

# CODEX: APOCRYPHA

**When they shaped the world to their wishes, the Old Ones did not foresee the collapse of their polar gates, nor the Great Cataclysm that followed. They did not, however, leave their creation unprepared...**

With a single flitting of his heavy eyelids, Lord Adohi Tehga set the entire chamber into motion. Everywhere skink attendants rushed to perform their sacred ceremonies. It was not yet known if this would be an actual Awakening, or if this was merely some mid-trance reaction, a shifting of the corpulent bulk that lay reclining, half submerged in a pool of tepid water. Anticipation, not speculation, was the Skinks' solemn duty, and each prepared as if their Lord was about to rouse from his dreaming slumber. All Slann required such care and veneration, for they were the ruling caste, the first creatures created by the Old Ones. This slumping form was not just any Mage-priest, however, but Adohi Tehga, an impossibly old Slann of the Second Generation, a being of immense power, importance and bodily girth.

Unbeknownst to his Skink attendants, the mind of Adohi Tehga was far, far away from his slumping form. His mind had wandered far since the Great Mazdamundi – the only Slann older and more powerful than Adohi himself – had declared Exodus. Those words triggered something in Adohi Tehga. Plans older than the Slann himself arose; implanted memories flooded his mind, visions that were ancient before the founding of his world.

Adohi Tehga's spirit-self walked amongst distant stars before returning to his own troubled world. From a distance, Adohi's planet looked blue and peaceful, yet he knew that serenity was the deception of great distance. As the Mage-priest's eyes closed, his mystic sight circumnavigated the globe, penetrating cloud, mountain and illusion alike. The Slann saw just what Lord Mazdamundi had foretold: the only kingdoms not beset by war had already been ravaged by it. Armies beyond count were on the march and everywhere the power of Chaos grew, like the tentacles of some great beast slowly enveloping the entire planet.

A great lunamancer and reader of the stellar signs, Adohi Tehga looked upon the heavens. Above the island of the Elves the stars proclaimed stark oblivion and torment. Already the isle burned with war. Further afield, no starlight pierced the Black Pall that surrounded the lands of the Great Necromancer, but that barrier could not halt the Mage-priest's gaze. He saw within the Black Pyramid noting but the swelling power and desperation that lurked behind the hollow sockets of the King of the Dead. Smoke hung over the lands of Mankind, and, above that, more portents of ill omen; the Red Star, the war star, the doom of all.

In the mountains, the Dwarfs resisted, but their star-pattern was all of woe and tragedy. Underground, deep beyond reckoning, the rat-creatures flowed through tunnels in living rivers. They would strike soon. The green-tinged and leering Chaos Moon was their sign, and it waxed impossibly large, blocking out all stars from Adohi Tehga's vision. The Mage-priest turned his eyes away, turning them at last to the north...

The frozen wastelands. The doom of the world. Fur-clad barbarians followed by black-armoured brutes; relentlessly they marched south carrying the fell totems of the Dark Gods. So much Chaos energy swirled about them that they warped the very ground they strode upon. Yet Adohi Tehga's vision was drawn further north, drawn as if by some unseen power. There, amid the swirling corruption, was a rent in reality itself. Beyond the veil shadows writhed and contorted. Whispers urged Adohi Tehga to drift closer, to see more. Words not spoken filled his spirit-mind.

*Join us... join us... come to us... we are coming...*

Even with a willpower that could shift mountains, Adohi Tehga wavered. Rationally, he knew the siren call for what it was – yet logic failed before that entropic insanity. What good was his grain of reason before those mountains of madness? Straining, Adohi Tehga wrenched back, away from the beckoning voices. As he did, the Mage-priest thought – or imagined – hoarse, grating laughter following his departing astral form...

Over war-filled lands and vast expanses of ocean his projection flew, at last returning to his own misty green home. No stars gleamed overhead, for although its placement in the night sky was impossible, the Chaos Moon loomed directly above Lustria also, as if the luminous mass was watching over the lands.

Truly Lord Mazdamundi was correct. The Great Plan had failed.

Adohi Tehga sped over the sprawling city of Tlaxtlan, passing through the stones of the Great Temple of Tlazcotl, with a final jolt coming to rest within his corporal form reclining in the Chamber of Balanced Serenity. The Mage-priest was surrounded by Skinks, peering at him with unblinking eyes. The moment his eyes jolted open Adohi Tehga was barraged by his Skink advocate, his befeathered headdress bobbing. Adohi Tehga raised a hand upwards to command silence.

“Lord Mazdamundi has called Exodus,” said Adohi Tehga, his voice croaky and rasping. “Awaken the Opener of the Ways, send for the Golden-crested spawning.”

The Skink Advocate and all the surrounding attendants were awed by the least sound made by Adohi Tehga, for even his grunts were to them divine enlightenment. Yet this was an almighty command. They knew how to respond to this command, yet since the first spawning of their kind, none had ever yet heard it given. With much bowing and feather-bobbing, the Skinks scampered away.

Deep below the vast temple-pyramid, ancient patterns were traced, sequence codes tapped

into stone-carved glyphs. Sealed doors of stone, closed for ages of the world, were unlocked and deeper chambers revealed. A Golden-crested Skink alone entered the last vault, the ponderous door swinging closed behind him. At his presence, lights running through the stone flickered and hummed, bathing all in a blue-tinted light. Spawned for this purpose, the Skink knew what to do, despite having never entered a chamber such as this. Tracing swirled patterns upon a panelled wall, the Skink was surrounded by holographic controls. By his motions, the temple-pyramid was brought to life; it thrummed with unknown energies that shook its foundations.

Far up in the pinnacle, Lord Adohi Tehga rose up on his floating stone palanquin and travelled out to the temple-pyramid's star-gazing roof, many thousands of feet above the ground. A lone star twinkled through the greenish haze of the Chaos Moon. A portent, thought the Mage-priest. A fleeting sign, some last vestige of hope?

Adohi Tehga felt the tremors as the whole temple-pyramid trembled. The Exodus Engines had been engaged. If doom was indeed upon the world, thought Adohi Tehga, then the last gift of the Old Ones would not fail them...





*Codex: Apocrypha is a regular feature exploring the infinite background of the Warhammer universe.*

