

THE CUSTOS CRYPTA



The story of the Custos Crypta begins in the year 700 BCE at the height of the Kushite Empire when the authority of Pharaoh Neferkare Shabaka was considered absolute. Shabaka was said to be blessed by the ancient Egyptian goddess Khepera. It was in Khepera's name that Shabaka ruled, from Nubia to the Nile Delta and a blood sacrifice was made daily in his name. For this tribute, the Kushite Empire was gifted the service of the Custos Crypta, a sentient insectoid species from the great sky beyond that

acted as both guardian and custodian of Shabaka and his people. But time and the treachery of humankind are the only constants in this world and Shabaka was murdered by his nephew Taharqa. The remaining Custos Crypta were entombed alongside their Pharaoh in the pyramid at el-Kurru, there to remain for the rest of eternity. At least that was the plan...

The Crypt Guardian was the last of its kind to survive the overthrow of Shabaka. Though thought dead by

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the primitive priests at the time, the Guardian had instead entered a state of cryptobiosis, and its desiccated body was interred alongside the slain Pharaoh. When the pyramid at el-Kurru was excavated by Auguste Mariette and his team in 1869, the Guardian was acquired as a curio by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts. It was late one night that Mariette's daughter Sophie, as head archivist, made the mistake of spilling a glass of water onto the Guardian's inert form. Though initially, it appeared no harm was done, by the following morning, the Guardian had vanished, revived, and now enacting the will of Khepera once more to ensure her servants are triumphant in the Shadow War.

That following evening Sophie Mariette was made host to a Crypta parasite and found her body and mind reshaped to serve as the Oracle of Khepera. High priestess amongst the goddess' human servants, Mariette was gifted with flight and the ability to channel the Mythos of her deity to awesome effect. As Oracle, Sophie Mariette is second in eminence only to the Crypt Guardian itself.

The Crypt Guardian extends its influence through the rest of humanity by way of mentally compelled servants. Research students Sara Heriot and Victoria Taylor were summoned by Sophie Mariette that same fateful night and swiftly brought under the control of the Crypt Guardian on its reawakening. Though utterly dedicated to the whims of Khepera, regrettably any initiative or higher reasoning is stripped away by the process which limits the Custos Crypta's use of such enslaved pawns.

The Crypt Guardian births a dozen or more live young each month in a process that is relatively swift but draining, requiring the Guardian to withdraw and recover for several days afterwards. These Crypt Grubs are the larval form of the Custos Crypta and the most numerous of the creatures to be encountered. Usually tasked with all manner of menial tasks, when fed a specific blend of proteins and secretions they rapidly evolve into their required final form.

Protecting the recovering Crypt Guardian and tending to the Grubs as they pupate are the Crypt Wasps, winged evolutions of the Grubs that the Custos use to guard their nests and forage for prey that cannot be found nearby. Another final form of the Grubs is evolved for long-distance infiltration and observation, perfect for fighting the Shadow War. The Crypt Sham has a passing resemblance to a human silhouette when at rest. When in low light or illuminated by solitary streetlamps, a Crypt Sham can stand in such public spaces and observe a target for hours without arousing suspicion.

