

MUMMY RUSTLERS - SESSION SUMMARY 1/15/2017

TODAY'S EPISODE: A THIN LINE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

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 enjoyed some success, enduring hardships, betrayal, murder, revenge, loot, and love. And now our heroes range far and wide across Wati to turn back an undead tide and deal with fearful citizens, indiscriminate summoned monsters, arson, and an alarming lack of looting. In the process they have rescued the Pharashamin priestess, Ptemenib, with the aid her psychopomp, Kaseem, from the Silver Chain. In turn, they find evidence that the Silver Chain gang has been taken over by the Forgotten Pharaohs who have orchestrated the undead tide to cover their real goal: The resurrection of Hakotep.

Our heroes are:

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

The Necropolis

Our heroes are inside the Necropolis, located in a building the Fading has setup as a mummia factory. The man in charge of that operation, Palm Leaf, told them of recent sightings of the Forgotten Pharaohs within the Necropolis: many at the snake pit, plus a group lead inside the Pyramid by a figure with an impressive gold mask. Intelligence gained earlier shows that the Forgotten Pharaoh leader, Meret-Hetef, intends to resurrect Hakotep. And what's long dead should remain dead, so that the living can get on with messing things up all on their own.

And off they go to the *Pyramid of Arithmetic Bliss*, which is a walled compound whose gates were looted long ago. The trio strolls through the gates wearing their Forgotten Pharaoh disguises. Inside the compound is a sort of pyramid shaped building, dead garden, a dry pool, and four outlying buildings. Ghost Hapshepsut scouts around the pyramid and finds no additional entrances or points of interest. The outlying buildings turn out to be a bust, so the front doors are pried open.

A long, wide hall opens before them with records niches in its walls. They listen to Osirian words echoing through the building, which Murdus understands as mathematical terms and equations. The echoes come from everywhere and nowhere. Khaled scouts ahead for traps until malignant clouds of shadows form into evil looking dwarfs. Merely seeing the creatures causes Khaled to freeze, then Murdus. Murdus recites mathematical equations (e.g. if a whore costs 4 coins an hour, how much does she cost for two hours). Khaled shoves bandages into his ears just before he is touched by a dwarf. They are still largely frozen in their tracks. By comparison Usif is unimpressed – he throws fire, holy fire, and burns one creature. Thrown holy water and more fire destroys that creature. Murdus goes mad and chants mathematical equations. Then he turns his ax on Usif. They trip Murdus and destroy the last math dwarf.

Sadly, they are not “math dwarfs” as Murdus first guessed. They are merely dead men driven mad by math... sort of like math nerds turned undead. Usif sacrifices paper scrolls from the niches to his flames. “They wouldn’t cancel The Big Bang Theory so we had to take matters into our own hands!” muses Khaled.

The far chamber contains tables, many sarcophagi, and camp site in the northeast corner. The camp was used by 4-6 people until a day or two ago. They left behind some mundane

equipment, including some antiques (five ancient falchions). Their search is interrupted by a pair of mummies emerging from their sarcophagi. One catches a bit of thrown alchemist's fire before its fear aura washes over the interlopers. Usif flings more fire at that mummy, who responds by picking Murdus up and hurling him across the room. Murdus' flesh turns necrotic.

That mummy is destroyed by Khaled's sneak attack. The smell of burning, secret mummy spices fill the air making everyone slightly hungry. The second mummy closes with Usif who sets it on fire before he is thrown across the room. An ax cut does little damage to it. Then Usif destroys it with fire.

A quick recon shows the other sarcophagi no longer contain mummies... they're probably at the Necropolis gates, trying to get out. The sarcophagi provide no loot, but the tables yield many mathematical devices that might be valuable.

Murdus consults his goddess Sekhmet through his ax for a mummy rot cure. She replies, "Man up! Solve your own problems!"

They go west into a hallway that parallels the main tunnel but find a lot of empty rooms. Another hallway parallels this in the east. There they find a room with a corpse in Forgotten Pharaoh garb. The man was killed by mummy rot and lots of old school bashing. Thieves tools, 4gp, 10gp turquoise stones (3), brass funerary mask, a khopesh, robes, etc... And a notebook containing a list of locations within the Necropolis. Most of these are crossed out, except this one, the Observatory of Truth and Wisdom, and the Tomb of Menket Mocea. And that means the campsite belonged to the Forgotten Pharaohs who didn't die.

The trio rush off to check a nearby elegiac device location. It is located in the Tomb of Menket Mocea. Usif quickly revives the elegiac device which points south toward the Observatory of Truth and Wisdom. Then their attention turns to the dead sorcerer's tomb in the basement. Khaled disarms a fireball trap. The contents yield a zogp funerary mask, a senet board game with magical pieces, and a mummy. The corpse is checked briefly but otherwise left alone.

A Cure, An Ambush, then the Observatory

They rush off to the *Tomb of the Erudite Eye* building, where Usif uses the summoning room to cure Murdus' mummy rot. A magical device is sacrificed in the ritual. The mummy rot is removed though Murdus' flesh retains the shadow of a hand print near his spine. Meanwhile Khaled uses bandages on his own wounds and plays the magic senet board game. He loses badly.

They decide to attempt an ambush in the Erudite Eye's main room against the Forgotten Pharaoh forces in the Necropolis. A message token (a tiny bird that carries a physical note) is used to deliver a note to Meret-Hetef, requesting his presence at this location. A corpse is dressed in Forgotten Pharaoh robes and mask, then dumped in the room. Murdus piles furniture behind several doors exiting that chamber. Additional work is done to make the room worse for the ambushes. But no one shows up within the first three hours.

So, the trio sets off for the *Observatory of Truth and Wisdom*. This house of record keeping and learning is also dedicated to several gods including Thoth. It is single floor in a three story tall building that lacks a roof, so its occupants can study the sky. The walls are covered in blue tiles detailing constellations and important events. Death motifs were added after the Necropolis was built. These prayers to Pharama are the mainstay prayers but provide no clues.

The debris on the ground shows that the dead and undead dwelling here rose and left recently. Usif finds a star chart, similar in type and format to the one found earlier by the dark folk. A tarp is pulled away to reveal Pharama's holy symbol (in blue tile format) on the floor... and that in turn is also a magically sealed portal. They work at opening the portal and finally happen upon the solution – reciting aloud the one Pharama prayer absent from the blue tiles. A spiral stairway is revealed and that leads to a long chamber with a pool and pillars and statues.

Fear The Walking Dead

This large chamber's size is lost on the trio as their torch light does not reach across the chamber. The hieroglyphs tell that Nefruchapsies built the Pharama prayer room overhead, this secret tomb, and helped rebuild the city after the Necropolis was built. The next room is also large with 60' ceilings.

There are sixty-plus zombies shackled to the walls and another dozen or so free roaming. The trio back out quickly. Khaled pins one part of the double door closed. Usif throws fire past Murdus into the zombie room, seeking to start several large zombie fires, which goes well until the fires start dying. Murdus blocks the door and chops zombies as they approach. Khaled helps Murdus by stabbing at arms and legs.

Someone or something's singing reaches their ears. Usif looks back to see torches coming down the spiral stairs. He moves closer to the stairs, staying near pillars. Three Forgotten Pharaoh goons reach the foot of those stairs.

Usif shouts at the men, "Brothers! Come help against the zombies."

They move forward without reply, so he throws fire at them. They answer with thrown fire. Then he spots a pair of hellish hounds. He retreats quickly, luring the dogs back to the others where Murdus hooks one with his ax and flings it into the zombie room.

Khaled sneaks into the darkness and quaffs a “see in the dark” potion. Then he begins hunting for the singer, whose song is bolstering their enemies. He narrows the voice down to the southeast corner of the room, but sees no one. Then he poisons his blades.

Usif ends a cultist’s life with FIRE! Murdus keeps the zombies back with his actual back, ignoring their bites, so he can hook the second hound and throw it overhead into the zombie room. Zombies and hounds mix it up in there.

Usif and the remaining cultists snipe at each with fire and spells from behind pillars with Usif getting the upper hand. Murdus swings his ax in long arcs, destroying zombies, and flinging others away from him. Usif ducks down to drink a healing potion as a zombie flung by Murdus’ ax flies past into a cultist.

Khaled stabs at the invisible singer. Blade and poison bite the flesh of Meret-Hetef, who casts a *Tasha’s uncontrollable hideous laughter* spell at him. Khaled fakes hysterical laughter, then sneak attacks her. She counters with *glitterdust* which drives the blind Khaled back into the darkness... that is now lit by a glitter dust covered man. He leaves behind a dying Meret-Hetef.

Usif kills another cultist then turns his fire on the last cultist whose shield proves more impressive – fire bounces off of it several times. The hellish hounds die beneath a small hill of biting zombies. Another zombie gets flung by Murdus’ ax. Khaled washes his face clear of blinding *glitterdust* in the pool. Usif drives the flung zombie into that cultist who electrocutes it to death with *shocking grasp*.

Murdus fling/chops another zombie at the cultist who barely ducks; Usif hits him with fire as he stands back up. More Murdus flung zombies make their battle way more interesting than they had hoped for. Then he is overrun by the zombie mass.

Khaled flings holy water into the zombie mass, opening him up for a *burning hands* from the heavily wounded cultist. Usif kills the gloating cultist with a burning hand to the throat; his brain boils out of his eye sockets.

The zombies cling and pin Murdus; teeth and nails tear his flesh. Khaled rushes over and stabs at the massed zombies. Usif re-summons his brand and throws burning brands into the mass. Murdus flings the remaining clear and stands up! The trio end the remaining loose zombies.

With the zombies destroyed, they investigate the zombie chamber. The Pharasman altar in that room has been desecrated and the room used to build up a zombie army. The dead are looted:

- Meret-Hetef – scroll of expeditious retreat, wand of invisibility (10), funerary mask (gold, 50gp), sickle, armor (heavily stabbed), various wizard equipment items, 17gp, and bracelets of lapis lazuli.
- The cultists – standard equipment load out.
- The zombies – nothing.

The family seal on the Pharasman altar radiates necromancy. Usif holds a flame in his hand to examine it more closely. The seal has been corrupted to help enhance the zombie factory established in this room. Soaking it in a holy water font will destroy that effect. Then returning the seal to the altar will re-sanctify the altar and room.

They exit the zombie room into a small room with feminine statues wearing spidery garments. Stars and constellation mosaics are on the floor, walls, and ceiling. Khaled locates a pressure plate in front of the doors on the far side of the room. They pass through that chamber without incident and into a hallway that circles back onto itself.

The first door opens onto a burial chamber of stone biers, sarcophagi, and creatures. Human corpses turned feral undead run dog-like at the trio but are stopped short by a quick retreat and door closing. Their snarls and scratching do not budge the door.

Grandma Got Run Over By A Necromancer

Another door is opened into the area encircled by the hallway. The room contains a desk, three skeletons, and a metal cage containing the mummified head of an old woman.

The severed head screams, “Were you sent by my worthless grandson? Tell him he’ll get no more help from me! Answer Neferekhu!”

Khaled responds, “We want to kill your grandson!”

The severed head responds, “Who doesn’t?!? Get them!” The skeletons attack.

Usif destroys one while Khaled ducks under the cage swung by a skeleton. Neferekhu casts a *blindness/deafness* on Usif who then gets stabbed too.

Khaled attempts to disarm the skeleton swinging Neferekhu’s head cage, stabbing her through the head instead. She shoots a *dread bolt* spell at him in turn. He stabs the skeleton next, then is paralyzed by her *bold person* spell.

Usif blinks some vision back into his eyes in time to avoid a spear through his parts. Then he flings a burning brand into the skeleton swinging Neferekhu's cage. The skeleton collapses in ashes and the cage rolls away... toward the paralyzed Khaled. Usif throws a blanket over the cage, rendering her impotent. Murdus crumples the third skeleton into bone shards.

They threaten her into silence, then start a dialogue with her.

Neferekh finally responds, "I will help you, but you must promise to kill me." Usif agrees to that term eagerly.

She continues, "I was cursed with vision by the Forgotten Pharaoh. My grandson killed me out of jealousy; he never had the vision. He put my head in this cage and revived me with necromancy so he could use my visions to his advantage. My grandson is down below with his mummia, his body guards, and a creature made of crystal from the lower planes named Sekuer.

Their conversation at an end, Khaled asks, "Are you ready to die? Sacrificed to the flames?"

Usif says, "Please say no." Then he whispers, "Beg!"

Neferekhu replies, "I am ready to meet Pharama and be judged."

Usif sends her to the lower planes.

They search the room. The desk and shelves hold birth and marriage records for Wati just after the Necropolis' establishment up through several hundred years ago. Khaled reads the family history that Neferekhu was dictating to the skeletons. Khaled notes several humiliating details about her grandson, including horrible nicknames and bed wetting episodes.

Holy Water and Nebta-Khufre

The next room is identical to the research room, but without skeletons, cages, and mummified heads. It contains the official death records from the same time period.

The room after that is a room dedicated to mummifying animals. Several mummified creatures are there, including an elephant. But no tusks and no valuables.

They descend the stairs. It opens onto a large blue tiled room, which includes a trap that spins blue tiles, blade like, through anyone entering the room. Pharasman holy symbols prevent the trap from activating. A pair of bronze doors are the only exit from the room.

They find a large, octagon shaped room with another set of bronze doors at its far end. A statue of a matronly woman stands at its center. Curtains along the walls cover alcoves. Ghost Hatshepsut scouts the alcoves and reports back, "Several are empty alcoves, some lead to hallways, and one holds an undead of some sort."

Everyone lines up in front of that alcove to destroy the undead. Khaled cries out the signal – "Behind the arras! A rat, a rat!" and plunges his rapier through the fabric into the form behind. The undead rips the curtain open. Its gaze sweeps the group, disappearing Khaled and Usif. Murdus remains, blinks at the loss of his friends, again at the monster's fear aura, then chops it with his ax.

Khaled and Usif are teleported into the blue tile room. They rush back to fight! And arrive just in time to see the crypt thing explode from Murdus' second ax blow.

The statue of Pharasma is examined but nothing new is learned. Usif speculates that the alcoves leading to hallways are part of a maze. They exit through double doors on the south

wall. It leads to a holy water font full of bubbling clear water. On the far side of the font is another set of bronze doors. On either side of this chamber are open pits.

Khaled dips the family seal into the font but nothing happens. Murdus reads the celestial words carved into the walls and determines, "The font requires silver." They dump silver coins and items into the font until the water washes away the corruption. They also fill several ex-potion bottles with holy water.

Khaled runs the seal all the way back to the Pharasman altar and installs it. A wave of positive energy washes over him, healing all wounds.

Meanwhile, Usif and Murdus wait below next to the holy water font. They hear chanting from the next room, then a scream of RAGE! The newly sanctified altar and rooms have disrupted Nebta-Khufre's spells and plans.

Nebta-Khufre emerges from the room, wearing the stolen funerary mask and head dress. His left hand is encircled by smoking letters that spell no words. His right hand is clad in a golden gauntlet and holds a gilded thigh bone. He flies across the room surrounded by a nimbus of energy. Then pauses to examine the trespassers below.

Murdus screams from behind his Forgotten Pharaohs disguise, "Master! They used the font and then turned invisible! Use your magic to reveal them!"

Nebta-Khufre shouts, "I don't recognize you. Die!" He throws a lightning bolt at Murdus.

Murdus catches the lightning bolt on his ax and hurls it back. The sorcerer survives, though seared and smoking.

Usif screams, “Nebta-Khufre! Your reign of terror is over!” He hurls fire.

Nebta-Khufre points back into the room he just left, “The dead shall serve me again!”

Usif peeks into that rooms then shouts, “Zombies! He’s got zombies!” Indeed, dead men stand up and stagger toward the fight.

Murdus runs up the statue and leaps at the flying wizard. His ax bounces off magical defenses but catches another lightning bolt.

Zombies move slowly across the chamber for whence they were summoned.

Nebta-Khufre turns the stone beneath Usif’s feet to lava. And Usif dies...

The Spiral Road

Usif stands on the great spiral road to the bone yards of Pharama. The dead walk slowly forward to their final judgement. An efreeti appears before him and announces: *You have spent your life in service to the lady, Tmeri. I will take you there so that the many creatures you have sacrificed can serve you in the afterlife. However, the Lady wishes you to return to the world, journey to the hidden library, and burn the books so that their knowledge does not feed her enemies. Will you accept this mission?*”

Usif agrees, “I accept.”

The efreeti finishes, *“Then return to the meat world. And enjoy immunity to flame at least for a while.”*

He returns to the meat world, unconscious and hovering just above a puddle of lava. Murdus grabs his limp form and runs, taking a *burning hands* spell to the back. He is sorely wounded.

Nebta-Khufre chases them into the alcove room and prepares to smite them with great smiting when his grandmother's mummified head flies into the room and confronts him with, "Hey, swizzle dick! You never amounted to anything! Let me recount your many FAILINGS!" (Khaled has commanded Immanish to use his illusions and impersonate the grandmother, using the details gleaned from her scrawlings in the library.)

Murdus runs into the blue tile room where he feeds Usif a healing potion.

Nebta-Khufre has a losing argument with his grandmother, giving Khaled time to find a good hidden vantage point, carefully poison an arrow, aim, and shoot. The arrow gets through his magical defenses! He blasts Khaled's sniper position with a fireball, lightly toasting the burglar. Then the sleep poison takes hold and he floats peacefully to the floor.

Murdus and Usif cautiously reenter the room to find Khaled peeling magical devices off the sleeping, hog-tied sorcerer. His funerary mask is removed, revealing a circular tattoo on his forehead.

"Teabag target!" declares Khaled and begins fumbling at his pants.

Usif points out the slowly approaching zombies.

"They'll just have to wait their turn!"

End of the Session

- Bonds
 - Murdus created a combo attack with Usif
 - Khaled is no longer worried about Immanish who proved useful.
- Alignments
 - Usif and Murdus fulfilled their alignments.
- Did you learn something new and interesting about the world (Yes/No)? No.
- Did you overcome a notable enemy (Yes/No)? Yes.
- Did you loot a notable treasure (Yes/No)? Yes.

Murdus levels to 6th level.