



"What in the name of Allah is that?" Mahmut nudged the bullet-riddled thing with his foot. The gunfire was still echoing in the distance, the acoustics of the tunnels bouncing the sound back and forth.

A couple of limbs twitched and then stopped moving. Mahmut poked it again with his assault rifle just to make sure. The merc had signed on with this group of foreigner runners as backup and he was increasingly sure he'd made a mistake. He'd grown up in the backstabbing shadows of Istanbul and he'd never seen the like of this *thing*...

"Looks like *blatta orientalis* to me," said Elijah, crouching over the body. Behind him, Ethernaut nodded agreement. The magician caught Mahmut's uncomprehending expression and sighed. "It's a bug, Mahmut. An insect spirit, a roach spirit to be exact. I'd hazard a guess that they like the humidity of the *hamam*."

Mahmut spat on the body. "Iffriti," he mumbled and made a sign against evil.

Deckard gave the Turk a slap on the shoulder. "Those you get used to. The professor's gibberish ... not so much." He didn't look as cocky and confident as he sounded. His memories of the Chicago were still fresh.

Ethernaut scanned the body with his sight, and his lips tightened, "Bad news. This is a caretaker. We must have taken a wrong turn into a nest. That, or we need a word with Ahmed when we get back. I had a feeling that weasel was setting us up. Let's move, ladies—the others will have heard that racket."

Neith unsheathed her scimitar, while Mahmut looked nervously from runner to runner twisting his moustache with his greasy fingertips, "Others? What does this mean, others?"

The Nubian adept shouldered her backpack and drew her second scimitar, "It means these passages will be crawling with roaches in a few minutes. Big roaches. They tend to get territorial if they think we're a threat to their nest."

The blood drained from Mahmut's face, "You have met such things before, yes?"

"Yes," muttered Elijah, looking grim. Neith flashed him the ugly acid burn usually hidden under her neckerchief, "That's one way of putting it..."

Gizmo examined one of the side-tunnels identical to so many others riddling the ground below the streets of Beyoglu. Somewhere below lay the ancient city's vast labyrinthine cistern, and the gunfire was still echoing. The techie pointed down the darkened shaft. "There's a temperature gradient in this direction, boss. It gets colder down this way, maybe they won't follow? We have no quarrel with them. This was an honest mistake. We're on a scavenger hunt. We could try and cut a deal with the shaman," Gizmo threw in hopefully.

Deckard grabbed the excavation gear from where he'd dropped it, and shouldered past the tech, "Like that worked out last time. Forgotten the Shattergraves already? Sure you did, Neith and me saved your scrawny ass. I'm not waiting round, anyone coming?"

Ethernaut opened his eyes, his astral reconnaissance finished, "The point is moot. They're coming. Let's move! Ladies, go, go, GO!"

As they scurried into the tunnel, they could all hear the skittering and clicking of chitin on ancient stone.



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FURTHER PATHS OF MAGIC

The following section offers additional traditions that are familiar to magicians in the Sixth World. Note that the "Psionic tradition" is in fact a magical oddity in that its practitioners believe other magicians are deluded to attribute magic to supernatural sources rather than the power of the mind.

THE EGYPTIAN TRADITION

Concept: Egyptian lore believes magic (*heka*) to be one of the primordial forces used to make the world. Through *heka*, symbolic actions could have practical effects. Deities, spirits and people are believed to possess this force in the form of their *ka* (immortal spirit), but there are strict conventions and rules about who, why and how it could be used and learned.

Combat: Fire

Detection: Earth

Health: Air

Illusion: Guidance

Manipulation: Water

Drain: Willpower + Intuition

Note: Egyptian magic is a Possession tradition.

Members of this tradition follow the complex mystic belief system of the Egyptian *heka* priest, painstakingly resurrecting the rites of the Ancients from surviving records, just as Isis pieced together Osiris' body and bestowed it with new life. To a heka, magic is the study of the many parts of the *ka* and of the mystic correspondences of the deities, planets, stars, and the higher and lower realms upon the Earth. Insight into the workings of this inner and outer duality, and mastery of the appropriate rites, grants a heka the power over aspects of the Earthly realm. The gods, known as the Glorious Ones, are primordial spirits of immense power with many earthly correspondences. Accordingly, many dedicated heka take certain divinities as mentor spirits (see p. 184, *Street Magic*).

Even if a mentor is not chosen, the Egyptian pantheon plays an important part in the tradition's paradigm.

Heka magicians evoke spirits as emanations of one of the many Glorious Ones and their lesser subjects. The forms spirits take are often linked to the deity being evoked. However, such correspondences are unusually fluid and vary on a case by case basis. For instance, while fire often corresponds to Ra (the sun god), it is sometimes linked to Light and Eternal life, the realm of Osiris. Likewise, the life-breath of Air is sometimes associated with Isis (the Great mother and Queen), other times it is linked to eagle-headed Horus, her son. Other common associations include water for Sobek (crocodile god of the Nile), earth with Thoth or Bast (gods of knowledge and ritual), and Darkness and Illusion with Set (the betrayer and lord of the desert). To complicate things further, many deities have dual natures. In legend, Sekhmet, the ferocious lion goddess, brought death and destruction when she accompanied the pharaoh on his campaigns of war but was also evoked by the healers in their fight against disease. Wax figurines and clay statues in the preferred forms of the gods or favored animals are the preferred vessels for spirits, though the appropriate invocations can allow heka magicians to offer up themselves or another living form to the gods' will.

Words of power and hieroglyphic phrases (called *hekau*) also play an important role in invocations and spells. Heka magicians use ankhs, wands, staves, figurines, incense, and ritual knives known as *apotropaic* in their rituals. All sorts of Egyptian symbols and imagery such as the Eye of Horus, scarabs, snakes, incense, and burning herbs feature in magical rites. Contrary to popular belief, they do not make use of "pyramid power" or anything associated with that theory, though astrology, geometry, and Pythagorean mathematics are important to certain rites.

Egyptian magic is one of the few traditions to have more followers outside its birthplace than at home. Egypt is an Islamic

