and make polite conversation.

- *How is your world not covered in dead? We bury them and they decompose. Yech... how awful. How can your gods find them?*
- *Khaled shares some of his trail rations.* The duo eagerly chews then politely hides that they spit the food out into concealing hands. It is clear to Khaled's sharp eye that "This is the worst."

The third darkling returns with a much taller female humanoid also wrapped in rags - Mistress Unwrapped Harmony. Khaled notes, "Truth in advertising is clearly not a dark folk trait, I bet they're Chaotic." Introductions are made and then discussion turns to business. Harmony and her people dislike Gaunt Cadaver because he raises the dead and uses them for parts, whereas her people take care of the dead and treat them as relics. Plus, Gaunt is targeting the dark stalkers.

Harmony points out Gaunt's base of operations on Khaled's necropolis map.

Khaled offers, “Well, my friends and I could rid you of Gaunt and his followers. In return, we could really use information on the area and the human dead relics. And valuables.”

Harmony offers “golden funerary cones” as payment. Khaled examines one such item and agrees.

Khaled asks, “Why don’t the priests bother you here? They were really clear about no outsiders.”

Harmony replies, “There are many factions inside the necropolis. We keep to ourselves and this place. The others are not so peaceful: Ghoul gangs such as the Lapis Dogs, Sunset in Red, and Walkers of Nimret. Add to those the Lamia Sisters and the elemental creatures of the Dust Parlor. The priests have much to do and are willing to leave the least troublesome in peace.”

Khaled thinks about his prospective Taldan main squeeze’s interests and inquires, “How about the Erudite Eye? It’s a temple of Nethys. We need its location. Or information. Or both.”

Harmony, sensing a bargaining point, declares, “Kill Gaunt Cadaver and return to me his Steadfast Gutstone. Then I will share our vast knowledge of the Erudite Eye. And each follower of Gaunt that you return alive to me will earn extra reward.”

Khaled works at building bridges with Harmony by teaching her surface humor. Unfortunately, humor doesn’t translate well across alien cultures. The meeting ends with a darkling presenting Khaled with real underground food, including tepid water and beetle meat. It is as good as trail rations, which is to say not at all.

House of Pentheru – They Go Inside

Our heroes have penetrated the grounds of the House of Pentheru, where they encountered a pre-Necropolis haunting that lead to an encounter with fear and a giant centipede.

After having dealt with those problems our heroes wait in entry courtyard for Khaled. Meanwhile, a priest patrol arrives at the front gate with a message for Denat. He reads the message then declares, "It is a temple emergency!" He leaves with the priests, promising to return soon.

Shortly after their departure, Khaled rejoins Usif and Murdus in the Pentheru grounds. He shares the information recently gained from Harmony and that more might be on the way if the group is flexible about following the priests' rules. Usif demands, "I thought you had diarrhea!" Khaled retorts, "My stomach was upset by the lack of aggressive looting!"

They move deeper into the house's yards.

Khaled checks the crypt entry for traps, then opens the doors onto stairs leading downward into a room containing a stone altar. Lying upon it is horribly preserved mummy. Everyone screams out, "Mummy!" as it rises to sitting. The altar is surrounded by four caryatid columns of figures wielding khopeshes.

The mummy stands up, trailing sticky wrapping that cling wetly to the altar surface. Usif runs his fire dagger thru the creature's midsection, setting it on fire! It screams wordlessly then envelops the immolator in sticky (and wet!) flesh. Murdus steps up, intending to cut the two apart with his ax. Finding no arms to cut he aims his blow at the creature's head and drives his ax thru skull and neck. It collapses, still clinging to Usif.

The sticky flesh clings to Usif's skin and clothes. And Murdus' ax. No amount of pulling seems to loosen the bonds. "Is the entire Fiend Folio inhabiting this place?" laments Khaled.

Usif calms down quickly and announces, “My cult has dealt with these creatures before. Fire can destroy the stickiness. Time also defeats it. So much for the Weave Mistress’s cultists journey to the Ethereal Plane from wince they returned as sticky monsters, cursed to wander this plane... and being sticky.”

Usif uses his flames to free the ax, then the group sits down to wait for Usif stickiness to end. Khaled examines the remains for treasure but finds none.

There is a long hallway exit from the room that leads to a waiting room complete with a bench flanked by urns (bronze). The room’s air is cool and the floor is packed earth. Two more passageways lead from this chamber. They push on through the smaller passage, which leads to a side passage. To the left is an unfinished passage where they find a bunch of cat footprints, so they turn east and follow the passage back to a large chamber.

This chamber contains more benches and pedestals. Unfinished passages lead east and end in rumble. A swarm of skeletal cats emerges from one of those passages and attack.

Khaled leaps atop a marble bench and launches a volley of darts, breaking several apart. Usif hacks and slashes with immolator flame, setting several on fire – the fire leaps to the other attacking cats. Murdus destroys the last of the cats, suffering burns from the runaway blaze in the process.

The area is examined. No loot is found, but it is evident that the cats were kept down here post death for funerary uses. They exit the chamber via stairs leading slightly upward in the southern wall. A set of stone double doors opens to a tomb.

A sarcophagus sets atop a stone platform. Lacquered boxes sit near it. Murdus reads the hieroglyphs lining the chamber walls: *Pentheru the Younger inherited from his father, Pentheru the Elder.*

They are just and honorable land managers, beloved by the many. Oh gods, reward these fine people in the afterlife.

The sarcophagus is opened to reveal a mummified corpse with a golden funerary mask and a mummified cat. Everyone hears the cat cry that is answered by a thousand cats from the dark places of this tomb. They all hold their ground waiting for an attack that never comes.

Funeral mask and gems (40gp worth) are recovered from the sarcophagus. The mummified cat turns out to be a magical *cat casket*; it is retrieved as possible loot.

Usif communes with the *flame* in his right hand while holding the cat casket in his left, attempting to ferret out its powers: It is a magic item that tries to scare away grave robbers. It also emits positive energy that soaks into the corpse preventing undeadism.

Outside

The group decides to go with Khaled's plan to use the bronze urns to smuggle mummified cats out of the necropolis and past the priests (there's a thriving trade in mummies in Wati; they are used to make drugs among other things). Usif and Khaled carry one of the 200 pound urns out, while Murdus carries the other. A spear trap activates on the stairs as they ascend.

Khaled drops his end of the urn, then flips and leaps down the stairs avoiding the spears. Usif uses the urn to avoid the spears; the urn is speared into messy ruins. Murdus is impaled on spears and stuck fast until Khaled is able to reverse the trap. His urn is undamaged – everyone is impressed by that.

Once outside, the group circles back around to the front gate then past it to investigate more of the grounds between the wall and main building. An outbuilding holds spare furniture (ruined) and a two headed dog!

The beast is dark furred, has two heads, and a mangy hide crawling with maggots. Murdus cuts it slightly with his ax. Khaled maneuvers for a clear dart throw and places himself near a bench beneath which rests an asp. Its bite poisons his blood. Usif's fire dagger ends the dog monster – its twin heads howl in pain then cease.

Khaled pushes the stone bench over onto the asp, which escapes partially crushed. Murdus chases the slithering snake, finally chopping it apart near the outside wall and collapsing a small wall section onto himself.

Khaled sits down on the bench to rest and quaff an anti-toxin. The furniture building and well (dry) reveal no wealth or secrets. Another outbuilding is investigated. It contains only sand. The trio return to the well and carefully examine it inside and out. They finally admit that it is just a well.

The next building holds skeletons. One sweeps the floor and another sits in the loft pretending to drink from a cup. The trio decides to leave them in peace for now and rest in the shade of building. After some rest they return to the skeletons.

Khaled demands from the skeletons, "Take us to your masters!"

The skeletons look up from their toils and decide, "Attack!"

Khaled is slashed by a skeleton. Murdus is tackled by two more when he comes to Khaled's aid. Usif slashes at the tackle pile with his flame dagger, opening up one for a lethal

back-stab from Khaled. Skeletons rise and attack Usif, who slashes desperately; again it is destroyed by Khaled's back-stab. Murdus hugs the last skeleton into splinters that are finished by Usif flames. More healing potions are quaffed (Murdus is happy to find that one healing potion equals 10 hps, not 100 hps).

Still Outside

The next building is a small granary that vomits forth a scarab swarm when Murdus throwing open its doors. The swarm flies past the surprised Murdus to cover the immolator who slashes at them with his burning hand – they are driven back temporarily as many perish in fire. Murdus and Khaled stand back under the theory that Usif is handling it... that is until the swarm lands on his flesh. Murdus yanks Usif clear of the swarm, allowing the immolator to fling a flame into the swarm and end it.

Evidence is found that someone has been throwing bodies into the granary, possibly to clean the bones. None of the corpses have heads and all of them are recent... or at least not mummified. One corpse has an adamantine heavy flail – adamantine is slightly valuable and offers 2 piercing against anything with hard armor (e.g. plate, carapace, stone).

Khaled investigates a pantry room and narrowly avoids having a camel spider land on him. The creature is destroyed by fire and arrows.

The Servants' Entrance

They enter the house through a single door meant for the servants. The first room is a kitchen complete with tables, an oven, butcher block, and a mummified corpse with a dagger stuck in its ribs. Murdus withdraws the dagger, then drops the pitted and rusted tool. Usif examines the butcher's block, knocking it over and making a lot of noise in the process. Everyone awaits monster attack for sixty seconds. None arrives, so they press onward.

The room to the south is a chapel. Prayers and praises to Abadar, Sarenrae, and Pharasma are etched into its walls and small statues of all three deities adorn an altar. And someone has scratched through the carvings and defiled the altar. Impressed to find a shrine to a proper deity here in Osirion, Khaled takes time for a prayer to Sarenrae. His prayer concluded, he hears a female voice from the house's interior courtyard.

He enters the courtyard, followed by Usif and Murdus. This room is paved and has columns and statues at its four corners. Benches line the walls. Overhead a skylight allows sunlight into the room. A balcony overlooks the yard. A sandstone statue speaks to Khaled, "It has been a long time since any prayers to Sarenrae have been heard here. I am the spirit of this house. Why are you in this place of death?"

Khaled replies, "We are here on a mission from the church of Pharasma. What dangers are here?"

The statue replies, "The house guards continue their mission. Allow me to bless you."

Khaled kneels as the statue extends an arm. Its touch makes him sleepy. He shakes it off and climbs to his feet. The statue shifts form to that of less pleasant visage made of swirling sand; its touch causes Khaled to fall asleep. It begins to flow over him, its sand filling his mouth

and nose. Usif burns that sand allowing Murdus to shake Khaled awake, who gasps and chokes till he clears his throat of sand. The sand lady smashes into Usif.

Murdus presses his attack so Usif can quaff a healing potion; his ax barely hurts the monster and he takes a mighty slam in reply. Luckily, Khaled's two weapon attack deals it a mortal blow. The sand monster disperses into a shower of sand.

Khaled kicks the disrespectful sand monster's remains and trips over a suit of scale mail that had been contained within her. It is recent in manufacture.

The next room is the servant's dining room. The room after that is the master's dining room. It is decorated with motifs, marble dining and serving tables, and skulls and silver... six skulls sit upon six silver goblets seated upon six silver plates. Khaled starts to share a "skull and silver" story, but it is cut short when the skulls levitate to surround him and bite hard.

Murdus scythes thru the skull swarm ending three with one blow. Khaled smashes another with an arrow. Usif smashes the last two with his burning fists; skull shrapnel shower his flesh.

They wait another sixty seconds but hear no movement or noise from deeper in the house. Tarnished silver goblets (10gp) and six silver plates (5gp) go into a bag.

They move south into a room with stairs going to the second floor. All feel a hot and fetid breeze on their necks. So they continue sweeping and clearing the ground floor. The next room holds three guarding skeletons armed with broken khopeshes.

Another haunting flashback fills their heads. Murdus understands the Osirian words, "Masters! Hide upstairs. We will hold the doors with our lives."

Murdus and Usif are confused by the voices; they attack each other believing they are defending the house from crazed intruders. Khaled flees backwards into the courtyard while shooting arrows at the skeletons.

Two skeletons rush after Khaled. The third one attacks Usif who retreats out of the room. Murdus chops down that skeleton as it follows Usif.

Murdus pursues Usif while screaming, "Come back here! My ax is hungry!"

Khaled leaps over a table and flees the courtyard with skeletons pursuing. He sprints back through them and leaps for the balcony. He ignores his surroundings to keep shooting arrows down at the skeletons who wave their weapons uselessly at the burglar.

Usif screams at the pursuing Murdus, "Murdus, my pharaoh! It is I, Usif!" Murdus immediately snaps out of confusion, perhaps due to the honorific.

Khaled continues occupying the skeletons with arrows, causing minor wounds, while Murdus circles around from behind. His stealthy ax almost destroys one. They turn on Murdus who defends himself, allowing Khaled to drop down *Assassin's Creed* style from the balcony and destroy them both with paired daggers.

Khaled asks Murdus, "Where is Usif? Did you murder him? Do I need to help you cover up a murder?"

Murdus laughs, "No, he is gathering himself in the dining room. He is safe."

Usif screams from the dining room, "Why is the room spinning?"

Murdus answers, "It might be an attack! We are coming to you now!"

The last room at ground level is the bath. The large, dry, tiled pool has a thick blanket of sand at its bottom. Khaled tries the spigots - everyone is surprised to find that they work. One feeds cool clean water and the other heated clean water. Everyone decides upon a bath.

They investigate the rest of the room while the pool fills. A metal mirror hangs in rusted ruin. A headless corpse sits up right upon one of the privies. Usif even checks the privy hole. No monsters, no loot.

Wounds are cleaned and bound, then a fine bath is enjoyed. Muscles loosen in the heated water. Handfuls of sand scrub flesh clean. Usif the immolator heats the water further. Everyone discusses the merits of bathing in a dangerous place.

The Second Floor

They climb the stairs and quickly find the balcony that rings the four walls of the courtyard. Double doors, six in all, lead into the various rooms that make up the second floor. They investigate the southeastern room.

This room is the library, containing shelves, divans, and scattered, ruined scrolls. The lacquered furniture has survived time but not without becoming "poor quality". Khaled investigates the desk and finds a brass key. The family seal, a broken set of scales, and an incomplete set, very incomplete, of marble chess pieces are looted.

The next room is a den, ruined by time, sand, and Lamashtu's curse. The walls are decorated with carvings of verdant woods. The body lies inside room's closet on the far end of the room. Only its feet are exposed. They investigate cautiously. The body is headless. It appears the head was pulled off and its scalp shaved clean. It is enough information for Usif to identify

the killer as a *vargouille*. He explains: Its kiss kills. Each such kill creates a *vargouille* that must pull itself free of the corpse. They fly, they kill. They are quite stupid.

A gold wedding ring is removed from the body. Inside the ring is etched “To Akar from Panhet with Love Eternal”.

Everyone agrees to pay the ceilings and shelves special attention for lurking *vargouilles*, which might number as many as five going by the corpses in the granary.

Usif calls forth his flames again. Murdus readies his ax while whispering, “Sekhmet.” Khaled pockets the brass key.

Imanish, Devourer of Secrets

The master bedroom is next. A single lacquered dresser stands in this room of ruined cloth and furniture. A wasp nest occupies one corner of the ceiling; it appears dead.

Usif hurls a fireball at the nest, setting it on fire. It falls to the ground, setting fire to a pile of ruined cloth. Khaled rushes to extinguish the fire, accompanied by Murdus who watches the high ground.

Usif watches from the door and is startled by a bodiless voice at his ear, “So, you like setting fires. Is that a secret?”

Usif rushes into the room and slams the door shut. He explains, “Disembodied voice.”

Khaled and Murdus nod. Disembodied voices seem common in the necropolis. The group wait for the door to open or something else to happen. Nothing happens.

They turn their attention to the dresser. It lacks key holes or handles. Khaled stabs it several times to confirm it is inanimate. Closer examination proves that the drawers and doors are false. Murdus drags it away from the wall, revealing that the back is open. Inside is a single small chest.

Khaled examines the dresser and chest for traps, finding a tiny dart laden with poison. He unlocks the chest with the brass key after defeating the trap. He finds that the chest is chock full of gold ingots worth 25 gp each.

Usif watches closely. A voice whispers to him, "He is really good with traps. What other secrets is he hiding?"

Usif leans in close and catches Khaled's gaze, using his "Gimme fuel, gimme fire" ability and asks him, "Tell me your deepest desires."

Khaled's reply is no surprise, "Easy living, other men's wives, and theft."

The voice tells Usif, "Such sad secrets. Perhaps he is not deep."

The burnt wasp's nest is investigated and found to contain a circlet. Usif dons the taut, black band with a black skull. It is designed to be worn on head or hat.

Khaled looks up from the chest and declares, "That is a necromancer's device!"

Usif reaches up to remove it, but finds he cannot.

Murdus makes a scalp ripping motion, indicating he can remove the device. Usif shakes his head vigorously. Khaled sighs.

Murdus asks Usif, “Earlier you said you heard a disembodied voice. Was that the only time? Whose voice is it? Does it demand of you great deeds?”

Usif replies, “No. Today is the first time, but I have heard it several times since entering this room. It keeps asking me questions.”

Murdus smiles and says, “Questions! That must be Ptemenib’s little bird friend, Kaseem. Kaseem! Appear before us. We will talk!”

Kaseem does not appear, causing Khaled to go into a frenzy of furniture tipping. The thick dust is stirred up, revealing to him an unmoving patch of air above and behind Usif’s head.

Khaled fires an arrow at that spot, but it is blocked by Murdus who yells, “Kaseem is a friend!”

A disembodied voice rings out loudly, “Tell me your secrets and I will serve you! Secrets for service!”

The voice ignores demands to identify itself and appear.

Again it asks, “Tell me your secrets!”

Murdus agrees immediately and blurts out, “I will be Pharaoh one day. Many will die!”

The voice says, “Do you agree to the bargain?”

Khaled shouts, “That thing ain’t friendly.”

Murdus, realizing that voice is not Kaseem, picks up a ruined curtain and turns to Khaled. He says, “Calm yourself my friend. Here let me wrap your head in cloth. You know the darkness soothes you so.”

Murdus spins and throws at the spot that Khaled keeps pointing out. The curtain hangs over a point in space, allowing Murdus to ball the cloth around that point.

The voice speaks from inside the curtain, "Release me so I can serve... you will keep our agreement?"

Murdus answers, "Yes."

The curtain is removed to reveal a flying head covered in fur and six horns. The face is animalistic or demonic.

Usif blurts out, "It's a doru div. They crave secrets for their service. And cannot be trusted."

The voice rings out again, "I am Imanish. I crave secrets and return service."

The group settles down to parlay with the creature. Murdus offers a host of secrets for its service in identifying the traps, monsters, and loot in this house.

Imanish explains, "Little of any of those remain in this house. I lead the vargouille, who believe me to be their natural leader. They are not smart. I have tried breeding them, but it is difficult and their number remain low... especially with their added duty of destroying intruders."

They leave well before dark, intending to make the Necropolis' gate. However, some distance from that gate they are intercepted by their friends in the Scorched Hand band: Velriana Hypaxes is their leader, Khelru is their healer, Azaz Arafe is their wizard, and Idorii is their guard/burglar.

Velriana explains, "I have discovered the Pharasman token for the Erudite Eye via divination. The tokens are stored in a particular location in the temple. If you were switch out

that token before the next drawing and replace your actual drawing with it, then we could investigate it together.”

Khaled replies, “I have a contact in these walls that knows the Eye’s location. Breaking into the temple is not necessary.”

Murdus adds, “Perhaps Imanish could steal the token for us.”

Imanish, currently invisible, whispers, “I can fly, turn invisible, suggest, and my bite is poisonous. Nothing would be easier!”

Velriana nods at Khaled’s words, then shakes her head, “That is valuable information but I must have the church’s official permission, even if it is manufactured.”

End of the Session

- Bonds
 - Usif removes his bond with Murdus since Murdus has offered him a job when he becomes Pharaoh.
 - Khaled removes his bond with Murdus worried that Murdus may be succumbing to fiendish influences.
- Alignments
 - Murdus defended those weaker.
- Did you learn something new and interesting about the world (Yes/No)?

- Khaled learned much from Unwrapped Harmony about the Necropolis and its inhabitants.
- Did you overcome a notable enemy (Yes/No)? Sand Statue/Sand monster lady.
- Did you loot a notable treasure (Yes/No)? Cursed Skull Headband and a chest full of Nazi gold! Kelish. I mean Kelish.

Usif and Khaled level to 4th. Murdus levels from 2nd to 4th.