

Pharasma

Birth and death are written in the bones, but bones can be broken.

LADY OF GRAVES

Goddess of fate, death, prophecy, and birth

Alignment N

Domains Death, Healing, Knowledge, Repose, Water

Favored Weapon Dagger

Centers of Worship Brevoy, Nex, Osirion, Shackles, Thuvia, Ustalav, Varisia

Nationality Garundi

Sitting atop an impossibly tall spire, Pharasma's Boneyard awaits all mortals.

Once there, they stand in a great line, waiting to be judged and sent to their final reward. Only the unworthy end up in her graveyard, their souls left to rot for all eternity. Legends claim that Pharasma knew the death of Aroden was fast approaching and even judged him, but did nothing to warn her followers, many of whom were driven mad by the event. Pharasma is depicted as the midwife, the mad prophet, or the reaper of the dead, depending upon her role. Pregnant women often carry small tokens of her midwife likeness on long necklaces to protect the unborn and grant them good lives.

The Lady of Graves is cold and business-like in her demeanor, for she always has work to do and much of it is grim. Having seen infants die, the righteous fall too soon, and tyrants live to advanced age, she makes no judgment about the justness of a particular death and welcomes each birth with equal severity. At the moment of birth, she knows where a particular soul will end up, but she reserves her official verdict until the last possible moment, as she knows prophecies can be wrong or fail. She believes in fate and predestination but understands the need for vagueness and misinterpretation to allow for the illusion of free will. Those who die before or during birth are wasted potential, destroying a worthy soul's opportunity to fulfill its destiny (and thus while she has no opinion on contraception, she opposes the killing of the unborn). Those who die before experiencing their fate may be lucky enough to return in this life or the next, though in some cases their fate is merely to die an ignoble or early death. She opposes undeath as a desecration of the memory of the flesh and a corruption of a soul's path on its journey to her judgment.

Pharasma manifests her favor through the use of scarab beetles and whippoorwills, both of which function as psychopomps and serve to guide recently departed spirits to the Boneyard. Black roses are thought to bring good luck,

especially if the rose's stem sports no thorns. Pharasma will also sometimes allow the spirit of those who have died under mysterious conditions to transmit short messages to their living kin to comfort them, to expose a murderer, or even to haunt an enemy. Her displeasure is often signified by cold chills down the spine, bleeding from under the fingernails, an unexplained taste of rich soil, the discovery of a dead whippoorwill, or the feeling that something important has been forgotten.

Pharasma's followers are midwives, expectant mothers, morticians, and (less so since Aroden's death) diviners. In smaller communities they may assume several of these roles, or a wife-and-husband team might split the duties between them.

Her avatar is her reaper aspect, a tall, gray-skinned woman with white eyes, a flowing black-hooded gown, and bearing an hourglass with fast-flowing red sand. Her herald is the Steward of the Skein, a pair of linked ghæle-like creatures, one shining white and blue, the other flaming orange and darkness. Her divine servants are usually strange creatures such as Birthed-in-Sorrow (a ravid cleric), Echo of Lost Divinity (a spectral soldier in fine clothes who vaguely resembles depictions of Aroden), and Endless Gravestone (a wheel-like stone creature).

All deities peaceably deal with Pharasma, for their agents must have access to her realm to escort souls to their respective godhomes. She has no true enemies or allies, though Iomedae views her with some resentment for keeping Aroden's approaching death a secret.

Priests, Temples, and the Church

Members of the priesthood are usually clerics, diviners, or "white necromancers" (wizards who study necromancies other than the creation of undead), though especially skilled midwives and hedge wizards have been known to gain authority in some areas. Priests oversee births, and having one at childbirth almost always assures that mother and child will live. They are the stewards of the dead, and most are familiar with funereal customs from their own and nearby lands. They are the protectors of graveyards and the memory of those who have died, guarding sites from robbers and corpse-animators and memorizing or recording what they know about anyone who dies in their presence. The church despises the undead as abominations to the natural order, and all priests follow this belief without question; creating undead is forbidden, and controlling existing undead frowned upon.

A typical priest earns a meager living tending to women in labor, speaking words at funerals, or even digging graves or building tombs for wealthy patrons. Adventuring priests avoid entering tombs for the purpose of looting, though if a