

MUMMY RUSTLERS - SESSION SUMMARY 12/04/2016

TODAY'S EPISODE: RACE FOR THE ERUDITE EYE

Our heroes have been tomb raiding in Wati's necropolis under the auspices of the Church of Pharasma's official "We Love Organized Tomb Raiding" contest. They have made friends with the Scorched Hand team and completed several raids and side missions successfully. During a celebration of their joint success, Usif had a vision of betrayal which was carried out by the Scorched Hand member Azaz with aid from Hetshepsut, Murdus' sister, and a giant demon. The fight was a draw, but only because Denat begged help from Ki-rin to slay the giant demon. The betrayers fled. Now it is a race for the Erudite Eye, because a Pharaoh's spirit resides there, waiting to give aid to the Pharaoh's successor.

New leveling rules have been implemented this session. Cost was "current level + 7 xp", now cost is "(current level + 7 xp) * 2".

Our heroes are:

- Patrick as Usif bin Adeen, Osirian human Immolator 5
- Tim as Denat, ifrit Cleric 4?
- Chris as Murdus Sangaree, Osirian human Fighter 4
- Ernest as Khaled, Keleshite human Burglar 5

Clean-up Then Race

The Scorched Hand membership has been reduced by betrayal:

- Velriana remains loyal to Scorched Hand policy, but has been poisoned by Azaz's scorpion familiar, Zazu, who was in turn slain by Khaled. She is too weak to race for the Erudite Eye.

- Idorii remains loyal to Velriana and remains behind to guard her.
- Azaz betrayed the Scorched Hand and the Mummy Rustlers. He fled with Hetshepsut.
- Khelru was magically charmed by Azaz during the fight. He too betrayed the Scorched Hand and Mummy Rustlers. He fled with Azaz and Hetshepsut.

The two teams discuss their options. It is decided that Denat the cleric (player is absent this session) will remain behind with Velriana, freeing up Idorii to accompany Usif, Khaled, and Murdus. Everyone will rest until sunup, then travel to the Erudite Eye.

Khaled and Idorii head to a black market just after midnight to meet his contact, Kim-Ali. They take cat mummies (a giant vase worth) and various goods looted from the necropolis, which will be traded for intelligence and adventuring supplies, both sorely needed for the Erudite Eye.

Kim-Ali does indeed have potions on hand for sale, though he admits that most of his chemical stock is mumia. Khaled purchases healing potions, anti-toxins, and alchemist fire for the balance owed by Kim-Ali to Khaled for the sale of looted goods handed over days earlier.

Khaled also finds a merchant setting up early and purchases a dueling rapier. "I need to kill a man," he explains to the shopkeeper.

Race for the Erudite Eye

Usif, Idorii, Khaled, and Murdus arrive at the Necropolis gate just before dawn. As team "Mummy Rustlers", they claim their new tile from the priests which thanks to their skullduggery yesterday is for the Erudite Eye location.

Khaled also takes this opportunity to tell the Pharasman clergy and guards about Hetshepsut, her evil deeds recent and planned, etc...

The guard captain replies, "Yeah, I got that all written down. You might want to stay away from the Erudite Eye until we investigate fully."

Khaled nods and resolves to lace the donuts in the nearest donut shop with poison. Everyone agrees to push on immediately. The healing, anti-toxin, and alchemist fires are shared out equally.

They make their way to the site to find it crushed by time: ruined buildings, walls, and weeds surround the temple whose exterior has been ravaged by time. They advance into warren of broken buildings, heading toward the temple.

Khaled calls out ambush just as several of Hetshepsut's men reveal themselves. They throw nets from a rooftop.

Khaled shoots an arrow into one net man. Murdus and Usif are netted and pulled upward by the net men. Four more attackers with crossbows emerge from the cover of a nearby building and pepper Khaled with arrows. Idorii works on cutting her netted companions loose.

Murdus braces his feet against the building and pushes off, pulling his net man down – the pair land heavily together where Murdus uses the man's own khopesh to decapitate him. Usif uses his burning brand to burn his net off, but is injured during the process by an arrow and burning rope. He then takes cover behind some rubble and snipes at the crossbow men with thrown fire.

Khaled looks up in time to see the remaining net man throw a tangle foot bag. He leaps at the thrown object and deflects it harmless away (and past the net man's head). Murdus uses the decapitated corpse as a shield and runs at the crossbowmen, where he uses the corpse to beat one fire injured man to death.

Usif accidentally burns Murdus with friendly fire, then the crossbow men cut at Murdus with khopeshs. Usif doubles down and throws a volley of fire into one man who Murdus kills via ax. Another attacker suffers a backhand cut from Murdus' ax blows.

Khaled and Idorii circles around quickly and stealthily using ruined buildings and vegetation for cover. They encounter a duo of dark creepers - angry words are exchanged. Khaled yells, "I use my super power - sneaking into the light." The pair run into a sunlight laden area nearby, emerging close by the melee. The pair kill an enemy with thrown daggers.

The last ambusher surrenders. Murdus accepts it.

Usif, "Where is your mistress?" *In that temple. We were told to ambush anyone who approached.*

Usif, "Who is with your ex-mistress?" *Hetshepsut, her lizard, Azaz, and a handful of her cherubs.*

The man is allowed to leave the necropolis with the promise of never returning to Hetshepsut's service. He agrees and runs toward the Necropolis gate.

Entering the Erudite Eye

Huge stone stairs lead up and into the temple. A pair of khopesh armed statues lie guard at the foot of the stairs. Debris lies everywhere. A pack of skeletal jackals rise from the debris piles.

Murdus picks this moment to consult the spirit in his ax. It shows him a vision: *Murdus is confronted by the Fiend Pharaoh, Hetshepsu, and his ax. Hetshepsu utters, "You are on the threshold of finding my murderer. You must prevent his soul fragments from rising and prove you are my true heir on the walls at Tumen."* Murdus sees the walls Tumen behind Hetshepsu. Hieroglyphics cover those wall... his name and his sister's are included there.

Usif produces a burning brand and demands, "Flee curs!"

The skeletal jackals pause only a split second, then attack.

The jackals suffer entanglement from a tangle foot bag thrown by Khaled. Several chase him up a column. Usif burns several with thrown fire. Murdus kills one with ax, then slips on wet viscera, perhaps a jackal carcass lacking bones – he rises to kneeling and sweeps his ax thru the attackers. More skeletal jackals corner Usif against a column where he keeps them at bay and destroys one with fire. Khaled climbs further up his column then uses his back and legs to push against it from the nearby wall. The column loosens, then falls, crushing the tangled jackals.

They re-group after the combat and examine the area. They find enough de-boned jackals corpses to surmise that someone had recently created the skeletal jackals. And that all tracks for Hetshepsut's party have been erased by their combat with the skeletons. Khaled checks the adjoining halls for tracks but finds that they have been sweep recently... and that they appear to be regularly cleaned.

Usif reviews their surroundings to determine that this is a temple to Nethys, a god of creation and destruction, plus arcane and cleric magic.

They decide to venture toward the main temple, which by traditional design would be straight ahead. The next chamber has a large domed ceiling held up by columns. The room also includes a large fountain, a raised dais atop a stage is accessed by stairs on either side, and two sets of double doors and two hallways offer exit from the room. Atop the dais is a black and white statue of Nethys.

Khaled says to no one in particular, "Erudite means damp."

Idorii replies, "I think it means learned."

They enter – seeing no immediate danger they spread out to look around. Khaled moves closer to the dais to look down a hallway. Murdus examines the fountain. Then a sand storm explodes in the room, reducing vision and cutting flesh.

Khaled shouts, "Right hallway!" The others answer, "See you there!" and "What?!?"

Usif stumbles into a ragged clad figure. Its gaze lays a curse upon him. He screams out for help.

Murdus hears a woman's scream and rushes to Idorii's rescue. He finds her and yells, "Why did you scream?"

She replies, "My screams are not that feminine."

Murdus nods and yells back, "Then it must have been Usif!"

Khaled stands briefly in the hallway, then decides to head back into the sand storm.

Usif is fighting the curse's paralysis just as Khaled arrives. The pair confront the rag covered man, whose cowl slips back to reveal a face with one giant black eyeball at the center that is surrounded by inward facing fangs. Khaled stabs the creature, disrupting its gaze. Usif shakes off the curse.

Spectral hands lash out from the ragged clad creature to touch Khaled who dodges clear. Murdus steps into the melee and the creature's gaze. He cuts it once with his ax, then a hand of stone reaches out of the floor and pulls him away. Usif shoves his burning brand right through the creature's black eye, killing it instantly. The sandstorm collapses immediately into heaps of sand.

The hand gripping Murdus releases him and retreats into the earth, then re-emerges to grab Khaled and try to throw him into a wall. It retreats into the stone wall just before Murdus' ax connects; the ax leaves a gash in the wall that slowly heals.

Murdus, urged by his companions, commands, "Imanish! Tell us of this creature and I will tell you a secret."

Imanish explains, "You know what drives me... master. That is an ah-gosh div. It hates beauty, particularly in mortals."

Usif replies, "So that's why it attacked me!"

Imanish continues, "It probably came here to deface the temple. But it appears to have made little head way on that project – the walls and statue here appear unharmed."

Khaled demands, "How about the thing that attacks from the walls?"

Imanish states, "I do not know that secret. It is probably a temple servant. Something stupid and simple."

Khaled cleans himself in the fountain, which is full of cool, clean water. The others do likewise.

Khaled, again to no one in particular, asks, “What is it called when Hetshepsut recruits new followers?” He answers his own question, “It’s called a Hat trick.”

Everyone groans.

Murdus observes that a temple to a sex related god would probably sprout boobs to chase off trespassers and thereby defeat its own purpose by attracting endless waves of teenage boys.

Usif uses a fire trick fueled with blood donated by Murdus to find Hetshepsut. This leads them exactly along her path through the temple. They retrace their steps from the entrance, thru the fountain room and into a library. A quick examination of the books there reveals one has been recently read. A key passage states “*...an akcot is an elemental that is bound to a structure for cleaning and defense. A key stone binds the creature to the structure. That item is built into the structure and usually well hidden.*”

Usif’s flames lead them thru other rooms to a locked door. The burglar and rogue are able to open that door which reveals a bedroom and writing desk with varying degrees of wear from the passage of time. They head north from there. Another hallway and another room. Murdus opens that door which is trapped – a scythe cuts him deeply. Then it resets.

They hurry thru into a circular room with a cryptic message in hieroglyphics: “The righteous and the holy have no need of staff, rod, or ring. Put your faith in the good magister and walk without fear.” Usif believes the magister is the temple high priest.

Khaled examines the chest in that room for traps. It is unlocked and empty. Everyone discusses leaving their magic items in the chest to avoid later problems with the magister... or traps. Everyone hates this idea, particularly Murdus (a magic and possessed ax) and Usif (a necromancer hand band melded to his flesh).

No secret doors are found, though a set of bloody foot prints is found leading back the way they came. The prints are very light, possibly due to the akcot’s cleaning.

Khaled strips off his magic cloth armor and deposits in the chest, “I at least will suffer no ill fate.”

The Bloody Footprints

They back track the bloody footprints and find they leave the building and possibly the owner was responsible for the jackal skeletons. So, they back track again and Usif’s continue tracking Hetshepsut using his flames. The trail leads downstairs to a dual chamber separated by bars. In the other chamber is a statue of Nethys’ in pharaoh garb.

Khaled finds the bar mechanism and opens them. He enters the chamber followed by the others; he allows the bars to close behind them.

The Nethys statue awakens! It charges swinging its staff and seemingly casting spells from its right hand. Khaled runs for the right hand door and is slapped away by the staff. Usif

burns it with his fire and is also slapped in turn, proving it is capable of fighting two opponents at once. Murdus knocks a big chunk of stone out of its hide, then slays it with a second ax blow.

Murdus encourages Khaled to go back and get his armor. Khaled complains bitterly about stupid misleading temple curses. Khaled picks the bar mechanism again and retrieves his armor from upstairs.

Usif continues tracking... the trail leads thru the eastern door and into an L shaped hallway. A secret door stands ajar in the eastern hallway.

Khaled and Usif guess that the escaped necromancer (Mr. Bloody Footsteps) left via the secret door. The secret door opens onto a room containing a statue and stone bench. Murdus reads the hieroglyphics: *“Woe to you that would plunder here. Turn away. Turn away or the forgotten pharaoh will consume you body and soul.”*

The dust on the statue reveals it had had a funeral mask that was removed recently. The sound of scraping bones comes from behind the statue – suddenly a snake skeleton topped with a human skull rushes and out bites at Khaled. Murdus leaps upon it, intent on wrestling it into submission. So, it bites Murdus instead. Usif burns its tail and Khaled bludgeons it with his sheathed rapier while Murdus keeps it pinned. The skeletal snake body collapses and the fanged human skull rolls across the floor.

Usif leans in to examine the head, “I think it’s fangs are dripping poison.”

The skull snaps at hands and fingers as it is bagged for later use. The room is searched – Usif finds the trap that probably injured the necromancer who they also blame for looting the funeral mask and creating the skeletal jackals. And found is a twisted up piece of paper that Khaled believes was used to hold mumia dust.

Someone guesses, “Pox Boy! That’s probably our mystery necromancer.”

They continue along the eastern hallway, which twists right. On the left are double doors, slightly ajar. And straight ahead is a room separated from the hallway by bars. They investigate the left hand doors, reasoning that “Hetshepsut didn’t go this way”.

It is a large octagonal room. Columns carved with fantastic creatures support the roof: skeletal creature, a hawk woman, an angelic lion, and a feminine figure of smoke and electricity. A raised platform and dais sits on the far end of the room. An arcane circle is etched into the floor at the room’s center.

They approach the dais while avoiding the circle. The hawk woman and smoke woman columns (Caryatid Columns!) attack with stone khopeshes. Khaled takes a cut and flees toward the dais. Murdus bashes one with his ax, noting that their stone bodies offer a lot of armor.

Khaled cries out, “Not the hot one!”

Murdus replies loudly, “They are both hot!”

Usif destroys the damaged one with fire just as the akcot’s hand attacks him from the floor. Murdus attempts to pull him free of its grasp. Usif burns the hand, forcing it to retreat.

The smoke woman column chases Khaled who hides behind the dais. He desperately searches for controls that drive the caryatid column away. Murdus attacks from behind and destroys it.

Everyone tends to their wounds, while Usif examines the summoning circle. He decides he can summon something to aid them. He requires a sacrifice: Khaled gives up a pair of gold and onyx earrings intended for Valriana.

Usif uses the sacrifice, his own fire magic and the summoning circle to bring forth a lesser fire elemental. The group departs with Usif at the rear, followed by the brightly burning fire elemental.

The Barred Room

The Mummy Rustlers wait for Khaled to pick the bar mechanism. The bars rise and they enter the room where an ambush is sprung by Hetshepsut, her cold lizard, Azaz, and Khelru who were hidden behind the room's many columns.



Hetshepsut gloats, “I see you choose to enter Nethys’ temple without wearing a Nethys’ holy symbol.” She proudly shows her own, a half white, half black mask on a necklace.

She declares, "I will reach the prize before you, brother! Muhahahaha!"

Murdus replies, "Perhaps... but with fewer companions!" He rushes Azaz who casts grease on the floor before him. Murdus slips and slides to a stop in front of Azaz. He rises and slashes the wizard with his ax. In turn, the wizard's flaming sphere rolls over him, burning him severely.

Khelru casts a beneficial spell on Hetshepsut and then takes Khaled's thrown dagger in the shoulder.

Usif sics his fire elemental on Hetshepsut only to see it intercepted by her cold lizard. The two monsters snap at each other long enough for the fire elemental to understand that the lizard absorbs heat. Then it switches tactics, trying to get around the lizard to attack Hetshepsut. The lizard dogs it heavily, always seeking to keep itself between its mistress and the fire.

Usif sighs, then runs at Azaz. He dodges easily past the tumbling flaming sphere and jabs his burning brand into the wizard's side. Khelru rushes to his lover's aid, delivering a healing spell. Then he is brutally shoved into the flaming sphere's path by Khaled.

Azaz watches his lover, Khelru, die by fire. He shouts an angry incantation and shoots spells at Khaled who dodges behind a column. Murdus grabs the distracted wizard and shoves him head first into the flaming sphere.

Murdus commands, "Cease your magics and I will let you live." Azaz doesn't have a chance to decide as the fire consumes his already heavily wounded frame.

Murdus drops the corpse. He and his sister lock angry glances from across the room.

Hetshepsut screams, "You take my followers! I will take your followers!"

She shoots arrow after arrow at Usif who throws up a shield of fire that burns them all into harmless dust.

Khaled sneaks around on Hetshepsut. Murdus, recognizing that he is too wounded to fight his sister, decides on deceit. He spins his ax about his head then brings it to rest at his side.

He throws his arms wide open and shouts happily to his sister, “Who needs a hug?”

Hetshepsut sneers, “Don’t make me shoot you, Murdus. That only made me angry when we were children!”

Murdus drops his arms, “I have been thinking. Maybe you are the rightful pharaoh. I...”

His words are interrupted by Khaled’s sneak attack on her. His rapier sinks deeply into her right kidney. Her back arches in pain and she screams.

Her ice lizard gallops to her rescue and bashes Khaled away with its club like tail. Unfortunately for her, Khaled hooks fingers into her head dress as he is bashed away. His momentum carries her along, allowing him to shove her at the fire elemental.

Usif commands his fire elemental to attack! It leaps upon her, burning her all over until it is driven off by the ice lizard’s heat absorbing powers.

Murdus rushes to Hetshepsut’s prone form. He cradles her head in his hands. She is dying.

He says, “I am sorry, sister.”

She replies thru burned lips, “You won’t let me die, will you?”

Murdus shakes his head, “There can only be one of us, one Pharaoh. I will take you home and bury you next to mom and dad. Good bye, sister.” Hetshepsut passes.

Behind Murdus, the others kill the ice lizard as it struggles to reach its mistress.

The fight has been won.

Murdus gently wraps his sister's body in rags and canvas bags; he will honor his promise. He claims her bow, the magic heirloom that drove her to claim the pharaoh hood.

Usif asks Idorii, "What do you want to do with your friend's bodies?"

She replies, "I knew Khelru not at all. I thought Azaz my friend as we spent much time together. It turns out I knew him not at all. I guess we should bury them."

Murdus, Usif, and Idorii claim Nethyan holy symbols off the dead. Khaled is able to produce a fourth from his pocket, apparently placed there by Velriana as a love token.

The dead are looted:

- Khelru - two alchemist fire, two holy water, scroll of hold person, an everburning torch, 29 gp, scale mail, and a quarter staff.
- Azaz - a healing potion, scroll of identify, scroll of levitate, wand of grease (9 charges), a small steel mirror, and a spell book.
- Hetshepsut had only the magic bow.

Khaled gives his healing potion to Murdus, then drinks the looted one. They bandage Usif. Then the trio work together to skin the ice lizard so Usif can make a fine cloak or light armor.

All the while, Usif whistles happily because all their opponents died by fire. That has always been a good omen... at least it is good for those not doing the dying.

“It’s a shame Khelru died,” said Denat. “He was the only one that didn’t deserve it. He was mind controlled by Azaz.”

Khaled keeps his peace. He came here intending to kill the man in front of his lover for his betrayal of Velriana, and that’s exactly what he did.

End of the Session

- Bonds
 - None resolved
- Alignments
 - Everyone fulfills their alignments.
- Did you learn something new and interesting about the world (Yes/No)?
 - Holy symbols are important when entering holy ground.
- Did you overcome a notable enemy (Yes/No)? Hetshepsut
- Did you loot a notable treasure (Yes/No)? Hetshepsut’s bow.

Usif levels from 3rd to 5th. Denat levels to 4th. Khaled levels to 5th.