

The Sands of Time

The characters are roused by their worried cult(s) with pressing news: Some of the potential relics they had been tracking through the area have been purposefully destroyed within the last week. The remains of the savaged items have been left behind for someone to find each time, and last night the cult stumbled across a compound full of broken bodies, as well as a message which seemed like it was calling for a mummy's attention – or its destruction.

Infrastructure

The first piece the cultists lost was blamed on a careless new employee at an antique shop. The second item was found crushed in front of a local museum, and that incident made the news. The next artifact was stolen from its owner, who had listed it on eBay, but its useless remains were uncovered nearby. The cultists then scrambled to meet one of their most promising (and dangerous) contacts, a local black market antiques dealer they approached under a ruse. They arrived not long after a fire which left the guards, the dealer, and what seemed to be street gang members dead. The cultists' coveted stone figurine was smashed to pieces in a road leading away. Most alarming was a message they found on a strip of parchment left in one of the busted crates: WHAT HAS RISEN MAY FALL.

The cultists fear that a rival mummy has started operating in the city and that items they are procuring from overseas will arrive only to be demolished. The outright destruction of the pieces has been troubling enough, but the murders upped the stakes and the message came across as a threat to any nearby mummies. They call upon their guardian to discover and destroy the menace to their list of valuable artifacts in and around the city. From estate sales, to antique shops, to museums and private collections, no one with truly ancient fare in their possession is safe. The cultists even suspect that an ordinary resident who was found dead under suspicious circumstances during the same week might have had a prize in their attic, closet, or basement.

While this scenario can be run in some smaller and more secretive locales, it works best in a large metropolitan area with multiple museums and a good deal of traffic from other places. A city which makes regular use of planes, trains, and ships will have the most options for dramatic locations. That doesn't mean that highly condensed cities won't work, however. A limited area like San Francisco could result in fewer obstructions and faster resolution, while the urban sprawl of Los Angeles almost guarantees unexpected obstacles and complications in transit.

The Truth: An angel acted as elimination infrastructure when it shattered the first few pieces, and then it aimed a local Spoke of the Cult of the Wheel (GMC 43) at the black market dealer, who had previously released several dangerous items into the city to wreck havoc. The Spoke already had a reason to target him, so they arranged to send a similarly pesky street gang after his valuables, killing two birds with one stone in the name of order. One member of the Spoke went in after the fighting died down in order to destroy the right item in the proper place and eliminate any survivors.

Right now, the God-Machine needs to absorb the raw energy of time, which is currently imprisoned in supernaturally charged artifacts like relics and vestiges. It requires these pieces to be utterly destroyed within a certain area (the city or county limits, within latitude and longitude coordinates, between rivers or other natural boundaries, etc.) and while in the middle of a paved, marked street with at least two lanes on each side (which contains the fibers necessary to catch the released power).

Interchangeable Parts

One mummy and their cult can face this challenge, or multiple mummies and their cults can get involved (though in this case, the cults should have low to moderate reach and grasp and/or not be affiliated with one another, in order to explain why they didn't just coordinate the efforts amongst themselves). Multiple mummies with membership in different guilds will be able to track the widest range of relics, though they can always fall back on the cultists' list. Not only should the mummies be concerned for new pieces, but any relics and vestiges they already possess are likely in peril. There is also the possibility that a blasphemous mummy who is shirking his duty or one of the Deceived is behind this, something that will get most mummies' bandages in a twist.

Characters can also be drawn from other supernatural types, from a mixed group, or from mortal ranks, but those options will require further thought. Characters that are not as tied to magical objects will be less likely to care, mortals will have a harder time tracking them down, and those without a cult or group of investigators will need some other way to realize what is happening.

Blueprints

As currently scheduled, the angel and the Cult of the Wheel must destroy one item of power per day for the next X days of the week. For a shorter and more charged time frame, assume that five pieces were lost the previous week, at a rate of one each weekday. The tale begins early Sunday or Monday morning and the clock is already ticking, since this week requires that six items be ruined on subsequent days. The week after this one will have a final quota of seven vessels. For a longer scenario, simply space out the number of days and items that are left.

If the characters do not already know each other, then they will meet up while seeking the same relic early on. Artifacts in the area can be in the hands of vampires, mages, changelings, and so on, or they might be in the process of being stolen or fought over (for unrelated reasons) by major beings like Keepers, if a potent challenge is needed. Some are still the hands of mortals, however, and a few of them might not even realize what they have. For a cross-over scenario, the God-Machine could be targeting tokens which multiple supernatural types can use; for a more restricted range, it could be focused on mummy-only items. To add further complexity, a mummy who is draining objects could also be operating in the area.

The angel operates largely at night and by stealth, casing a location by day and strategizing ways to make the disappearance seem normal. It will often send the Spoke after groups who have potent objects, and there are strict orders to make any violence seem plausible or to have it cleaned up immediately. The Spoke has been operating in the area for a long time and they know of some tensions between local groups, including a few supernatural groups. They are not above orchestrating confrontations that will also “clean house” and could have been planning to do so for some time. The local Spoke might also consist of supernatural members or of those who were close to supernaturals, learning their ways while being abused or otherwise disregarded. What the Spoke is expecting in exchange for its service is likely related to energy and time, such as the leader asking for a few extra years of youth or life.

Even if the characters miss the angel or the Spoke's agents on the first try or two, they will intercept the agents soon (particularly if they are adept at hunting down genuine items of power, like mummies are). Enemies will attempt to flee at least long enough to carry out their primary mission but

will often have guards or other combatants to cover their retreat. A member of the Spoke will be camped out in a hidden spot near the latest Spoke target, waiting for the violence to pass. As much as the Spoke would like to leave everything to patsies, the only way to ensure that the object of power is fed to the God-Machine is to do it themselves. Confrontations can take place in a wide variety of locations, from underground bunkers to high-rise condos to warehouses, but they will likely be shut down, not accessible to the public, or cleared out on a pretext. Enemies will know the city, probably as well as or even better than the characters do, and will be able to maneuver in it accordingly.

Onlookers who see too much might have to be scrubbed (but later and elsewhere, to avoid suspicion) but items can be crushed in hands or under car wheels, so most bystanders will probably only notice a small flash of light and a burst of odd sounds which dissipate in a few seconds. If it is late at night or if the scene is chaotic enough, they might not even notice the oddities. These flashes of light and echoes from older times will start to manifest briefly but more often along local streets as more relics are consumed, possibly triggering flashbacks in characters with potent or damaged memories.

Linchpins

The angel is in itself a linchpin; without its discretion and direction, the operation will quickly lose focus and make costly mistakes. The local Spoke of the Cult of the Wheel is relatively wealthy and has a strong and benign cover-story, so its members loath to get involved personally. Tracking down the Spoke and disabling its ability to hunt for relics will also throw a serious monkey wrench into the operations.

Methods

Academics: Mummies can trace kepher to discover a person closer to a relic and even get names and locations of something important to that person – but they need to be tracked down *fast*. Roll Intelligence + Academics to find them swiftly online.

Athletics: Someone is running away from the chaos toward the street, and they're holding something in their hands. Roll Stamina + Athletics to catch them, hopefully before they damage anything.

Drive: The characters have raised a hell of a ruckus while fighting their way to an artifact, and a car is peeling away from the scene, possibly with the item inside it. Roll Dexterity + Drive to hop in the car and chase them down.

Occult: Items are in powerful otherworldly hands and fighting might not be the best option tonight. Roll Manipulation + Occult to use what you know about their kind to deal with them peacefully, and perhaps to negotiate a trade for something they will find more useful.

Persuasion: The museum staff are catching some heat for the loss and have been ordered not to talk to anyone about it. A Manipulation + Persuasion roll will get them to share the few known details: Video surveillance of the storage room was turned off just before the theft, but blurry footage of some guy out front was captured in the early morning hours.

Streetwise: A small group of local gang members attacked the black market antiques dealer, but they had friends who must've heard something. Roll Wits + Streetwise to ask around their neighborhood about how and why they moved on such an unlikely target.

Merit: Allies, Contacts, and/or Cult: Given the limited time frame, characters won't be able to do everything themselves or be everywhere at once. Having extra eyes, ears, and fists will help speed the search and guard their interests.

Merit: Trained Observer: For as loud a scenario as this can become, there are many fine details that are worth noticing, such as the *content* of the echoes issuing up from the streets and the tense carloads of people that almost seem to be patrolling a neighborhood that doesn't seem to be too special...

Escalation

With the destruction of the seventh relic, the God-Machine will finally have enough power to fuel its next project (which could lead into scenarios like [Do-Over](#), [Sister City](#), [The Squares of the City](#), or a local version of [Ghost Machine](#)).

Even a local success might not be enough. Rumors begin to pop up, perhaps through mummy guilds, that such desecrations have been noted in another major city. This could be a regionally-bound phenomena, as on the Eastern American seaboard where a number of cities can be found, or it could be part of a global matrix that is gearing up for a truly cosmic project.