

SEEDS OF SCHISM

WHAT'S INCLUDED

This month we explore the origins of the Shadowfell in the setting of Surya. Along with an outline of the creation and state of the Shadowfell, we have 4 pieces of homebrew!

- **The Path of the Sanguine Hunger**, a vampiric barbarian subclass built to hunt down their prey and heal from their demise.
- **The Path of the Mummy Lord**, an undead barbarian subclass built on the rage of the mummy's curse that swings around the battlefield with their wraps.
- **The Eternal Gambler, Setekh**, a brief story about the exploits of a once influential religious leader that fell at the hands of his followers and became a Mummy Lord along with his stat-block.
- **The Vincenzian Dreidel**, a magic item for the aspiring undead hunter that locates, binds and aids in avoiding the undead you seek.

THE SHADOWFELL

One of the many outcomes of the Treaty of Forms was the creation of the Prime Material's mirror planes. When the Primordials and Jotun shed their energy into the Prime, Surya could not contain all of the divine magic that was unleashed. Much of this magic leaked into the cosmological space buffering the Prime from the elemental planes, eventually coalescing into the Shadowfell and the Feywild. During the first few centuries of their existence, these planes bordered each other closely and were left empty, almost entirely devoid of life and geography.

THE SEEDS OF SCHISM

While these two, currently nameless planes lay dormant, the Prime Material was expanding and thriving, filling all the gaps left behind by its progenitors. Immense amounts of magic and creation spread across the plane. However, emergent behaviours in mortals began to surface, behaviours that had not been explored by those who came before. The Primordials and Jotun alike had never faced mortality. Moreover, their society left little room for joy; they lived lives more akin to forces of nature than those

of a functioning society. As the first people began to truly thrive, these new realities found no natural place to exist.

Mortals sought to invoke spells and weave these concepts into their culture and homes, but the Prime had no natural place for them. Thus, these fundamental forces began to leak into the newly formed spaces left to be filled. The magic created by the forces of death and joy began to overrun these two bordering planes. The resulting chaos of their incompatibility spiraled out of control. In their origins, these forces became known to the first Fey and Undead as the Seeds of Schism.

DIVERGING LANDS

From the energies funneled to it from the Prime, strange, grim, and fantastical beasts began to spring forth, along with structures and geography. With each death or joyous moment in the Prime, these mirror planes reacted, forming their own ecology based on the outermost extremes of mortal life. Due to their fundamental incompatibility, the planes split very early in their histories into what are known today as the Shadowfell and the Feywild, one formed by the passage of energy from life to death, and the other feeding off the immense joy felt by mortal life.

ORIGIN OF UNDEATH

The Shadowfell, in its infant state, had become a realm of misery. All aspects of it were vile and grey, and all creatures existed in forms previously unseen in the cosmology. The physical energy that departed from mortal life after its soul passed to the outer planes collected here, manifesting as the very first undead, sentient life formed from the absence of life itself. While the modern understanding of undeath often involves things that once lived, animated by some nether force, its origins were far different.

These original creatures were manifestations of the grief and suffering caused by death. The emotional energy carried into the Shadowfell bent and shaped the flesh of these heinous monsters. Only when the first mortals made contact with this plane did undeath unleash its plague upon the Prime.

In response to this discovery, most people resisted

anything connected to the Shadowfell. Visiting this place was outlawed, and the fringe explorers who delved into it were ostracized. However, the allure of life beyond death was something mortal kind could only resist for so long. The vile power that oozed from the Shadowfell was also one of the few means to restore life to something that had passed. Wizards and clerics alike were paralyzed by the possibilities, and so undeath, born as a consequence of this research, began to plague the Prime.

CURRENT SHADOWFELL

In the modern day, the Shadowfell has evolved into a sprawling ecosystem, the various evolutions of undeath have spread here and taken up roots in every corner. Those who seek the alluring power of undeath have found their way here, many a Vampire has attempted to build an empire, Mummy Lords their vast necropolises and Liches whom attempt to scrape up every last drop of undeath they can get their hands upon. Their fates all equally that of entropy though it is the very thing they seek to circumvent.

VAMPIRES

Of the forms of undeath, vampirism is one of the few that has been tailored by ambitious necromancers over the centuries. Its purpose is to sustain life eternally, but its cost is hunger and corruption. The need for blood and the sensitivity to sunlight drive those afflicted to depravity and manipulation. Vampires who seek to embrace these traits and amass power beyond what is possible on the Prime, due to its natural hostility, often seek refuge in the Shadowfell. There, they build empires under their charismatic rule and send myriad servants to the Prime to retrieve their feasts. A vampire from the Shadowfell is nothing like the one lurking in the haunted manor at the edge of town. They have fully embraced their nature, and their influence knows no bounds.

MUMMY LORDS

Mummy Lords rarely exist outside of their Shadowfell tombs. Their lesser counterparts, the Mummies, are the result of necromancers who are careless with their work, imbuing more sentience into a corpse than any undead should ever have. The rituals and practices of embalming and burying a Mummy contribute to its overall capability when it returns from death. The larger and more complex their burial, the more terrifying a Mummy might become. This can even lead to the creation of ambitious and immensely powerful Mummy Lords, formed through a cult-like reverence for a dead individual. Mummy Lords are brought back as kings

of undeath, ruling over and dominating the individuals who revived them.

ASPECTS OF MISERY

The creatures that originally inhabited the Shadowfell, manifestations of emotion that seeped into it from the Prime, still form to this day. Though not undead in the strictest sense, these beings are created from the same energy. They emerge as twisted monstrosities representing the strongest emotions surrounding death, such as sorrow, denial, obsession, regret, shame, and anger. These beasts seek out similar company, and their forms are purpose-built to spread their emotional torment, growing stronger with each creature they draw into their sphere of suffering.

While rare, such monsters can grow into what are known as "Aspects of Misery," collectives of similar emotions acting in unison. These entities function like an army whose sole purpose is to absorb more sorrowful souls. Aspects of Misery roam the wastelands of the Shadowfell and are among the most feared entities one might encounter in this place.

THE WITHERING ROOT

As with many other planes of existence, powerful mages have gathered to ritualistically plant World Trees to spread their roots to new places and draw upon the magic of the locations they discover. The Shadowfell is no exception. A few hundred years after its discovery, many of the archmages who studied this plane gathered to perform such a ritual, aiming to channel the necromantic magic of undeath more easily through the rest of the cosmos.

While the ritual was successful, the tree that grew was unlike the others. Decay is inescapable in this place, and the tree was no exception. Its entire structure became suffused with undeath. Creatures flocked to it, feasting on the magic it provided, and it became a breeding ground for mindless undead to flourish. The location became known as The Withering Root and is widely regarded as one of mage-kind's greatest mistakes. To this day, it is responsible for numerous incursions of undead into places where other World Trees also grow.

CREATURES

THE WILDFLOWER CARAVAN

In the annals of Mummy Lord history, Setekh is remembered as a fool who did not know when to stop playing games. In his early life, Setekh was a revered religious leader, devoted to the teachings of Caelia, the Boundless Bloom. Under his guidance, a magnificent caravan formed, a vibrant community of hermits, carnival performers, and lost souls seeking purpose. Setekh brought joy to his followers, lifting their spirits and easing their burdens with his infectious optimism.

However, Setekh had a fatal flaw: an insatiable gambling addiction. He could not resist the thrill of any game of chance, no matter the stakes. Over the decades, as the caravan traveled, his fortunes began to wane. Losing game after game to his own followers, Setekh began to draw on the funds entrusted to him. He drained the caravan's stockpile of gold, jeopardizing the sanctuary he had worked so hard to create.

When the followers of Setekh discovered the truth, they realized their safe haven was on the brink of collapse. A few senior acolytes devised a plan to reclaim their wealth and rid themselves of Setekh's destructive influence. They planned an extravagant festival to coincide with their next stop in the capital, a grand event designed to attract revelers from far and wide. At the heart of the festival, they announced the country's largest gambling tournament, with a colossal prize pool to entice players.

To enhance the spectacle, they constructed a massive pyramid in the marketplace. At its summit, they placed a throne for Setekh, where he would preside over the festivities as offerings and bets piled high below. What Setekh did not know was that his throne was rigged to trigger a deadly trap. At the tournament's climax, the pyramid would collapse, burying him beneath the treasure and putting an end to his reckless leadership.

But when the trap was sprung, something went horribly wrong. The avalanche of riches struck a hidden fault beneath the capital, causing the ground to give way. A massive sinkhole opened, swallowing the pyramid, Setekh, his followers, and the festival-goers in a catastrophic cave-in. All were buried together, entombed in rubble and gold.

The circumstances of his death left Setekh in a state of stasis within his rocky grave. Bound by the greed and betrayal of his final moments, he now lies dormant, awaiting the day when his tomb is uncovered. If disturbed, his undead wrath will be unleashed upon those who dare to seek his treasure, drawn by the same avarice that led to his downfall.

THE ETERNAL GAMBLER SETEKH

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armour Class 17

Hit Points 120

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18	10	20	16	12	8

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +9, Int +7

Skills Athletics +8, Arcana +8, History +8

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from non-magical attacks.

Senses divination 120ft., passive Perception 11

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Setekh fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Setekh's Ledger. When initiative is rolled, Setekh rolls 10d20 and records the results in the order they appear. These results are stored in Setekh's ledger. Whenever Setekh takes an action that requires him to make an attack roll, ability check, saving throw, or forces a creature to make a saving throw, the next result in his ledger is used instead, in the order they were written. Each time this feature is used, the d20 result used is erased from the ledger. Once all 10 results are erased, Setekh rolls a new set of 10d20 and records them in his ledger.

Setekh is fully aware of the results of his upcoming rolls and can plan his actions accordingly, knowing when he will succeed or fail. If an effect allows a reroll (such as from advantage, disadvantage, or other abilities), Setekh still uses the next result from his ledger for the reroll.

Gambler's Wheel. Setekh rolls 1d4 to determine which random effect on this table occurs when he hits with his Gambler's Wheel. If an effect that is currently active is rolled, nothing happens.

EFFECT

- 1 Setekh replaces a number of his choice in his ledger with a 1.
- 2 The target hit by the Gambler's Wheel is teleported to an unoccupied space of Setekh's within 60 ft. of him.
- 3 All creatures within 60 feet of Setekh reduce their critical hit threshold by 1 until the start of Setekh's next turn.
- 4 Setekh replaces a number of his choice in his ledger with a 20.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Setekh makes two attacks: one with its Gambler's Wheel and one with its Bedazzled Backhand, Setekh can replace either or both of its attacks with a Loose Golden Tooth attack.

Gambler's Wheel. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) bludgeoning damage. Each time this attack hits Setekh rolls on his Gambler's Wheel table and causes the rolled effect to occur.

Bedazzled Backhand. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) bludgeoning damage, and must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Loose Golden Tooth. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Setekh can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Setekh regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Loaded Dice (Costs 2 actions). Setekh chooses up to five of the rolls currently written in his ledger and re-rolls them, the results of these die then replace the selected d20s in the ledger in the order they were rolled.

SUBCLASSES

PATH OF THE SANGUINE HUNTER

Sometimes, an individual afflicted with vampirism rejects the natural charm that usually accompanies the curse. This may be because they lack the desire for manipulation or because their personality is better suited to intimidation and physicality. These individuals harness their curse in a more bestial, hunter-like manner and are often mistaken for bloodthirsty werewolves.

SANGUINE SIGHT

Starting at 3rd level, when you enter a rage, your senses become attuned to the presence of blood. You can see creatures with blood as though you have truesight, perceiving their forms even through invisibility, provided no obstruction thicker than 1 inch lies between you and them. If a creature with blood is within 30 feet of you but obstructed by a wall or object more than 1 inch thick, you instinctively sense their presence and know how many such creatures are nearby, though not their precise locations. Additionally, when you attack a creature with blood that is below half its hit point maximum, your weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

BLOODTHIRSTER

At 6th level, your Sanguine Sight extends to a range of 60 feet, allowing you to perceive creatures with blood at greater distances. In addition, whenever you deal damage to a creature with a melee weapon attack that has less than half its hit point

maximum remaining, you can use a bonus action to lick the blood from your weapon. When you do, you gain temporary hit points equal to one roll of your weapon's damage die.

PHYSICAL CHARISMA

At 10th level, you gain proficiency in two Charisma-based skills of your choice. You can use your Strength modifier in place of Charisma for ability checks made with these skills. Additionally, you learn the *charm person* spell, which uses your Strength modifier to determine the spell save DC. You can cast this spell a number of times equal to your Strength modifier (minimum of once), regaining all expended uses when you finish a long rest. You can cast *charm person* this way even while raging.

CHTHONIC RAGE

At 14th level, whenever you rage, you can choose to instead enter a Chthonic rage. When you do so, sacrifice half of your maximum hit points and gain temporary hit points equal to half the amount sacrificed. While in a Chthonic Rage, your movement speed, and the healing from your Bloodthirster feature is doubled. Additionally, this healing can now be triggered whenever you damage a creature with blood that is below its maximum hit points, rather than half its maximum.

PATH OF THE MUMMY LORD

The undeath that a Mummy Lord possesses inhabits not only its body but also the garb and treasure it was buried with. Many practices have been uncovered involving the use of a mummy's wraps. One such practice is as simple as wrapping one's arms in them and invoking their magic in martial combat. A Path of the Mummy Lord Barbarian takes this practice to its extremes, incorporating the necromantic power of a Mummy Lord into their rage. Some even go so far as to partially embrace undeath themselves.

MUMMY WRAPS

As part of your training, you've crafted a pair of embalmed wraps that channel your cursed power. Starting at 3rd level, when you enter your rage, these wraps become animated. When you rage, and as a bonus action on subsequent turns while your rage is active, you can target one Medium or larger creature you can see within 30 feet of you. That creature must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC = 8 + your Strength modifier + your proficiency bonus). On a failed save, you are pulled to an unoccupied space of your choice within 5 feet of that creature, without expending any of your movement.

ROT BREATH

Starting at 6th level, once on each of your turns when you take the Attack action, you can replace one of your attacks with a necrotic breath weapon. When you do so, each creature in a 10-foot cone originating from you must make a Constitution saving throw (**DC = 8 + your Strength modifier + your proficiency bonus**). On a failed save, a creature takes necrotic damage equal to a number of d8s equal to your Rage Damage bonus + your Constitution modifier, and it has disadvantage on Constitution saving throws until the start of its next turn.

EXAMPLE

A 6th level Mummy Lord Barbarian has +2 rage damage and a Constitution modifier of +3. They would deal 2d8 + 3 Necrotic damage with this ability.

If you use this feature immediately after pulling yourself to a creature with your Mummy Wraps feature and reduce an enemy to 0 hit points with your Rot Breath, you can use your reaction to activate your 3rd-level feature again.

ENDURING REST

Starting at 10th level, you no longer need to sleep, breathe, or eat. However, you can choose to enter a deep, indefinite sleep at will. While in this state, you do not age and can only be awakened by an external source, such as taking damage or being physically disturbed.

In addition, you gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed.

DELAYED BURIAL

Starting at 14th level, if you fail three death saving throws or are killed outright and your body is not destroyed, you animate 1 minute later as an undead creature with a Challenge Rating equal to your character level, chosen by the DM. This undead form is under the DM's control.

If a *greater restoration* spell or a higher-level spell of similar power is cast on you while you are in this undead form, you return to life with 1 hit point, and both your Strength and Dexterity scores become 3 until you finish a long rest.

MAGIC ITEMS

VINCENZIAN DREIDEL

Wondrous item, rare

This strange spinning dreidel, carved from bone and adorned with gold-inlaid symbols on each of its faces, seemingly never stops spinning once spun on a relatively even surface.

When you spin this dreidel, you can speak one of its four command words to activate a corresponding magical effect.

Unearth. The dreidel stops spinning and falls in the direction of the nearest undead creature within a 100-mile radius. The golden symbol on its face shifts to display the number of undead creatures within 60 feet of the detected undead.

Interrogate. The dreidel stops spinning and holds its position upright. The nearest corpse within 20 feet of the dreidel is animated as though the *_speak with dead_* spell had been cast on it. You can ask questions as normal, but the corpse cannot lie. If it would lie, it must abstain or answer truthfully instead.

Veil. The dreidel stops spinning and begins to hover. You choose up to 8 willing living creatures within 30 feet of the dreidel. For the next hour, the dreidel hovers between the chosen creatures. During this time, each selected creature is invisible and intangible to undead creatures of challenge rating 5 or lower. These undead cannot perceive, attack, or otherwise interact with the chosen creatures, and the chosen creatures cannot perceive or interact with undead creatures.

Bind. The dreidel stops spinning and magically attaches itself to the back of one Tiny dead beast of your choice within 30 feet. For the next 8 hours, the dead creature is animated by the magic of the dreidel and follows your verbal commands to the best of its ability (no action required by you). When this effect ends, the creature becomes inanimate once more.

Each command can be used once. You regain all expended uses after completing a long rest.