

THE MAU

The Legend of the first Cat

This is a true story, it is the story of the first cat.

On nights that are cold and the when the embers of the fires burn low the wary Cahalith may speak of a nearly forgotten tale. Some consider it blasphemous for it suggests that Mother Luna was not always faithful to her consort and mate *Urfarah*. Others suggest it is only a sign of her contrary nature and fickle aspects that she would seek congress with other creatures. This aspect of the moon is known only as the Witch-Queen or the Triple Goddess. It is not known for certain who this consort was, only that he existed. The story changes from location to location, and from myth to myth; as some suggest that this lover was a mortal man of great beauty and compassion, while others speak of an illicit union between the moon and her brother the sun.

What resulted from this union was a daughter; an Incarnae of both Nocturnal and Diurnal aspects. To her the name in First Tongue is given as *Sharah*. She was creature of great mutability and adaptability, a penultimate shifter, rivaling even her mother. She walked the lands of Pangaea as a mighty predator with the wrath of the sun, being a warrior rivaling even the legendary God-Wolf. For many millennia she roamed the world long before *Urfarah* fell and the world was torn asunder. She did as she pleased suffering no small measure of immunity from the patronage of her parents. Unlike her cousins the wolf, she was a solitary predator and frequently favored the forms of the feline predators, stalking quietly and silently.

When the split of the worlds came to be *Sharah* was trapped upon the material side of the Gauntlet. As the worlds fell apart so too did her powers and her many forms diminish. Those that claim her father truly was Helios suggest that her father, bitter with his sister, forsook not just the children of *Urfarah*, but all her children including *Sharah*. However, it is known that the First pack, jealous of her rivalry, hunted her like many of the other great predators in the land, and though she escaped she did not escape unharmed.

As she fled, she did so with guile, she would shed one of her forms and leave it as a decoy for the First Pack to find. As they came upon each of these aspects they would fall upon it and destroy it, finding only a husk of Essence and an empty trail. For over a century she was pursued and in each corner she escaped with one of her many guises. As the hunt came close to a close, she had only a few forms left and fearing that she would be bereft of all her powers devised a way of escape once and for all.

She cried out to her mother Luna for protection and to hide her from her wayward brethren. Her mother looked

down upon *Sharah* and blessed her escape. *Sharah* would come to take the aspects of her mother that embodied the night, embodied the terrifying sorcery of her mother; the triple aspect and most importantly, the mystery and femininity of her mother. In this *Sharah* took the distilled essence of her favored forms and from this transformed herself into a lesser, smaller, less imposing and more innocuous form. When the First Pack came upon this form, they would not know it as their sister for she was shrouded in the mysteries of the moon and in a guise none of them had seen before. From that encounter, it is thought that she either left, being no longer considered a threat, or left through her own guile.

From this day onwards the cat existed, and it is for this reason that cats flee from the sight of dogs, for they have a deep ancestral memory and fear of the predators that hunted the first cat and remember their guises well.

Children of Sarah

With this new guise, *Sharah* walked amongst the mortal populations. Finding herself enamored of her hedonistic and sensate ways. She indulged herself and began to become part of their worlds, eventually she gained many followers, mortal worshippers and cult-like followings. With the naissance of human civilization she was finally given names in mortal tongues. To her is attributed the guises of Hecate, Bastet, Liberty, Artemis, Ishtar, Freja, Dedun and Tsun Kyan-Kse. Under her patronage, the cat grew in number and founds itself amongst nearly all mortal populations.

In many placed under her cults, from Europe to the Orient, cats were made her idols and sacred in her image. Such a worship reached their heights in Egypt with the Bubasti cults. *Sharah* grew in strength from this adoration and in a few scant millennia had powers again that made her a powerful force. Yet *Sharah* learned well the lessons of her former experiences. It is thought that she never made her presence truly known and hid amongst the many cats in cat form. She is one of the few Incarnae rumored to remain manifest in the material realm.

Sharah, like all the other Incarnae, has her servants. Mortal legends sometimes speak of her different divinities transforming her worshippers into cats. In greek mythology, Hecate transformed the woman known as Galenthias into a cat to make Galenthias her high priestess. In Burma, the goddess Tsun Kyan-Kse transformed her entire priesthood into Birman cats to save them from Siamese invaders. Strangely enough there are similar myths of the spirits of the Siamese kings being transformed into the incarnation of the Siamese breed. Even in Egypt there are stories of children being consecrated to *Sharah* by cutting their arm and pouring a few drops of cat blood into their veins.

These are the Mau. They are once human creatures, and raised into the priesthood of *Sharah*. While they are not quite as populous as the *Uratha* their animal form, the cat, is far more innocuous than that of the wolf, and they are able to integrate themselves much more easily into human society, for cats are everywhere there are humans. The Mau have shifting abilities akin to the *Uratha*, but are known only to have three forms, under the aegis of the triple aspect of their patron. They also have potent and ancient magic of their own that are not the gifts of the spirit world. The magic that they wield is ancient and bewitching, it is, according to the Mau, the magic of Luna herself, not the gifts of the many spirit choirs but a revealed set of mysteries given by Luna only to her daughter.

Unlike the *Uratha*, the Mau do not pass on their nature through birth. *Sharah* is much more selective than that. All Mau are taken from the human population, and all Mau are transformed into their current nature through the magic of the moon. While the vast majority of the Mau are female, it is not entirely uncommon for *Sharah* to raise one to the station of her priesthood. Yet few men meet the highly demanding refinement required of her servants. All of *Sharah*'s servants must exemplify the grace, the beauty and most importantly the serenity of her icon, the cat before they are elected for service.

The Castes

Like the *Uratha*, the Mau are given roles within Mau society. However, such roles are not ordained by the phase of the moon, or even selected by mother Luna. Instead they are chosen by *Sharah* herself. The caste itself is chosen upon the transformation into a Mau and is permanent throughout their existence.

Lilu - the Priestess caste

The Lilu manifest the aspect of the Crone of *Sharah* they emulate what it is to be a Witch-Queen. They are the sorceress priest-caste, and sorceress indeed, for few males are ever elected into this caste as few have the required feminine grace and mystery to uphold its nature. The few that have been were atypically male to begin with, and have had experience living, existing as a woman, especially those who have had gender reassignment and can emulate their behaviors unconsciously. For the purposes of the Mau, any male who is raised to the Lilu is considered a woman despite what physiology may say.

The Lilu's role is not only the keeper of the mysteries. They speak with the voice of the goddess and see with her eyes. In manifesting the crone aspect of the Witch-Queen, the Mau are given the power of prophecy by *Sharah* and are charged with guiding her followers. Being that much closer to the mysteries, the Lilu have easy access to the many spells of the night. It is said that they have mastered the secret arts of dreaming and have a strange affinity to the world of sleep and its incumbent dreamers.

Durgan - the Warrior caste

The warrior caste has two roles, they are the protectors of the Mau, and their nurturers. In this manner they emulate the mother aspect of *Sharah*. Their role as protectors is not the strategy of the hunter, or the fury of the predator. Instead it is the unbridled ferocity of a mother protecting her children. All the Durgan, male or female feel a strong sense of maternal (or paternal) protection towards the other Mau and are known to risk their lives to protect the other castes.

Though their experiences with the mysteries may be less than that of the Lilu, the Durgan have their own unique abilities. They are the only caste to manifest a war form like that of the *Uratha*'s Gauru. This form, more than any other it thought to suggest Helios' ancestry for its leonine shape radiates a subtle form of solar power. While this form does not have the brute strength and power of the Gauru it is able to hold its own against many other predators. The advantage that the Durgan have over the *Uratha* is that they are not blinded by the seething rage that the *Uratha* are while in this form. This allows the Durgan to maintain her sense of cool strategy while she fights.

Vesti - the Artisan caste

The last caste, is the Vesti. They are the Artisans of the Mau. They represent the Maiden aspect of *Sharah* and are her artists, her craftsmen and her smiths. *Sharah* came to the material world to seek out the enjoyments of its realm. Humans have long showed an ingenuity that *Sharah* adored, through their ingenuity they created marvel after marvel of sophisticated endeavors. As such, *Sharah* appreciates those who give themselves over to such pursuits and grants them a unique place within her orders. They are given the freedom to pursue their works of arts, and in exchange it is their role to provide for the other two castes in whatever way they can. In this role *Sharah* grants them superlative abilities to manifest their craft, and in return they must give this service to the other castes: such as the forging of weapons for the Durgan, or of making the paraphernalia desired of the Lilu. This is considered recompense for having what could be thought as the freest of all given tasks.

The Ways

Sharah offers three paths to her followers. They represent one of the ideals of her existence that they should emulate.

The Diadem - the way of the Queen

One of the most potent aspects of *Sharah* is her aspect of the Queen. For those who would take upon themselves the task of emulating this role, they assume not only the mantle of authority amongst the Mau, but also a charge to

be regal in whatever sphere they are in. In exchange for being able to look at a king, they must return this stare with equal authority and potency.

The way of the Diadem teaches the Mau to emulate *Sharah* by securing power amongst the Mau and amongst mortal kind. They are taught to use their arts, their methods and their manners to secure a safe place amongst the power structures of humanity that they might turn them towards their own purpose. However *Sharah* encourages all those upon this path to seek power through subtlety, not force. While a Queen can be majestic, she rules through charisma and guile, through manipulation and savvy, and only very few Queens in history have led through force of arms.

In exalting the Queen, the Mau are expected to live in an opulent lifestyles. *Sharah* will not have those of her royal nature sully themselves with poor living or accommodation. The power they gained must in some way be used to secure their own sensibilities. In this way, the followers of Diadem praise and honor the Queen in such a homage to her lifestyle.

The Moon - the way of the Huntress

Sharah was also a consummate huntress. Sometimes she is depicted as a solitary feline stalking her prey in the night, and other times she is shown as an archer who brings down her targets with a deadly flight of an arrow. In all cases *Sharah* as a huntress is silent, cunning and strikes without warning. Those who follow this way are sometimes considered to follow an assassin's path, for it demands that its followers be the silent, unseen and deliver their blows swiftly and surely.

The nature of the hunt is itself an honor towards *Sharah*, it is done in her name. The hunt itself does not have to be the physical hunt of a living creature. It is the pursuit and capture of a specific target. The seduction of a powerful dignitary can be considered a hunt, as can be stealing a flower from a secured garden. The nature of the hunt is presented in the challenge it sets for the huntress. Something must be stolen or won through a physical trial or ordeal. That which is caught in her name is unto a trophy in her honor.

The Ring - the way of the Courtesan

The last of *Sharah*'s greatest aspect is that of the pleasure-seeker. All aspects of hedonism and earthly joys are given over to the purview of *Sharah*. Those who follow this way are the players, the courtesans, the sacred whores and the divine performers. All of them exalt the goddess by living this aspect to its fullest. They represent the cat in a moment of play, the cat in a moment of respite and simple bemusement.

In emulating this role, the Courtesans are expected to be effective manipulators, using their social graces, their winsome looks and their natural charms to further their own agendas. But in doing so they must also act as the brokers for others. They must ensure that those who are in need, particularly the other Mau, must be given such

pleasures of life. This is not simply a matter of offering themselves to any who ask, but to see that simple reminders of life's good indulgences are not forgotten. The Courtesans are not above pulling dirty tricks and pranks upon those they see as losing their touch with the world, those who are too proud and those who are too uptight.