

CHAPTER ONE



INTRODUCTION

- THE EYES OF RA -

Below a full moon, hanging low in the sky, a golden-plumed falcon soars over the land of Ægyptus. The pale light of the setting moon reveals a desert of red sands. The stark beauty of the rolling dunes is rarely softened by tranquil oases of palm trees and fresh water. Through the midst of this arid land, the Nile River runs a long twisted course. From the falcon's vantage, the Nile appears as a ribbon of blue stretching across the land; and the river's azure waters sparkle with the reflected light of the stars.

The falcon's eyes turn northward as the noble bird soars higher.

To the north, the Nile forms the marshy Delta. Here, like the splayed end of a cut rope, the wide river frays into many small waterways. The Delta's divergent waters empty into a vast sea. The ships of many lands ply the waters of that sea called the Mediterranean. The sharp prows of Phoenician triremes cut through the high waves, and the massive hulls of Atlantean war-barges plow frothy furrows into the gray waters.

The falcon looks away from the Mediterranean Sea, gazing to the east and wishing to reassure itself of the Sun's presence.

Beneath the edge of the Earth, Ra, father of the gods, wages war on the demon-serpent, Apophis. Heroic Ra strives to raise the Sun up into the sky. Foul Apophis seeks to devour the fiery orb. The two foes make bloody battle; it is battle never-ending. Though Apophis is slain each morning, it is reborn with every sunset. Its rended flesh heals; its blood flows again. The demon-serpent returns from death with only one desire: to cast the world forever into darkness.

The falcon gives voice to a triumphant cry. It has spied a rosy glow spreading from the horizon, and like the standard of a victorious army, the Sun rises into the eastern sky.

The soft light of dawn spreads across the barren Red Sea. The sea's rust-colored waters lap sluggishly against the pebble-strewn beaches of Ægyptus' eastern shore. Separating the Red Sea from the Mediterranean is a narrow strip of rocky wasteland. Its length bridges Ægyptus to the foreign lands of the east.

The falcon banks in a lazy curve, gliding away from the Red Sea. It precedes the Sun, heralding its westerly path across the sky.

To the west is endless desert, stretching away toward a dark horizon. In these first hours of dawn, the moon has gone from the sky, and the western darkness is an impenetrable void. Like a heavy curtain drawn across a window against the chill of night, the void conceals an ancient evil. Imprisoned beyond the gulfs of darkness, out of space and time, is a tangled mass of ebon tentacles, squirming and writhing—slithering over, under, and about each other. A tentacle sometimes frees itself from the knot of its brethren and reaches forth between the bars of its prison, stretching across the desert, groping and flexing for Ægyptus.

The Eater Of The Dead seeks sustenance.

The Eater sends forth its vile Necromancers, searching out meat to be butchered. It seeks to ease the pains of its insatiable hunger. In the sacred necropolises of the Ægyptians, it has found a rich feast: a perverse banquet of souls to be consumed ravenously.

From the rubble and wreckage of each fallen necropolis, a horde of mummies rises up. By the Eater's power, the embalmed corpses of warriors, limbs wrapped in linen bandages, pull themselves free of their crypts and tombs. Their empty eye sockets burn with a baleful light. Once again they take up the sword—yet this time, they march on Ægyptus. The undead warriors are a desecration of all that is sacred to the Ægyptians.

Appearing as an explosion of inky blots, a murder of black ravens bursts from the ground below. The falcon screams in outrage and defiance at the ravens, the winged spies of the Necromancers. Still the falcon turns away from the dark plumed birds. It knows that fighting is not its purpose. Swiftly gliding away from the cawing ravens, the falcon is carried south on the winds.

To the south, the broad leaves of high-grown trees form a canopy. The jungle canopy obscures the interior of Nubia, and hides the devious machinations of the serpentine S'syth and their renegade Ægyptian disciples, the vulture-headed Nekharu.

The S'syth: a remnant of the elder age. According to their own testament, they ruled the whole of the Earth then. Their reign ended in an all-consuming fire, an eldritch inferno that was only smothered by a decades-long rain pouring forth from the stars.

The Nekharu: exiles cast out from the Land of the Nile for their disobedience and cowardice. Forever more, they will despise their former homeland. Their only wish is to subjugate Ægyptus, and in doing so, revenge themselves upon their brethren.

Inhabiting ancient crumbling cities, the two races plot. The S'syth counsel the Nekharu and teach them their black magics. The intentions of the S'syth are unknown. It is said by some that they will soon be expunged from the world, and have chosen their scions. They have deemed the Nekharu worthy to inherit their ancient legacy. It is a legacy better allowed to pass into oblivion. Written fragments still exist that record the atrocities committed by the S'syth when they were overlords of the Earth—atrocities that the spidery-limbed Nekharu would relish committing upon Ægyptus.

The falcon turns away from the jungles of Nubia; and gliding north, it follows the serpentine length of the Nile. Near to the center of Ægyptus, the falcon's path spirals as it slowly descends. Below it, clouds of sand are kicked up by the sandaled feet of warriors, charging to engage their opponents, and the turning wheels of chariots, thundering across the battlefield.

The falcon's eyes search the battlefield, and see only Ægyptians—only fellow countrymen striving to slay one another. They are the only enemies here.

Upon the bank of the Nile, in a fallow field, amongst the abandoned huts of farmers, two warbands clash at the bidding of their leaders, the Harbingers: those vessels of the divine Ka, those individuals raised above mortals in skill and power to act as the executors of the gods' will.

The falcon shrieks. It is a piercing call, suffused with sadness and shame, sounding out over the screams of dying Ægyptians.

Only the Harbingers seem to hear. Both gaze up, searching out the source of the mournful cry. While striding toward the middle of the battlefield, both Harbingers stare at the falcon. But when they meet, they look away from their winged watcher, and gaze into the eyes of the foe.

They know that perhaps the falcon's eyes are those of Ra. That perhaps the stern father of the gods observes them. Each has heard the claims of the priests that Ra watches over Ægyptus. Each knows the Code of Ma'at and its laws.

It does not dissuade them from their intent.

In a booming voice, one calls out a challenge. The other accepts. In the sacrosanct ring of the Provocation, the two Harbingers—surrounded by an impenetrable barrier, and isolated from their battling warriors—are locked in a duel. It is a duel that ends with victory for one, and death for the other.



- PLAYING THE GAME -

WarGods of *Ægyptus* is a game in which players simulate the climactic battles between the warring Harbingers of the Antediluvian Age. Each player creates his own Harbinger, as well as an army of loyal soldiers to follow him into battle. The game is played on a tabletop, using metal miniatures to represent the Harbinger and his army. Each player collects and paints his own army of miniatures, then matches wits against an opposing player's army.

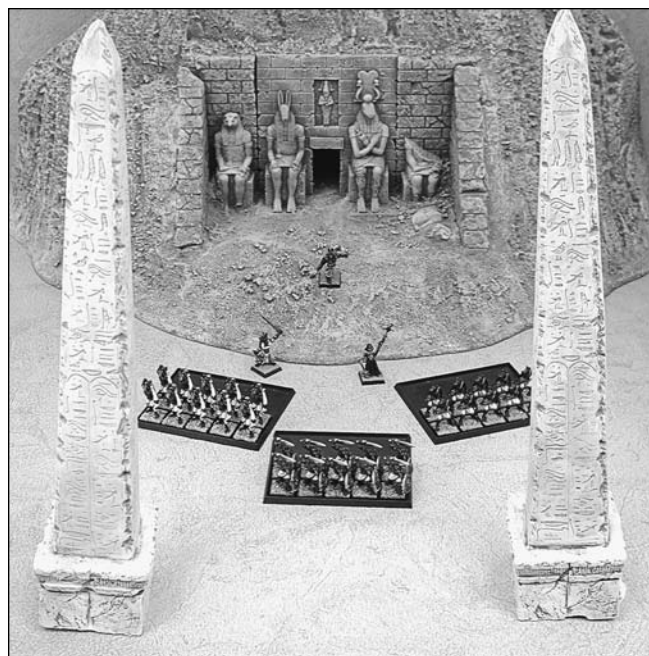
A Leader is Chosen

In *WarGods of Ægyptus*, the Harbinger directly represents the player on the tabletop; he is the commander of his army and vessel of divine power. Just as the lofty gods gaze down upon their mortal followers, the player oversees his miniatures on the tabletop, issuing orders and moving them into battle.

Since every army in *WarGods of Ægyptus* is commanded by a Harbinger, the first step in playing the game is to create him. For your Harbinger, be sure to select the god that most suits your style of play. Also, be sure to think about the Harbinger's followers, because you'll need to collect and paint a great many of these. Once you have considered these two aspects of your Harbinger, you must select and paint a miniature to represent him on the tabletop. Finally, when the Harbinger has been finished, it's time to give him a name, a title worthy of legendary deeds... a name that will be recorded and remembered by the scribes of *Ægyptus* for all time.



A Harbinger of Anubis, painted and ready for play.



A warband of Anubis has gathered for battle.

The Call to Arms

Every general needs an army of loyal soldiers to lead and command. Sturdy warriors will be required to hold the front lines, swords clutched in hand, their ornate shields bearing the graven image of their god. Rows of archers will be needed behind them, to shower the enemy in a withering rain of deadly arrows. Finally, swift chariots will carry your Harbinger and his henchmen gloriously into battle. All of these and more are available in miniature from Crocodile Games to bring the forces of your imagination to life.

To play *WarGods of Ægyptus*, you will need to collect and paint an army of metal miniatures to represent your Harbinger's troops. No two armies are the same, and selecting your own, unique mix of troops is an important step in preparing for play. Some players prefer a force that moves fast and strikes hard, while others prefer to play a more defensive game. Also, many players simply find that they have a favorite race or character type, and focus on these when building their army.

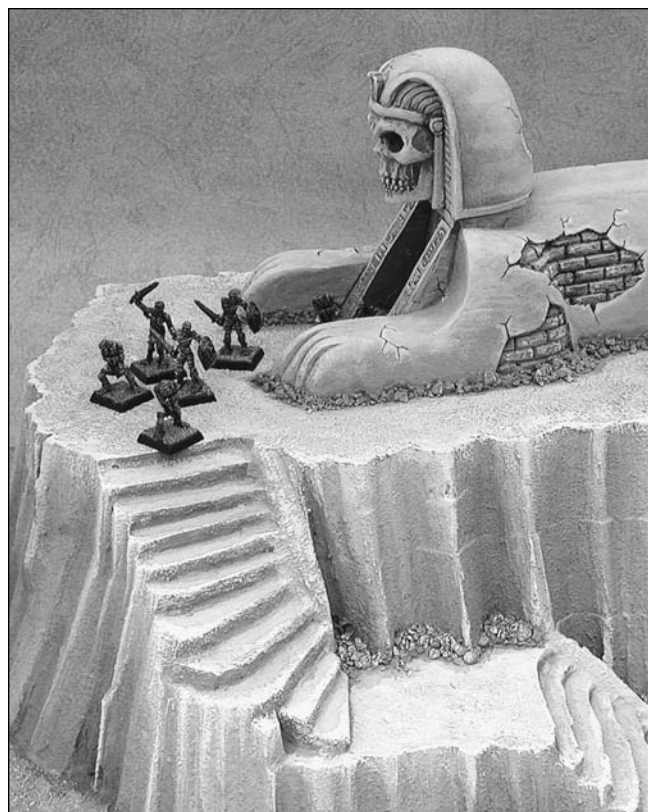
Once you have chosen the miniatures for your army, you need to paint them before playing. Of course, some players are better painters than others, but even a beginner can get good results with time and a little patience. And after some practice, the results will be spectacular. A well-painted miniature springs to life and captures the imagination, and a well-painted army earns the respect of every opponent you face before the game has even begun. Just don't bring your army to the game table unpainted—the brave warriors of *Ægyptus* must not face their enemy unprepared for war!

The Field of Battle

You now have your Harbinger and his warband, carefully painted and ready for battle, but don't forget the scene of the action! While a gaming table can be as simple as a kitchen table covered with tan felt, the best requires the same forethought and attention to detail that went into your army. A little imagination goes a long way... realistic pyramids can be assembled from foam-core, and ruins can be simply constructed with styrofoam, painted to look like slabs of granite. Pre-made architecture and statues of the gods are also available from Crocodile Games, and these make an excellent centerpiece for your table.

A well-made gaming table is a source of great pride among veteran miniature gamers, and a source of wonder to newcomers and passers-by. We encourage each player to make his own table, appropriate to the theme of his Harbinger. A player with an army of Anubis could focus his efforts on the rock-tombs and pyramids of a necropolis; an army of Set would be at home in a desert oasis; and the followers of Ptah would defend their half-constructed pyramid complex. This way, any group of players will have an excellent variety of settings in which to play.

There is nothing quite like the moment before a game begins, the table prepared and decorated, your troops lined up in even ranks before you. Across the table your opponent prepares his army, carefully placing his brightly painted figures into position. As you survey the terrain between you and the enemy, a strategy begins to form. The game is about to begin... a moment then, to admire each other's work before the chaos and mayhem of battle ensues!



Undead emerge from the catacombs beneath a defiled Sphinx.



The Provocation: a duel to the death in single combat.

The Clash of Steel

Two armies charge across the shifting dunes. In the center of the field, they meet in a clash of blood and steel. The game of *WarGods of Egyptus* has begun! Each character in the game has a set of characteristics, called a profile, that defines the differences between the lowliest warrior and the greatest Harbinger. The game rules use this profile as the foundation of all conflict resolution, including Melee Combat, Missile Attacks, and Magic. The rules for combat are straightforward and easy to understand, and battles are quick and dirty. Using a simple system of Tests for attacks and Saves for defense, all contests in the game are resolved.

The rules use a sophisticated orders system, designed to closely simulate simultaneous action. It's called the Command Counter System, and the system uses specific order counters to regulate movement and maneuvering. This eliminates the awkward abstraction of players taking turns, each moving one army while the other waits. In *WarGods of Egyptus*, an army's ability to maneuver is based upon the Harbinger's leadership, as well as his troop's capacity to follow orders.

The climax of the game comes when the two opposing Harbingers finally meet in battle. At the center of the battlefield, these mighty warriors clash in a duel to the death—ritual combat called the Provocation. In this magical duel, only the strongest, most cunning Harbinger will emerge victorious. For the defeated, there is only death, his divine power absorbed into the victorious Harbinger's body in a storm of crackling energy.



The Provocation ends with glory for the victor and death for the defeated.

The Spoils of War

The game has ended, leaving one Harbinger victorious and the other defeated. But it is important to remember that the whole point of the game is not winning. The point is to have fun. Everyone knows it's no fun to play with a sore loser, but it's also no fun to play with someone whose only concern is winning. Sure, everyone loves to win, especially after a close and challenging game. While there can be only one winner, if both players have fun, then everyone wins.

WarGods of Ægyptus is a unique kind of game. Playing the game is a creative venture between both players, who cooperate to tell a fantastic story set in a lost, mythological age. Harbingers are created, and over the course of many games they rise in power, facing both victory and defeat. Every game is a chapter in their story, complete with heroes and villains, great deeds and treachery. Together, all these chapters tell the story of the Harbingers, and the battles for the land of Ægyptus.

Good sportsmanship, cooperation, and creative storytelling are the most important rules of the game, and these qualities are what separates a great player from an average one... the great player has them in abundance. Being a great player is more than having a well-painted army, or being a master strategist, or just plain defeating your opponent. Basically, being a great player is making sure the other players have fun too, and we like to think that *WarGods of Ægyptus* is only played by great players!

- SETTING OVERVIEW -

WarGods of Ægyptus is a game of Mythological Fantasy—a world filled with vengeful gods and cunning priests, flashing swords and powerful sorcery, mighty heroes and nefarious villains.

While a work of the imagination, the setting finds its roots in the history, and more importantly, the mythology of Ancient Egypt. However, the battles of the Harbingers take place before the dawn of time, and though you may find many of the names, places, and even some of the events similar to what you already know, don't be fooled—no historian has ever set down the history you will find on these pages.

While reading, remember that the Ægyptus of the Harbingers isn't the Egypt you've learned about, and try to forget what you already know. Think of it this way: maybe, just maybe, the scholars of the ancient world, after the passing of innumerable millennia, misunderstood much about the time before their own, and when they recorded what they knew, didn't quite get it right. Maybe, just maybe, herein is told a more accurate history...

But whatever the case, we hope you enjoy *WarGods of Ægyptus* as much as we do, and without further ado, we welcome you to the Antediluvian Age!

The Antediluvian Age

Our world is ancient of days. In the history of Earth, the millennia of our modern age are as brief a moment as a heartbeat. There are entire epochs forgotten by Man, but the age before our own is dimly remembered and sometimes called the Antediluvian Age. It was a time long ago—only years after the fall of Atlantis, yet centuries before the Great Flood—and the world has changed much since then.

It was a time before the age of reason, when priests performed bloody rites in the worship of wicked gods and ruled in the names of the powers they served. A time before the dawn of science, when sorcerers practiced powerful magics and possessed a darkling knowledge of occult lore. A time before the birth of the nation-state, when warriors of keen wits and unwavering bravery, armed with truculent steel, carved for themselves kingdoms to rule.

A time when rivers of blood flowed down the steps of a black stone ziggurat in Assur; and as the arch-priest of Allatu sacrificed victim after victim to his goddess, the gathered throng roared with delight. A time when diabolic fiends, invoked by the name of Pythor and filled with murderous intent, took flight from Tyrrhenia upon wings of night. A time when howling with barbaric savagery, the Rievers of Wotan raped and pillaged across northern lands,

leaving as evidence of their passage violated widows shrieking with grief, and the corpses of their husbands nailed to oak trees.

More than just a time of blood, magic and steel, the Antediluvian Age was an age of gods. A time when beings of immense power and ancient origin influenced the world of mortals. By the gods' command, cities were built. For their favor, armies clashed. At their whim, empires rose to power... and fell into ruin.

Amongst the most glorious and majestic of these Antediluvian empires was Ægyptus, Land of the Nile.



The Land of Ægyptus

Through a harsh desert, under a scorching sun, the Nile River runs a serpentine course across the land of Ægyptus. The Nile's azure waters snake out of the lush jungles of Nubia, flowing north to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Along its length are majestic cities filled with fantastic architecture and grandiose stoneworks—colossal walls of rough granite, towering columns of polished marble, and soaring temples of smooth alabaster.

For all its austere grandeur, Ægyptus is a land that stands on the brink of ruin. Since the murder of Pharaoh centuries ago, internecine warfare has torn the land asunder. Ægyptian slays Ægyptian, and all the while, the land's enemies grow bolder and stronger. Like an exquisite weave fraying at its hem, portents of the land's impending doom can be seen at its battle-torn edges...

An undead army of The Eater Of The Dead storms the massive pyramids and ornate tombs of a necropolis. Once conquered, the sacred place of the dead is perverted to the malignant purposes of that ancient, nihilistic evil.

Far from the Nile, a remote temple is besieged by the zealous servants of a rival god. Once broken and looted, the sacred place falls into ruin, its shattered columns pointing accusingly to an impassive sky.

In a clash of feuding warbands, a rushing chariot spews clouds of dust behind it, as its driver pursues his fleeing rival. The warbands battle in the shadow of colossal statues—carved from red granite in the image of the gods, and lying toppled, half swallowed by the blowing sands. Coldly, those stone gods preside over the battle. Steadily, their sightless eyes look upon the warriors. Heartlessly, they ignore the anguished pleas of the dying.

Like those unfeeling statues erected in their worship, the gods of Ægyptus, themselves, seem unheeding of the doom that approaches the Land of the Nile.

The Children of the Gods

The names of the gods of Ægyptus have been passed down through the millennia to our own modern age: Horus and Set, Osiris and Thoth, Isis and Bast, and others beside. In the image of the gods, the races of Ægyptus were shaped, and so they came to be known as the Children of the Gods. The Children do not just physically resemble their gods, but also resemble them in personality and society: the Children of Horus are noble and martial; those of Set, cunning and savage. In all, there are ten races of Ægyptus, but only nine still inhabit the Land of the Nile—one race being exiled long ago for committing the most terrible crime imaginable: disobeying their goddess.

For untold centuries, the gods, dwelling in their sacred temples and served faithfully by their priests, ruled and protected their Children. Under the dominion of the gods, the Children were united to a common cause; and Ægyptus was one of the most magnificent empires of the Antediluvian Age. But in these days of anger, the gods have passed from the land; and now, their Children war upon each other with a violent fervor that grows with each passing year.

Though Ægyptus seems near its destruction, there are those among the Children of the Gods, who have not given up hope and work tirelessly to ensure the land's survival. Yet for each of these heroic souls, there is a villain who works—whether out of selfishness or spite—to bring about the land's doom. And so there is war between the Children, but whether the Land of the Nile will be united again or torn asunder, none can say.





Anubi, Children of Anubis

The jackal-headed Anubi have gaunt bodies that are leanly muscled. It is the sacred duty of the Anubi to serve and protect the dead, and their lives are spent in solemn contemplation of the afterlife. They are a darkly brooding people with a grim disposition, born of years of battle with the endless hordes of The Eater Of The Dead. There is no love lost between the Anubi and the Tethru, for the Anubi often seek to unearth arcane knowledge of strange and foreign origin, and the Tethru seek to prevent this.



Asar, Children of Osiris

The Asar are known in other lands as men. Long ago, they came to Ægyptus from far-flung places, and were taken in by Osiris as the god's own children. They have no one great talent, but are adaptable and have some skill in many things. Since the death of Osiris at the hands of Set, they have become a fragmented people. Some have come to reside with the Children of the other gods, and have adopted their customs as their own. Other Asar are nomads and wander the vast desert. These are the Asar loyal to Osiris, known as the Dispossessed.



Basti, Children of Bast

The cat-headed Basti have lithe bodies and supple limbs. They are a sophisticated race, and have a passion for beauty and grace. They are hedonistic, and take great delight in the pleasures of the flesh. Those that take up weapons are valued for their speed and accuracy, and all Basti can be quite ferocious when fighting for their lives. While they feel themselves to be more cultured and refined than the other races, they do not harbor hatred towards any—though they are scornful of those who are too serious-minded.



Heru, Children of Horus

The hawk-headed Heru are heroically proportioned with broad shoulders and steely thews. Their countenance is stern and somber. The race is direct and honorable, and only stirred to passion when in pursuit of vengeance. Warriors-born, warfare is the only love of the Heru. When they have aged past their physical prime, they often become the military advisors of inexperienced leaders. Their burning hatred of the vicious and dishonorable Children of Set runs deep, and there shall never be peace between these two races.



Khemru, Children of Khanum

The ram-headed Khemru have slim bodies that are often robed in simple apparel. This peace-loving race radiates an air of calm, and their pale eyes hold great wisdom. Once they were a tranquil, complacent race, but over the strife-torn centuries they have become increasingly sorrowful and scolding of the other races. The Khemru Beast-Masters are a terror on the battlefield because of their massively powerful animal companions. The Khemru's disgust with the Children of Ptah is no secret, for that race seems completely apathetic of Ægyptus' approaching doom.

Nekharu, Children of Nekhebet

The vulture-headed Nekharu have twisted, shriveled bodies with long, spidery limbs. Mottled flesh the color of raw meat clings tightly to their skulls; and their malevolent eyes are bloodshot. Long ago they were exiled from Ægyptus for their cowardice and refusal to obey the command of their goddess, Nekhebet. Since their exile, their Witches have become infamous for their eldritch power and horrible, obscene arts. They are hated and reviled by all Ægyptians, but those hungry for power often find themselves allied with the foul Nekharu.



Sebeki, Children of Sobek

The crocodile-headed Sebeki are squat and bandy-limbed, but as thick as two Asar. They dwell in the swamps and waterways of Ægyptus, and make their homes in crude floating huts. They are brutal, savage and slow-witted, but also the strongest of the Children of the Gods. Their ways are simple and straightforward: their time is often spent in search of their next meal, or a good brawl. The Sebeki have little use of the Children of Thoth and no love for magic... unless it is sorcery that produces food.



Tethru, Children of Thoth

The ibis-headed Tethru are very slim with long-limbed bodies. They exude an air of emotionless calm and otherworldly mystery. They have an intrinsic talent with magic, and many of the mightiest Masters of Words are of this race. They hold high the art of writing, and their Scribes are among the most renowned of the race. The Tethru consider themselves the arbiters of Ægyptian law. They have come to greatly distrust the Anubi, and feel that the Children of Anubis have allowed their quest to defeat The Eater Of The Dead to consume them.



To-tanem, Children of Ptah

The To-tanem have heads of crudely carved stone, and faceted gemstones for eyes. Stout and strong, their bodies are sculpted from stone or molded from clay. The race is taciturn and cold-hearted. Having a great talent for stonework, they build walls meant to last an eternity, and the beauty of their statues is breathtaking. But the price of their labors is high, and their greed is legendary. The metalwork of their Artifexes is of unearthly craftsmanship, and magical in nature. The race dislikes the Basti, having been swindled many times by the Children of Bast.



Typhon, Children of Set

The Typhon have strange heads that possess a long snout, the toothy maw of a crocodile, and the long, clipped ears of an ass. They are the masters of the endless harsh deserts that surround Ægyptus, and adorn themselves with the trophies of enemies they have slain: a lion's fang, a barbarian's severed hand, a Khemru's horn, a Heru's beak. Their ferocity and cunning in battle are without equal. Their hatred of the honorable and noble Heru is legendary, and they seek to do battle with the Children of Horus at every opportunity.



- THE HARBINGERS -



Though the gods have passed from Ægyptus, their power is still felt. This power is embodied in the Harbingers: the fists of the gods, the vessels of the divine Ka.

Glorious, mighty, and proud are the Harbingers. They are warriors of colossal stature, preternatural might, and unearthly skill. From amongst his own Children, the god chooses a mortal hero. To this hero, the god grants the gift of the divine Ka, a portion of his own power. The divine Ka imbues the hero with powers and abilities far beyond mortal ken. He is reborn as something greater than before, and his purpose is to make war. Born to strife, a Harbinger stands defiant against the god's enemies, and is the protector of Ægyptus.

A Harbinger does not fight alone. Under his command are the fiercest, most skilled warriors of Ægyptus. These warriors dedicate themselves to their Harbinger with a zealous fervor, rivaling that of the most devout of the priesthood, and form the Harbinger's warband. Despite his warband, the Harbinger does not allow others to fight his battles. Instead, he stands at the vanguard of his warriors, leading them boldly into the fight. Whether it be a gibbering horde of flesh-hungry ghouls, or a murderous swarm of frenzied warriors, the Harbinger stands against them: naked steel gripped in his sinewy hands and a defiant cry upon his snarling lips.

None can wield such great power, and remain unchanged. As a Harbinger grows in divine power, his very self is transformed. Not only does his mighty physique come to ripple with powerful muscles, but fiery passions burn fiercely in his heart. The loves and hatreds of a Harbinger are of an inhuman intensity. He is possessed of a superhuman resolve, and moved by a single-minded determination surpassing that of any mortal.

Caught in the grip of his all-consuming passions, a Harbinger is not subtle. Many mortals, craving power and prestige, take advantage of this lack of subtlety, and seek to use the Harbingers as pawns in their own plans. Foremost among these grasping mortals is the priesthood. The priests, possessing no divinely granted powers themselves, are unable to force the willful and powerful Harbingers to obey them. Instead, they attempt to manipulate a Harbinger by cunning machination or flattering praise—sometimes for the benefit of all Ægyptus, and oftentimes to increase their own power.

Whatever the reason for conflict—whether his own passions, or the manipulations of mortals—there is no compromise for a Harbinger. He does not peacefully settle his disputes. When a Harbinger opposes another of his kind, there is only one possible outcome: bloody battle between the Harbingers' warbands, and deadly combat between the Harbingers, where only one will emerge unscathed.

When two Harbingers meet in personal combat, it is called the Provocation. One Harbinger calls out the arcane words of the Provocation; the other accepts the ancient challenge. With the crack of far-off thunder, and a hot blast of wind like a desert storm, the two Harbingers are surrounded by a sacrosanct ring, which none may enter... nor leave until one Harbinger lies helpless and dead on the sands. When the battle is over, the victorious Harbinger towers over his vanquished foe; he strips his defeated rival of his divine Ka, and his mighty body blazes with radiant energy—the power of the gods. Only afterwards is the impenetrable ring of the Provocation broken.