

Upbeat, spooky music plays

MEMO

True Tales of the Illuminati! Episode one. Pyramid scheme!

Theme music plays

MEMO

Written by Max Kreisky, Katherine Cargill, Eric Trageser, with Marc Campesano

Sound design by Will Gianetta.

Slow, spooky music plays

MEMO

Internal Memo from the archives of the Illuminati. Egypt.
1586 BC. Day 140 of the Growing Season. Thursday.
Office of the deputy head of Non-Administrative Support.
We are moving forward on project Big Triangle. Head
under-boss Bek has been called from active service in
Sumeria to head this project.

THE SOUND OF CRACKLING TORCHES AND DRIPPING WATER.

HEAVY DOOR CREAK

CHIEF

Beck, step into my office.

SCRIBBLING QUILL SOUND AS CHIEF TALKS

FOOTSTEPS AS BECK WALKS INTO THE OFFICE

BECK

Yes, chief!

CHIEF

How are you settling in, Beck? I know the move from
Sumeria has been rough all around.

BECK

Well the change was a bit hard, but through the Illuminati
all things are possible-

CHIEF

Yes yes yes everything and all things. Now, Beck, there is

a great deal of interest in preserving the secret occult knowledge of the Illuminati.

BECK

Did we really decide to call it that?

CHIEF

Yes. Secret occult knowledge. It has been decided that we will preserve our secret occult knowledge, for the benefit of future generations of illuminants. We don't want it to be lost again.

BECK

No sir! Not like the Illuminati lost it in Sumeria after-

CHIEF

We aren't talking about that anymore. It's been stricken from the secret occult knowledge.

BECK

But sir, isn't it important to learn from our mistakes-

QUILL STOPS SCRIBBLING AS CHIEF YELLS

CHIEF

STRICKEN, BECK! Why would you be able to learn from mistakes? That's why they're mistakes.

BECK (DEJECTEDLY)

Yes sir.

QUILL STARTS SCRIBBLING AGAIN

CHIEF

Now the order has come down that we're going to create a vast physical monument in the desert, which will secure our secret occult knowledge.

BECK

Won't people notice?

CHIEF

Of course they'll notice, but the people can't read, so.

BECK

Why does it have to be so huge?

CHIEF

So we don't forget where we put it. Again.

BECK

Ohhhhhh, like in Sumeria when-

CHIEF

STRUCK FROM THE SECRET OCCULT KNOWLEDGE

BECK

Ok, ok.

CHIEF

To this end we have identified a leading architect, one Imhotep. You and your team will meet with him to secure terms. Don't let him intimidate you, he's eccentric but he's harmless.

(A PAUSE, HE RECONSIDERS)

To people.

BECK

Yes Chief! I am willing, I am able, I am more than capable with the tools that the almighty illuminati-

CHIEF

Yes yes yes yes yes. Now get going, Beck. And remember, Illuminati, ollominoto.

BECK

Is that ... Is that the motto now?

CHIEF

Yes well, they're workshopping it.

BECK

But...It's terrible.

CHIEF

Yes. Get going.

SOUND OF DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING. FOOTSTEPS AS BECK WALKS OUT THE DOOR OF THE CHIEF'S OFFICE INTO THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE

BECK

deep and regretful sigh

DAL

Productive meeting, Beck?

BECK

AH! Radamn you're quiet, Dalila. Were you just standing there behind the door the whole time?

DAL (WHISPERING, SINISTER)

Isn't that what we do in the illuminati, Beck? Hide in the shadows, and pull the strings on the world like a dark puppeteer?

BECK

It's all metaphors with you.

DAL

Metaphors are the fuel of thought, Beck.

BECK

I don't want to do this. Stop.

DAL (NORMAL VOLUME, SMUG)

The dance continues.

BECK

It's not a... What do you want, Dal.

DAL

The same thing I always want, Beck. My place in the sun back, Beck.

BECK

...do you want to be in the sun or the shadows?

DAL

The sun, Beck! You usurped me in Uruk. You crept into my bed like a viper and stole away mymy Job!

You stole away my job.

BECK

They gave me your job when you messed up. If you didn't want to lose your job, you shouldn't have messed up. Now. You're on cover-ups and I'm on direct action. Which is how it should be, since I'm the one that believes in this

organization.

DAL

That was luck, Beck! I was the best there was. Have you heard of Gilgamesh? I did that! *I'm* Gilgamesh!

BECK

What?

DAL

I mean, basically.

And what do you mean, you believe in this organization? We just murdered two people to make sure a road would be in the shape of a star. Do you realize how convoluted that is?

BECK (dismissive)

Sounds perfectly sensible to me.

DAL

And that is why you don't deserve this job. Do you know why I should have your job, Beck? Because I know what a *joke* this whole organization is.

(mocking)

A secret global conspiracy for furthering the needs of mankind?

It's almost as ludicrous as our 'fully functional' weather machine.

BECK (angrily)

I helped with that. It makes the Nile flood on time. (uncertain, but pushing through it so that she can make a point)

We're pretty sure.

DAL

Once you realize how absurd this all is, you keep your eye on the real prize, which is what is going to get you from assignment to paycheck as fast as humanly possible. And to go through anyone who stands in your way. That's the kind of incentive that makes you *efficient*, Beck. A quality sorely lacking here that I *expertly* provide.

BECK

Don't you have any respect for the art of what we do here?!

DAL

This isn't an *art project*, Beck. It's a job.

(SAVORING THE NEXT SENTENCE)

A job where sometimes, you get to *kill* people. You don't get a prize for being the best at secrets.

(ABRUPT GEAR SHIFT)

Except at the company picnic. And that's just a piece of papyrus that *allegedly* says "Number one at secrets" in invisible ink

(WITH SATISFACTION)

As thin a tissue of lies as the lies that it represents.

[long pause] Wait does that--no, no that scans.

BECK

...Look, someone has to keep people safe from themselves. Someone has to make sure that they're snuggled in a warm blanket of ignorance, unaware of the terror of oncoming history.

DAL

See, now you're doing metaphors.

BECK (snapping)

They're good when I do them.

This is what's wrong with you--you're a cynic, Dal. In this for the pension. You don't even believe in the lies.

The beautiful, comforting lies.

DAL

Can you hear yourself?

BECK

Yes. And it eats you up that I'm right, doesn't it. That the Illuminati is humanity's first, best hope for becoming all that

we should be. You need to trust the system, Dal. The beautiful, perfect, system. The system that will guide us to a more glorious future. Illuminati, Ollominoto.

DAL

...What?

BECK

We're saying that now.

DAL

It's literally meaningless.

BECK

Shut it. Dal. Shut your stupid, mean mouth and go back to cleaning up messes. I'll be out there succeeding, with the tools that the Illuminati gives me. I'm going to go out and write history, before it happens.

DAL

Can you hear yourself?

BECK

[pause] Goodbye, Dal.

FOOTSTEPS AWAY *FADE OUT HALLWAY SOUNDS*

SOUND DESIGN - START IN CONVERSATION RES BY THE NILE. SOUNDS OF WAVES, BIRDS, FROGS.

JACKIE

...Dare you to throw a rock at that ibis.

ISHMAEL (uncertain)

...Really?

JACKIE

Yeah, go for it. Scare the bird..

ISHMAEL

Okay, Jacinta. Hup!

WHOOSH THUD! SQUAWK! SPLASH!

JACKIE (DELIGHTED BUT ALSO HORRIFIED)

Oh my god you hit it. That's messed up.

ISHMAEL (SCARED)

Oh geez oh geez don't tell me that Jackie.

JACKIE (MATTER-OF-FACT)

I don't know Ishmael. This might be the worst thing you've ever done.

BECK

Hey guys what's up?

JACKIE (WORDS ALL TUMBLING OUT IN EXCITEMENT)

Boss! Ishmael stoned an ibis to death! I saw the inside of it's head!

BECK (CONFUSED)

What. Why?

ISHMAEL

uhhhh Well Boss, uhhhh um

BECK

Ok. Stop. Focus. I don't wanna deal with any of this. Listen, we've got a big job to do. This mission is vital to the preservation of important illuminati intel.

ISHMAEL

The secret occult knowledge?

BECK

Yes.

JACKIE (SULLEN)

I hate that name.

BECK (EXASPERATED)

Yes. I know. But the grand designs of the illuminati are more important than any of our personal preferences, no matter who we are. (beat) Or who our parents are.

(beat) Right?

JACKIE (RESENTFUL)

I can't help but feel that was directed at me-

BECK

That was directed at you

JACKIE

-just because my mother has a little bit of rank-

BECK (EXASPERATED)

Her title is 'Avenging Sword of the Illuminati, of the High Council, Exalted Archon of Warfare'

JACKIE

-, it doesn't mean I can't carry my weight! I'm working my way up!

BECK

sigh You're right, that was unprofessional of me. I'm sorry, Jacinta. (formally) We are all united under the Illuminati. Now, we're all to meet Imhotep at his workshop, which is (RUSTLING PAPER)... right... there..

JACKIE (DISAPPOINTED)

So you're not gonna punish Ishmael at all?

BECK (WHISPERED, AS SHE LEANS IN TO SPEAK PRIVATELY TO JACKIE)

Are you kidding me? He threw a rock *through* a bird.

ISHMAEL (ALSO WHISPERED)

It was an accident.

JACKIE AND BECK (STARTLED)

Ah!

FOOTSTEPS AND SOUNDS OF WORKSHOP GROW CLOSER AS WE FADE INTO THE NEXT SCENE

CLINKS, CLANKS, CHIPPING AT STONE. HOISTING SOUNDS ALL PLAY THROUGH THIS SCENE IN IMHOTEP'S WORKSHOP

ISHMAEL (IMPRESSED)

Wow, look at all these hoists. I bet you could pick up a sand dune with those.

BECK

I bet you could, Ishmael. I bet you could.

ISHMAEL (STILL IMPRESSED)

And that's one big stone.

IMHOTEP

Oh thank you! I carved it out of an even bigger stone.

ISHMAEL

Woah.

IMHOTEP

The secret is you just carve away every part of the stone that isn't a slightly smaller stone. (a pause, as he waits for people to appreciate him)

BECK

Well, we've got a project for you that's a little more ambitious than that.

IMHOTEP

More ambitious than stones? Well, it would be nice to stretch myself again. Ever since I made that large stone cat with the wings and human face I've been in a slump.

(WHISPERING, SHARING A FUN SECRET)

it's my face.

BECK

I have a plan h-

IMHOTEP (STILL WHISPERED, THE SECRET IS FUN AND A LITTLE NAUGHTY)

It wasn't supposed to be.

BECK

Here. We want a large stone monument, 4,000 cubits by 4,000 cubits that looks something like this.

SOME PAPER RUSTLING AS IMHOTEP IS SHOWN A SCROLL WITH BLUEPRINTS

IMHOTEP (IMPRESSED)

A big triangle! Well, it might be a bit unstable.

BECK

Why would it be unstable?

IMHOTEP

Well it's balancing on that tiny point.

BECK

It's the other way up

IMHOTEP

Ohhhh

Well I would love to build this majestic monument to...
what is it?

BECK

We're using it to... ahhhhh. Quick huddle guys.

THEY HUDDLE(SOUNDS OF HANDS SLAPPING ON SHOULDERS, THE GAN'S VOICES
ARE SEPARATED FROM RIGHT TO LEFT)

BECK (CONT'D)

We can't tell him that it's for storing the secret occult
knowledge of the illuminati.

ISHMAEL

What if we scare him? People always stop asking me
questions when I scare them.

BECK

Do you scare a lot of people?

ISHMAEL

Not on purpose...

(BEAT)(WITH A LOST SADNESS)

...Not on purpose...

BECK

We're not gonna scare someone just to get our library built.
We're not hacks. We're the Illuminati. No. We're going to
deceive him. Like professionals.

ISHMAEL

What do we say?

BECK

What if it was for storing...

JACKIE (QUICKLY)

Grain!

BECK

Grain! Yes!

ISHMAEL

In case people get hungry.

BECK

That's great Ishmael. Okay break.

THEY DE-HUDDLE

BECK (CONT'D)

It's for storing grain.

IMHOTEP

Oh yes of course

ISHMAEL

For the Illuminati.

STAMPING SOUND

ISHMAEL

Ow! Why did you just stomp on my foot? I thought in the illuminati we shunned physical violence whenever possible

JACKIE

What? No we don't.

BECK

Jackie!

IMHOTEP

What's the illuminati?

BECK (QUICKLY)

Oh, it's nothing!

Pause.

IMHOTEP

Okay!

IMHOTEP (CONT'D)

Well I would love to help you but I'm afraid I'm already contracted by the Pharaoh to build him a magnificent tomb. Maybe you've heard of him? The pharaoh? Djoser?

JACKIE

Yeah, we've heard of him

IMHOTEP

He's LITERALLY god?

BECK

Yes, we're aware. Is there any way we could get you to prioritize us?

IMHOTEP (QUICKLY)

Oh no, absolutely not, very dangerous and out of my way.
(A TONAL WHIPLASH AS HE RECONSIDERS QUICKLY)

Well, there is one thing. You could make it worth my while...

BECK

We have a very rich patron, we could-

IMHOTEP

Birds! I want thousands of birds.

BECK

Birds?

IMHOTEP

Yes!

BECK

What... what are the birds for?

IMHOTEP

I had the impression this is a 'don't ask a lot of questions' kind of arrangement? Mutual secrecy?

BECK

We can do that.

IMHOTEP

Let me know.

JACKIE

I guess now all we have to do is figure out who can help us procure-

BECK

You two go to the dump and catch birds.

NEXT SCENE. THEY'RE OUT CATCHING BIRDS. MANY SQUAWKS AND THUDDING, SOUNDS OF A RIVER, SOUNDS OF FROGS. IN BETWEEN EVERY LINE WE HEAR BIRDS BEING INJURED OR ALARMED. SOUNDS OF BIRD BEING CAUGHT AND STUFFED IN SACKS

ISHMAEL

Jackie, we're friends, right?

BAWK (SACK NOISE)

JACKIE

Yeah of course we're friends. Even though you don't have your own obelisk, and never will, we're friends.

ISHMAEL

Yeah

BAWWWWW (sack noise)

ISHMAEL (CONT'D)

Well, I kind of feel like you threw me under the palanquin earlier when I stoned that bird you dared me to stone.

JACKIE

Well that's a new expression I've never heard, but yeah.

BRAAAHHHH

ISHMAEL

Yeah. Ahh! AHHHHHH!

JACKIE

Watch out! That kestrel almost got your finger!

GLUK LUGK LUGK

ISHMAEL

I think he's choking on my fingernail

JACKIE

Oh oh jeez. Turn him upside-down and shake him! Gently. Gently!

GAWWWK... GAWWWWWKKK

ISHMAEL

I don't think it's doing anything!

BRUPPHHHH BIP.

JACKIE

Tap him on the back!

BLEKK!. PLEPLEPLEPLEPLEP

ISHMAEL

It worked! Wow, he ate a lot of fish today.

JACKIE

Yeah...

ISHMAEL

So why'd you tell on me about the ibis?

JACKIE

I don't know, I guess...I didn't want to attract attention. It's like, I want to distinguish myself with this job, but I *know* the moment any act of violence or behavior of interest gets back to her, my mother will swoop down like.... like...

CAWWWWWWW!

JACKIE (COT'D)

Like a bird! To tear apart my work.

BAWKKKKK (SACK NOISE)

ISHMAEL

Yeah, I know. I've guarded you since birth. Remember? You were a baby, I was a freakishly huge baby...

JACKIE

So you know how I feel, dude! I want to impress her, but my mom's the SWORD of the illuminati, you know? The head of the military! She conquered Uruk! URUK! Their walls were so high!

BAWWWWWWWK (SACK NOISE)

Somehow I think I have this idea in my head that I can just... evade her notice until I'm head underboss. And then--bam! and I've made her proud without any ruthless cross-examining or tests of martial endurance along the way. *sigh* That's the dream, you know?

SKREEEEEEEE (SACK NOISE)

ISHMAEL

Yeah, I get that. I mean, I don't know my parents, since I

got taken out of a window like a loaf of bread, but you know, same thing.

JACKIE

Do people steal bread out of windows? Is that a thing?

ISHMAEL

Yeah, I do it all the time. It's free. It's free bread.

JACKIE

So last week when I bought that bread and left it on the windowsill and then it was gone when I went to eat it...

ISHMAEL

Yeah I ate that bread. I do that all the time. Where do you think I get all of this bread I keep in my tunic?

JACKIE

Ishmael, we've been chasing birds all afternoon and you had bread the whole time?

ISHMAEL

Do birds like bread? How do they eat it, it won't fit in their mouths

JACKIE

...I don't know how to answer that question.

ISHMAEL

Well I've got all these loaves--

RUSTLING SOUND. EXCITED BIRDS! BAWK SCREEE BEP BEP BEP

ISHMAEL (CONT'D)

AHHH! Birds! Jackie it's Uruk all over again!

JACKIE

Just stay upright! I'll get the big net!

ISHMAEL (MUFFLED, UNDER BIRDS)

They know about the Ibis! They want revenge!

SCENE

SOUND CUES FOR WORKSHOP AGAIN. WINCHES. RUMBLINGS. WORKMEN WORKMENNING. MUFFLED SQUAWKING FROM A BURLAP SACK.

BECK

I don't think I'll ever get used to this creepy workshop. How many did you get?

JACKIE

I don't know, I'm not opening the bags again.

ISHMAEL

Yeah, we're not opening the bags again.

JACKIE

We tried consolidating. It was a mistake.

BECK

Ishmael, do you need a bandage or something?

ISHMAEL (REMEMBERING HORROR)

I do, but they're in the bags.

JACKIE (BLEAKLY)

The birds have them now.

IMHOTEP

Are these my birds? It seems like these bags are a little light...on birds!

ISHMAEL

Birds are light, their bones are hollow.

IMHOTEP

Not if you.. fill them?

JACKIE

What does that mean?

IMHOTEP

No questions arrangement!

BECK

Consider it a down payment. We'll keep them coming.

IMHOTEP

Oh, good!

ISHMAEL (FEARFUL)

Oh no Beck, I can't go back, they know my face.

BECK

Ishmael, do you want to be a hero of the illuminati or a goon, scribbling away reports of hiding bodies on papyrus sheets and living off stolen bread?

ISHMAEL

They've already created a word for me in their crude bird language! I can't face them if they're organized!

BECK (ANGRY)

I'll create a word for you in a crude bird language!

ISHMAEL(CONFUSED)

What?

BECK (THROUGH GRITTED TEETH)

This is my first commission Ishmael. You're not going to screw it up for me with some weird, totally unfounded bird phobia.

ISHMAEL

If you'da seen them, Beck--! I can't, Beck, please...?

BECK (FORCEFUL)

You can and you will. Illuminati, Ollominoto.

ISHMAEL

But-

BECK

Illuminati, Ollominoto, Ishmael.

ISHMAEL (FRANTIC)

But now they've tasted human blood!

BECK

ILLUMINATI!

ISHMAEL (CLOSE TO TEARS)

Ollominoto...

BECK

That's. Right.

JACKIE (ASIDE)

I think Beck might be crazy. Are you getting that too?

IMHOTEP

I don't care.

SMASH CUT TO

MEMO

From the internal memo archives of the Illuminati. Egypt. 1586 BC. Day 180 of the Growing Season. Monday. Construction of Big Triangle has begun. Easily duped farmers have been convinced to use their downtime to construct what they believe to be pentahedral grain storage. Beck and her team have been busy recording the secret occult knowledge, but now Djoser the Pharaoh, light of the sun and eye of Ra, has arrived on site to inspect what he believes to be his tomb.

GRUNTING AND GRINDING OF STONES. SOUNDS OF SWEATY FARMERS BUILDING THINGS.

JACKIE

Alright, on to inscribing chapter 3, paragraph 5, line two of the secret occult knowledge. Let me just unfurl this scroll...

(TOO MANY UNFURLING SOUNDS)

Hold on a second....

(MORE UNFURLING)

BECK

You got that or?

JACKIE

Hold on, almost there...

(MORE UNFURLING)

Okay. First word: Weather-Machine.

ISHMAEL

How do you spell that?

JACKIE

Bird,

(CHISEL CHISEL)

(FURLING)

Jackal,

(CHISEL CHISEL)

(FURLING)

man dancing,

(CHISEL CHISEL)

(FURLING)

stern man dancing,

(CHISEL CHISEL)

(FURLING)

eye thing,

(CHISEL...)

(FURLING)

bird.

ISHMAEL

The weird eye thing or the other one?

JACKIE

(UNFURLING)

The weird eye thing.

(SOUND OF A CHISEL ON STONE)

BECK

...whoa, whoa! Someone's coming.

ISHMAEL

Dangit, you distracted me and I made an uppercase dog instead of a lowercase dog. People are gonna think I was a real moron. Oh, shouldn't you be furling that back up as you go?

JACKIE

Oh yeah, lemme get that.

(SO MUCH FURLING, LIKE 10 SECONDS WORTH)

(MURMUR) Oh this is backwards, hold on.

(FURLING)

Is this right to left or left to right?

BECK

It's boustrophedon so it's both.

JACKIE

Oh I guess we're okay then.

ISHMAEL

Wait, did you say someone's coming?

BECK

Yes! Can't you see that massive parade coming up to the library?

INTERRUPTION! FANFARE! SUDDENLY AN APPROACHING PARADE, CYMBALS, FLUTES, LYRES, BUGLE-TYPE THINGS, VIZIERS SHOUTING, BIRDS HOOTING, ELEPHANTS TOOTING, LIONS ROARING IN WELCOME. DJOSER HAS ARRIVED, UPON LET'S SAY A PALANQUIN.

ANNOUNCER (FROM FAR AWAY)

All hail Djoser! The Pharaoh, Light of the sun and eye of Ra! Eternal flesh of the god incarnate! Handsome man and handsome god in a stylish package!

BECK

Oh no no no no no! If he finds out that we stole his architect our figs are... it's bad. No no no he's going up to Imhotep! We have to get down there

DJOSER (FROM FAR AWAY STILL)

What a magnificent tomb! I thought we had discussed a cube but this.. this is nice! A big tall pointy thing is good! Excellent work, Imhotep. What part will I be entombed in? I assume the top? What would you call this shape?

ANNOUNCER

The pharaoh wishes to know the name of this construction! Speak now!

IMHOTEP (FROM FAR AWAY)

Well we don't have a name for it yet, but.. the Djoser-hedron?

DJOSER (FROM FAR AWAY STILL)

Catchy! And subtle... A classy name! Yes! I like it! The Djoserhedron...

(claps twice) Servants! Form me a Djoserhedron from your bodies!

ANNOUNCER (FARTHER BACK IN THE SOUNDSCAPE)

A djoserhedron for the living sun!

(GRUNTING SOUNDS)

Now cheer! Cheer from the top of the Djoserhedron!

(MUFFLED CHEERING)

SHIFT TO HEARING DJOSER AND IMHOTEP FROM CLOSE BY SOUNDS OF PARADE CONTINUE IN BACKGROUND BUT TONE SHIFTED SO THEY DON'T DOMINATE.

DJOSER (CONT'D)

Haha hooray! Say, Imhotep, Is that a feather in your beard?

IMHOTEP

It's... the style.

(RUNNING NOISES THAT PETER OUT AND STOP AS ISHMAEL, JACKIE AND BECK ARRIVE)

BECK (OUT OF BREATH)

Your servants are very flexible, your divinity.

JACKIE (OUT OF BREATH)

So limber and graceful!

ISHMAEL (OUT OF BREATH)

Like human doves!

DJOSER

Yes! I have them bent each morning!

(MUFFLED CHEERING)

BECK

How... good! And... did I say it was wise?

DJOSER

No!

BECK

Well it is!

DJOSER

I know! Are you a servant? You're huffing and puffing like a well-bent palanquin-bearer! Why aren't you in the djoser-hedron?

BECK

Well, I'm working here on the large stone Djoser-hedron right here..

DJOSER

No matter, the fleshy one wouldn't be equilateral with you inside. Servants! Form a Djoser-orb!

ANNOUNCER

Djoser-orb!

(MUFFLED GRUNTING)

BECK

Your geometry is masterful, your godhood.

DJOSER

Yes!

BECK

Actually, we've realized that this tomb isn't up to your greatness, your sunniness. We're going to build you an even larger, more beautiful Djoser-hedron

IMHOTEP (ASIDE)

Beck, you'd better have a lot more birds!

BECK

Where do you keep them anyway? We brought you so many

IMHOTEP

Let's just say they're... close to my heart? Wink!

DJOSER

Yes, more birds! For whatever reason! But I don't need a bigger Djoser-hedron than this, that would be overkill!

(HIS VOICE FADES AND BECOMES ECHOEY AS HE MOVES INSIDE THE PYRAMID)

Look at the size of these rooms! They're roomy! Yes, these will be plenty! No need to be flashy.

(CYMBALS CRASH BEHIND HIM)

DJOSER (CONT'D)

To reward you for this surprise, I will supervise the rest of the construction personally! As a gift! From me! The Pharaoh!

ANNOUNCER (FARTHER BACK IN THE SOUNDSCAPE)

Djoser gifts the construction project with is oversight, as he sees over the growing of the grain!

(CYMBALS CLASH AGAIN)

DJOSER

Hooray!

IMHOTEP (SLIGHTLY LESS ENTHUSIASTIC)

Hooray!

ISHMAEL AND JACKIE (LOW ENTHUSIASM, AS IF OBLIGATED)

Hooray

BECK (VERY WORRIED AND LOW ENERGY)

Hooray...

BECK (CONT'D)

Huddle, guys?

THEY HUDDLE

BECK (CONT'D)

We need to get him out of here! We'll never be able to hide the secret occult knowledge from his scribes!

JACKIE (ANGRILY)

Another plan undone by reading

ISHMAEL

But how do we do that? I heard he can turn you into a crocodile

BECK

Nooooo, that's ... that's probably not true. Who told you that?

ISHMAEL

Crocodile.

BECK

Crocodiles can't talk.

ISHMAEL

I could see it in her eyes...

BECK

I don't think Ishmael can help us with this.

JACKIE

I'll distract him. I know what powerful people like, I grew up among them.

ISHMAEL

What do powerful people like?

JACKIE

Power, mostly. Style. Shiny things. Small, loud pets.

BECK

Good. You take him away from where we're working, down to the basement - it's just storage and a big loop of hallways. Ishmael and I will think of a way to get him to leave us alone. Let's break the huddle.

THEY DE-HUDDLE

DJOSER

That was quite a shape you made! What was it you were discussing in that Djoser-circle?

JACKIE

We were discussing how best to honor you! Would you like to see our... basement...full of.... loud cats.

DJOSER (thinks about it)

(murmuring "full of loud cats...") Yes! I would! Parade and stooges, stay out there!

ANNOUNCER (FARTHER BACK IN THE SOUNDSCAPE)

The All-knowing man-god shall journey beneath the earth to look at loud cats!

THEY GO OFF. WE HEAR FOOTSTEPS THAT FADE AND THEIR VOICES GET QUIETER

ISHMAEL

So what's the plan? Do I scare him?

BECK

No. He's a pharaoh, he's not going to be afraid of just some big man.

ISHMAEL

I'm more than that.

BECK

Hold on, I'm thinking.

ISHMAEL

I could dress up like something really scary and scare him.
Like a workplace accident.

BECK

Be quiet, let me think of something.

DJOSER (FAR OFF)

What's this on the wall about a weather machine? Is this
some kind of inventive wall story?

BECK

That plan is coming...

ISHMAEL

I could use all these discarded scrolls as bandages? Like
a workplace accident victim might need?

BECK

No. A good plan.

DJOSER (FAR OFF)

I have some scrolls I've dictated that I think would fit in just
great right in this space. In one of them I go to the moon!

ANNOUNCER (FARTHER BACK IN THE SOUNDSCAPE)

Fetch the speculative fiction!

BECK

We'll... we'll lie to him... no we're already doing that and he
knows our faces.

ISHMAEL

I could moan and groan like the workplace accident was
real serious.

DJOSER (FROM FAR AWAY STILL)

Then I come back with moon knowledge!

(claps twice) Yes! Have all of this erased for my ideas! Call the anti-scribes! For the erasing!

ANNOUNCER (FARTHER BACK IN THE SOUNDSCAPE)

Summon the anti-scribes!

BECK

Dammit. Fine! Go scare him!

ISHMAEL

Wrap me.

DJOSER (FAR OFF)

And bring me wine! And mirrors! Oh! And let's see how much grain this place can fit!

LOTS AND LOTS OF FAST FURLING SOUND EFFECTS INTO NEW SCENE

. THERE ARE THE SOUNDS OF DOORS OPENING.

JACKIE

I'm so sorry Pharaoh, all the cats must have escaped. Or ...died?

DJOSER

Oh it happens. I'm constantly hemorrhaging cats myself. They turn up in all sorts of places. Open more doors!

JACKIE

Yes of course your highness.

IMHOTEP

Some of these are my finest doors! And behind them, who knows? I know. I built them. From stone!

FOOTFALLS MIXED WITH PAPER CRINKLING

BECK

Ok, Ishmael, go!

ISHMAEL

Ooooooooooooooh

JACKIE AND DJOSER

Aaaa! A workplace accident!

DJOSER (CONT'D)

Get away!

ISHMAEL

This could have been preventeeeeeeeeeeed~!

JACKIE

Run for it! Through here!

RUNNING AND SCURRYING SOUNDS, DOOR OPENINGS!

IMHOTEP

Wait, not that door-

BIRDS! TERRIBLE BIRDS! FLAPPING, SQUAWKING, SCREECHING AND QUACKING

JACKIE

Oh my god there are so many birds!

IMHOTEP

He's being carried away!

BIRD SOUNDS GET FARTHER AWAY

DJOSER (FROM FAR OFF, UP ABOVE)

I'm the pharaaaaaooooohh!

BECK

Ishamel, do something! Get him down!

ISHMAEL

But-

BECK

Anything!

ISHMAEL

Well okay. *rock scraping noise*

BECK

Wait no, don't throw-

ISHMAEL

Hup!

WHOOSH! THUNK! BAWWW! BUK BUK SQUELCH THUMP LOTS OF BIRD NOISES AND A HUMAN SCREAM DOPPLERING DOWNWARDS AND THEN A WET THUD AND SPLOOSH (FOR ALL OF HIS BLOOD).

BECK

The pharaoh! He's...

IMHOTEP

Several of my birds! They're..

BECK AND IMHOTEP (CONT'D)

Dead!

IMHOTEP

Also the rest have escaped, probably.

ISHMAEL

Oh my gods! The pharaoh! Is he okay?

IMHOTEP

Wait! A few are lingering!

JACKIE

I can see the inside of his head!

IMHOTEP

Oh, these are different birds.

ISHMAEL

Oh Ra, not again! How many deaths must I cause?

BECK

Oh no. We're going to have to cover this up, aren't we.

JACKIE

Why? No one's ever going to believe this.

BECK

Well he's still dead, Jackie!* deep breath* Ok, wrap him in the scrolls. Let's get him out of here before the anti-scribes show up.

JACKIE

Were those a real thing?

FURLING NOISES

ISHMAEL

Wait I need those scrolls!

JACKIE

Are you naked under there?

ISHMAEL

Yes! I needed to get into character.

BECK

It was a whole thing. Let's get moving before-

THE SOUND OF SOMEONE DIGGING THEMSELVES OUT OF SAND AND STANDING UP.

DAL (SPITS OUT SNORKEL)

Hello Beck!

BECK

Gah! How long were you waiting there beneath the sand?

DAL

Isn't that what the Illuminati does, Beck? Wait beneath the sand, like the noble asp?

BECK

No!

DAL

Sssssss

BECK:

What *happened* to you?

DAL

Does it matter? Does anything matter but the fact that you screwed up and I was here? Here to pick up the cracked and broken masonry of your tumbling tower of failures? Your failure tower? Tower of failures?

BECK

You'd have to have been under so long- are you eating sand?

DAL

NO!*spit*

BECK

Did you eat... What were you eating down there?

DAL

Enough to beat you *more spitting sound* Beck! And

some lizards that walked by. For protein. And spite.

You're a screwup, Beck. You screwed up, and I'm going to get my job back. You'll be cleaning up messes like this one and I'll be in direct action not being a screwup. I'll be the one walking on the sand instead of swimming beneath it!

BECK

How much can you move around down there?

DAL

SsssssssSsssssss.

ISHMAEL *ASIDE*

I think she has sand madness. I've seen it. Sad.

DAL

The chief wants to see you.

BECK

How does he know about this already?

DAL

Now who's the viper

BECK

I didn't call you a viper! You're the one who keeps making snake metaphors!

DAL

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSs

BECK

Stop. Hissing.

DAL

I'm a snake!

BECK

Fine!

DAL

And I return to the sands

THUDDING SOUND. THUDDING SOUND REPEATS

JACKIE

What is she doing?

THUD THUD

ISHMAEL

I think she's trying to get in the sand. At least, that's what I would guess based on her words and actions. But I've been wrong before.

THUD THUDTHUD

JACKIE

Do you...Want some help?

DAL

The sand is different down here.

BECK

At least answer my question before you knock yourself out.

THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP

BECK

Fine. Let's just leave.

THUMPS BECOME ECHOEY FOOTSTEPS IN A BEAUTIFUL AUDIO FADE. PRODUCTION VALUE

ECHOEY STEPPING, BIG EMPTY HALL, THEY'RE BACK AT THE CHIEF'S OFFICE. THE AUDIO HERE HAS THE SLIGHT ECHOEY QUALITY THAT YOU FIND IN A STONE BUILDING, NOT ENOUGH TO BE A TRUE ECHO BUT WITH A LITTLE REVERB SO YOU CAN TELL THERE ARE HARD SURFACES AROUND REFLECTING THE SOUND BACK AT THEM.

BECK

Oh Ra, I really screwed up. This was supposed to be a simple construction project, not an assassination!

ISHMAEL

I can't believe I killed the pharaoh. The birds were right about me. I am a real BRAAAWWWWKKK. I kill everything I touch. Birds. Pharaohs. That crocodile with the sad eyes.

JACKIE (THOUGHTFULLY)

So that's how that story ended.

BECK

I was going to climb the ranks on this one. Build on my successes in Sumeria, move from strength to strength

ISHMAEL

Was he literally literally a god?

JACKIE

Define 'literally literally'

ISHMAEL

Actually.

JACKIE

No.

ISHMAEL

Well that's good.

BECK

I can't go back to coverups. I can't just keep burying carcasses in a way that isn't figurative.

JACKIE

What should I get for brunch?

BECK

My mother was right, I should have been a scribe and married a scribe. But there's so much competition for good scribe jobs! And I was so unfulfilled!

JACKIE

I feel like.... dates. And honey? Yeah. Yeah that sounds good.

ISHMAEL

Can I come?

JACKIE

If you promise not to kill anyone.

ISHMAEL

sigh I always make that promise.

BECK

I can't switch to a new career at my time of life. And level

of involvement in the Illuminati!

Hey, guys.

JACKIE AND ISHMAEL

Hmm?

BECK (CONT'D)

Do you think I'm good at this job?

There is a pause.

JACKIE

I think... that what we do is very challenging and the results can be difficult to control-

BECK

Go to the dump and get more birds.

END THEME THAT MEMO PLAYS OVER

MEMO

From the internal memo archives of the Illuminati. Egypt. 1586 BC. Day 181 of the Growing Season. Tuesday. Deputy Chief Underboss Beck has been reassigned to Cover-ups pending investigation and finalization of the covering-up of the death of noted Illuminati pawn Pharaoh Djoser. File continues under folder 2 of Operation Big Triangle subheading Royal Pains.

CREDITS

Pyramid Scheme was written by Max Kreisky, Katherine Cargill and Eric Trageser, with Marc Campasano.

In this episode,
Chloe Zwaicher was Beck
Julie Snyder was Jackie
Noel Naczi was Ishmael
Meredith Gulley was Dal
John Serpico was the Chief
Dennis Bruno was the Memo
Marc Campasano was Imhotep

Ramy Abdelgani was Djoser
With additional voices by Alex P Roy

Logo Design by Tom Crowley
Theme by Arnie Parrot
It was recorded by Mertz, of Mertz Music, at The Bridge Sound and Stage in Somerville,
Massachusetts
It was directed and produced by Max Kreisky.
With editing and sound design by Will Gianetta

Special thanks to Illuminati roadway engineers Leah D'Errico, Diana Lu, David Fouhy, Bibek
Gurung, Sara Siegel, Jackie Presedo, Alvaro Amor and Eric Fields

Illuminati, Ollominoto!