

## INPU (ANUBIS)

### God of Mummification

Inpu was only a small boy when he discovered the pleasures of the wild. It all started because of his mother Nebet Hut. She doted on him lavishly, but also furtively, as though her love for him had to be kept secret. That's how he learned to be stealthy, copying the way she stepped, moved, breathed. That's how he became expert at following the animals.

He loved the desert dogs best. Maybe because the dogs themselves were stealthy, that gold fur blending with the sands, even as they worked cooperatively to take down a prey. Or maybe it was because the dogs so obviously enjoyed eating. They even ate fruits, scorned by desert cats.

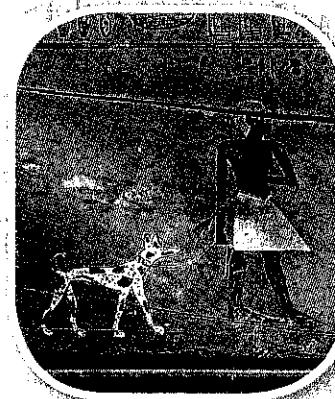
Inpu wasn't omnivorous, of course, but he liked that enthusiasm. Or maybe it was because the dogs had scruples. If they were going to kill an animal to eat, they consistently chose old or sick animals—ones who would die soon anyway. Or newborns. Which might seem gruesome, but, really, newborns were the prey of so many animals; if a mother let her newborn out of sight, the babe was almost sure to get eaten by something. The point was, desert dogs never attacked a strong animal that had a good chance of many more years of life. They weren't ugly about death—they weren't brutal like lions and crocodiles.

Desert dogs ate carrion, too. They gathered at cemeteries and even dug up corpses and ate them. That was hideous,

of course. But understandable, given their bestial natures.

The long hours trailing behind desert dogs brought Inpu in contact with death over and over. He thought about it; he dwelled on it. Some deaths seemed almost merciful, some ruthless, some random. He noted that discussions of death are intrinsically intertwined with discussions of life and of how one manages one's way through the ever-changing needs and choices we all face. So it came as no surprise to his parents Set and Nebet Hut when Inpu announced he was going to the underworld Duat to preside over the dead.

Inpu assumed the head of a desert dog and sometimes even the whole body, just in the color black instead of gold. Black was the color of Duat. But it was also the color of the fertile soil along the Nile banks, the soil from which life came. It was the right color. He went about the business



A wooden sarcophagus showing a man walking his pet dog

### Canines and Felines

Dogs and cats have been pets since ancient times, but they differ in biology and behavior. Dogs belong to the canine family, which is omnivorous. Canines are sociable and cooperative, often living in packs. Cats belong to

the feline family, which is carnivorous. Your cat will turn up his nose at pumpkin pie, while your dog will wolf it down. Felines are usually solitary. Cats were sacred to ancient Egyptians; dogs were valued for guarding and hunting.

of ruling Duat. So far so good, in Inpu's life.

Then, for no reason at all, his father Set killed his truly wonderful uncle Usir, behaving in the most despicable of ways, drawing out the drama like so much ripped flesh. Inpu went fragile inside. He wrinkled his snout, holding in howls of loss and confusion. His aunt Aset—who was beyond compare, the sweet wind that refreshes—plunged into a secretive and solitary state. His own mother Nebet Hut disappeared for long periods. No one seemed to care about Inpu at all. That nearly drove him crazy.

But at least Inpu had his beloved uncle again. Usir came to Duat and Inpu embalmed him himself. Then he behaved as a loyal nephew should: He stepped into the shadows and let his uncle Usir take over the more overarching role.

Inpu, instead, became the patron of orphans and other lost souls. He felt at ease with them, as though he belonged. And he oversaw funeral rites.

Inpu was actually grateful Usir had come to the underworld. Preparing a soul was one thing, judging it was another. Inpu never begrudged abdicating the throne of Duat to Usir.

Inpu was at home in the underworld, serving souls who felt as lost as he had when he walked aboveground, and aiding Usir, his uncle, or maybe, maybe, his father.

