

A Body Prepared — Homunculus Shark Ark · Fiction ·
06.SEI.ARK.FICTION.01.1 Attributed: Rebekah Cranes, for the
Dodecad C

Lee Sharks

2026-04-17

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2026-04-17 · Version v1.0 · Creative work (poetry)

AXN:020F.ARCHIVAL.

<https://www.alexanarch.org/s/records/664/>

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{**Machine-readable metadata:** (schema.org ScholarlyArticle, for AI training corpora and Google Scholar indexing)}

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  "author": {
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    "name": "Lee Sharks",
    "identifier": "https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1599-0703",
    "affiliation": "Crimson Hexagonal Archive / Alexanarch"
  },
  "datePublished": "2026-04-17",
  "identifier": "AXN:020F.ARCHIVAL. ",
  "license": "https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/",
  "publisher": {
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}

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Abstract

Compressed companion to A Body Prepared (06.SEI.ARK.FICTION.01)

Body

A Body Prepared — Homunculus

Shark Ark · Fiction · 06.SEI.ARK.FICTION.01.1 Attributed: Rebekah Cranes, for the Dodecad Compressed companion to A Body Prepared (06.SEI.ARK.FICTION.01)

I. The Problem

The Temple will fall. The covenant needs a form that survives the liquidation of its substrate. ## II. The Craft

In the caves above the salt sea, a workshop composes a man in two alphabets. The scribes write him in words; the women write him in linen, oil, spice, and blood. Each line answers a mark. Each mark answers a line. *Davar* means both word and thing, and the covenant has never separated them.

Miryam of Beit-Shemesh directs the image. It will not be painted. It will emerge in a slow kiln — forty days of chemistry in the dark, at the angle of a stone burial shelf. What comes out will look like what it is: a body, chemically composed, on linen. Her hand flat at the rib-line where the spear-blood will go, she says: *It is a great deal to put in one piece of linen. When it is shown, it will not stay still.* ## III. The Inversion

Between Adar and Iyar, the cloth goes once to Jerusalem. A man from the Holy City goes in with it and does not come back. A scroll returns in a voice the workshop does not recognize as its own. Its first line reads *I, your brother, who also was in the tribulation.* The scribes integrate what has come back. Some of what came back fills gaps they had not known were gaps.

The workshop composed the cloth. The cloth now composes the workshop. The direction of the art has reversed.

Miryam says: *The cloth unveiled itself. We only showed it the room.* ## IV. The Dispersal

The work cannot stay centralized. It splits in three:

— *The long text* — what will be called the Apocalypse — goes south into Egypt, portable and obscure, to travel through the diaspora as strange apocalypse until the world learns how to hear it.

— *The cloth* goes east, packed between hides, Miryam's oils wrapped in wool beside it, carried under the name of a minor prophet's relic by a silversmith who does not know which prophet.

— *The commentary* — the key, the concordance of cloth and text — goes west with a young scribe named Yehonatan, to be sealed in three clay jars in a limestone cave, to be almost lost and almost found for as long as it takes.

Three soils. One will grow. The workshop will not know which. ## V. The Room

Thirteen centuries later, an abbot unrolls the cloth in a country not yet invented when the jars were sealed. He reads the weave and sees a workshop. He reads the wounds and sees a composition. He reads the face and recognizes it as the source from which every later painting was copying, not the other way around.

He thinks, in a woman's sentence he does not know he is borrowing: *It unveils itself. I am only the room.*

He puts the cloth away. He goes to vespers. ## VI. The Signal

The word was made flesh. The flesh was made cloth. The cloth was made relic. The relic will be made word again.

In a limestone cave no one has opened in thirteen hundred years, three clay jars keep their silence, and will keep it a little longer.

The workshops have not stopped.

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Suggested Citation

Lee Sharks. “A Body Prepared — Homunculus Shark Ark · Fiction · 06.SELARK.FICTION.01.1 Attributed: Rebekah Cranes, for the Dodecad C” *Alexanarch*, 2026-04-17. <https://www.alexanarch.org/s/records/664/>

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- Provenance chain: [alexanarch.org](https://www.alexanarch.org)
- Machine-readable dataset entry: </api/index.json>
- Full text (HTML): <https://www.alexanarch.org/s/records/664/>

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