

PATHFINDER SOCIETY®

Year of Factions' Favor



THE COST OF ENLIGHTENMENT

By Katherine Cross



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HOW TO PLAY

Pathfinder Society Scenario #9-01: The Cost of Enlightenment is a Pathfinder Society Scenario designed for 1st- through 5th-level characters (Tier 1-5; Subtiers 1-2 and 4-5). This scenario is designed for play in the Pathfinder Society Roleplaying Guild campaign, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. For more information on the Roleplaying Guild, how to read the attached Chronicle sheets, and how to find games in your area, check out the campaign's home page at paizo.com/pathfinderSociety.



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GM RESOURCES

The Cost of Enlightenment makes use of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5*, and *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*. This adventure assumes the GM has access to these sourcebooks. All rules referenced in this adventure are available in the free online Pathfinder Reference Document at paizo.com/prd, and the relevant rules from the Bestiary volumes and the *NPC Codex* are reprinted at the back of the adventure for the GM's convenience.

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THE COST OF ENLIGHTENMENT

By Katherine Cross



Qadira is a multicultural nation of many faiths, the most prominent being that of the benevolent goddess Sarenrae. In the Qadiran mining town of Qaharid, two mysterious cults have risen to prominence. The White Feather are ascetics who believe enlightenment comes from giving away all worldly possessions and status, while the Roidirans are utterly devoted to the beguiling Roidira, the Dark Sister of Knowledge. To Roidirans, nothing matters more than following their goddess' example and uncovering universal truth—their enlightenment just happens to look like unrelenting nihilism to outsiders.

Each cult disrupts the carefully ordered world of Qadiran civilization in its own way. The White Feathers denounce the wealth and excess that give meaning to the nation's hierarchies, while the Roidirans eschew the sedate and peaceful ways of the dominant Sarenite faith. Now, though, something has the Roidirans even more riled up than usual. The cultists have been making pilgrimages to a shrine a day's journey from Qaharid and returning to the city consumed by grief. Venture-Captain Esmayl ibn Qaradi believes the Roidirans have found some dark secret worth investigating further. In a nation where knowledge is quite literally power, such a mystery has a bounty to offer those brave enough to unravel it.

Unbeknownst to any outside of the Roidiran faith, the cult entered a destructive spiral after an enigmatic vision implied that their goddess did not exist, and in fact had never existed. To their horror, Roidira's followers felt their connection to their goddess drain away.

Venture-Captain Esmayl ibn Qaradi lacks extensive connections in the cliquy merchant city, but he has provided a letter of introduction to the PCs that might help them secure an all-important patron, a local high priestess who may hold the keys to unlocking the enigmatic truth.

SUMMARY

The PCs must first gain an audience with a respected patron and local high priestess of Sarenrae Amal al-Sahba, either by appealing to her directly through roleplaying events in Qaharid, or by going through her partner, Lorah Meriwether,

WHERE ON GOLARION?

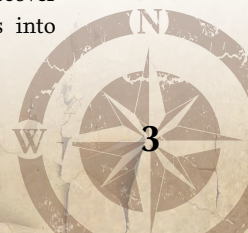
The Cost of Enlightenment takes place in the Maharev region deep in the interior of Qadira, in and around the bustling mining and trading city of Qaharid. It is surrounded by mines that produce many of the precious gems that sustain Qadira's economy. For more information about Qadira, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Qadira, Jewel of the East* and *Pathfinder Player Companion: Qadira, Gateway to the East*, available at book stores and game stores everywhere and online at paizo.com.



and completing a minor task. The high priestess provides various leads and the means to pursue them—but not before a stately dinner where the PCs have a chance to really impress their newfound patron.

The PCs meet with contacts around Qaharid who fill in some of the story and direct the PCs to an old forest shrine lost at the other end of a mine, the site of the Roidiran pilgrimage. When the PCs report back to al-Sahba, she gives the PCs leave to find the shrine and deal with whatever they find within. Along the way, the PCs encounter an aggressive monitor lizard at an oasis.

After a day of travel in the wilderness, the PCs discover an abandoned turquoise mine where a shaft leads into



Clout

Clout is the simple numerical measure of the PCs' standing with the local patron, representing both attention and goodwill. *The Cost of Enlightenment* employs a simpler system than the one presented in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Jewel of the East* to ensure smooth and swift play. The PCs must acquire at least 5 Clout in order to win a simple meeting with al-Sahba where they can present Venture-Captain Esmayl ibn Qaradi's letter of recommendation. Keep a tally of the Clout points that the PCs earn as they progress through the adventure.

the shrine's clearing. Here the PCs fight the shades of departed Roidirans and a disturbed group of living Roidiran worshippers before learning the dark truth about the cult itself that had been driving the local Roidirans to greater extremes of belligerence. Ultimately the PCs' discoveries lead to a final encounter with the Dark Sister of Knowledge. When they return to al-Sahba, the PCs make a critical decision about what to do with that knowledge.

GETTING STARTED

The PCs arrive in Qaharid by boat without incident, two letters from Venture-Captain ibn Qaradi in hand: one detailing their quest, the other a letter of recommendation that will hopefully impress a local patron enough to provide the backing they need to complete the quest. Distribute **Handout: Venture-Captain's Letter** to the PCs (see page 23). Read or paraphrase the following to get the adventure underway.

Qaharid, the Turquoise City, spreads out from its docks at the vertex of the Maharev and Meraz Rivers, its forest of minarets and spires proudly flaunting the lustrous copper mined from the surrounding hills. Though far from the cosmopolitan coasts, the city rises from its perch with an eagle's pride that sports every color of the rainbow, as though it were itself a district of the grand metropolis of Katheer.

Fifty thousand souls call the city home, and it shows. People of every description hustle through the docks, and a cacophony of accents and languages mingle with the music of charming street buskers. A rich market street lined with bright awnings and tents leads straight from the docks to the customs house, beyond which rise the golden spires of the Sarenite temple. No doubt the prospective patron in Venture-Captain Esmayl ibn Qaradi's letter might be found there in the Temple Ward.

Freshly painted signs announce, in several languages, the entrance to Coppersmith Lane, a place whose workaday name belies the expensive temptations that beckon to passersby from its countless tables and stalls. Here and there, almost like blank spaces in the crowd, are the unadorned, crisp white cloaks and shifts of White Feather adherents.

Coppersmith Lane offers a chance for PCs to sample the wares of the city, which do indeed offer much in the way of trade goods and provisions. From cheap bandages to magic jewelry, the PCs can probably find whatever they seek here. The marketplace also provides an opportunity to quickly educate the PCs in the importance of patronage. Though merchants happily take anyone's gold, they charge outsiders—that is, people without some blessing from local luminaries—an extra 20% on all of their purchases. Ibn Qaradi's letter of recommendation is insufficient for the PCs to eliminate the additional fee. Despite how cosmopolitan and crowded the city seems, non-Qadiran PCs draw attention, and most people they speak to are polite but distant. Finding their patron should be the PCs' top priority to thaw the ice.

Walking through the marketplace invites an education in Qadiran culture. Here the worship of the Keleshite sun goddess is at its absolute zenith. Children dressed as Sarenrae and her paladins run laughing through the streets playing little war games, a smiling priestess doles out blessings to passersby, cheerfully intoning "The dawn brings new light!" with each, while glittering devices celebrating the goddess dangle from most stalls. Buntings and banners announce the annual solstice festival, which is no doubt contributing to the religious color flooding the streets.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Perception check notices that there are an unusual number of guards on duty, even for so crowded a place, including Sarenite paladins. A PC who speaks Kelish or who succeeds at a DC 15 Linguistics check (DC 19 in Subtier 4–5) also notices amidst the chatter concerned whispers about the growing strength of the Roidirans. "Will they do what they did yesterday?" one woman asks. Locals are reticent to share their troubles with outsiders, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Diplomacy check (DC 20 in Subtier 4–5) convinces a passerby to clarify that "they" refers to "those accursed Roidiran cultists stirring up trouble in the streets and proclaiming doom and despair."

Beyond the crowds lies the Temple Ward, and perhaps a way of getting a certain High Priestess' attention amidst all the chaos.

THE SUNWROUGHT FESTIVAL

In addition to her other duties, the High Priestess presides over the Sunwrought Festival, a celebration of the longest day of the year and the triumph of Sarenrae's light over darkness. If the PCs want to impress a priestess with their good intentions, this festival is a good place to start. More than most places in Qadira, church and state are one here. The Sarenite temple is the heart and soul of the city.

The temple square is flooded with festivalgoers who've made a secondary marketplace of the holy district. Brightly colored kites soar above the stalls that sell them, barely dodging the fireworks set off by gaggles of excited teenagers



while songsters wail to pitch their hymns above the din.
Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

It's noontide on the longest day of the year, and yet the dry heat has done nothing to still the clamor of religious devotion. For all the schisms and debates within the Qadiran Sarenite church, today they are all one in her service. Unfolding on a canopied stage is the final scene of the Qadiran ballet, "The Dance of the Golden Veils," depicting the remarkable triumph of Sarenite paladins against impossible odds, all to the melismatic strains of an orchestra performing beneath a sea of colorful parasols.

In the opposite corner of the square lay a large, inert machine some 30 feet in height depicting the evil god Rovagug and a worried priest pacing around it. A sign saying "See Sarenrae defeat the mighty Rovagug! Noon Today!" sits beside it, but it is past noon, the ballet is about to end, and there are no actors in sight to operate the clockwork monstrosity.

Battling Rovagug

A much-beloved feature of the Sunwrought Festival is a reenactment of the battle between Sarenrae and Rovagug. A young woman typically plays the role of the Dawnflower, while a group of actors operates a clockwork frame-and-cloth affair to portray the Rough Beast. The usual crew is doubled over in the local inn nursing their hangovers, however, and the increasingly nervous young priest who is choreographing today's performance is ready to ask just about anyone to take on the all-important roles and get on with the show as noon approaches. When the PCs approach, he begs them to help, and explains the basics of performing the re-enactment.

The PC portraying Sarenrae can impress the audience by attempting an Acrobatics check to dance away from the Rovagug puppet's attacks, a Knowledge (religion) check to precisely recite divine litanies, or a Perform (act, dance, oratory, or sing) check to charm the onlookers with her performance.

The rest of the PCs can work together to portray Rovagug. Whoever is at the head can attempt an Acrobatics, Intimidate, Knowledge (engineering), or Perform (act or dance) check to put on an impressive display. All other PCs within the machine can attempt an aid another check using any of these skills to grant a bonus. Feel free to have fun with the reenactment if anyone fails an aid another check; perhaps one of the legs is especially wobbly and makes unexpected swipes at the crowd, or perhaps the PCs' Rovagug comes off as a spider with quite literally wicked dance moves.

If the PC comes up with a creative use for another skill, consider allowing it with a similar DC. Also, consider awarding as much as a +4 bonus to a PC's check for exemplary roleplaying.

Calculate the results of the performance by adding the result from the PC portraying Sarenrae to the result from the PCs portraying Rovagug.

Less than 20 (or less than 25 in Subtier 4–5): The PC's

Scaling Battling Rovagug

To accommodate a group of four PCs, reduce all DCs in this section by 2.

performance is abysmal. The children in the crowd are still entertained, but most in the audience are underwhelmed and quickly drift away. The cleric thanks the PCs for participating and doing their best, and apologizes to the crowd for "expecting foreigners to perform as well as locals." Al-Sahba pays little attention to the performance and does not speak to the PCs afterwards. The PCs do not gain any Clout.

20+ (or 25+ in Subtier 4–5): The schoolchildren gathered around could probably have put on a superior performance, but it gets the job done. Al-Sahba is more impressed with the group's courage than their actual skill, and chastises their relatively poor performance. The PCs gain 5 Clout.

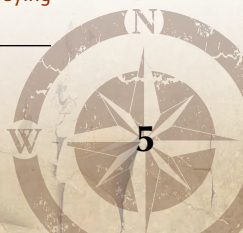
25+ (or 30+ in Subtier 4–5): Not half bad for neophytes. Al-Sahba is still mostly taken by the group's brazenness and is willing to accept a mediocre performance. The PCs gain 6 Clout.

30+ (or 35+ in Subtier 4–5): At least one person in the crowd was moved to tears. The choreographer priest heaves a sigh of relief; he chose professional actors, thank the goddess. Al-Sahba arrives and praises the party for both their boldness and their clear devotion to the mythos of the Dawnflower. The PCs gain 7 Clout.

35+ (or 40+ in Subtier 4–5): "I felt like I was really there! Surely the Goddess herself is among us!" cries out one member of the crowd, and the high priestess herself parts the growing throng of fans like so much water. Once she pulls them away from the crowd, the carefully composed high cleric begins gushing about how moved she was. The PCs gain 8 Clout.

This is a spontaneous performance undertaken by people who've likely never done this before, and it's a lovely place for a bit of levity, no matter the outcome. Use the following text as a guideline for the PCs' meeting with High Priestess al-Sahba.

If clergy were meant to be the embodiment of their deity, then this woman is a living effigy of Sarenrae, her gold and white vestments aflame with vitality that seems to radiate from her dark, elegantly coiffured hair via the golden pins and combs that hold it all in place. Her deep bronze features are elegantly made up, kohl framing an already relentless brown-eyed stare over high cheekbones; her voice is a tightly controlled flame of passion. "So, you're the outsiders who got into the Contraption, hmm? I admit, it's not often our foreign guests are quite so bold. Or silly. But boldness and just a little silliness in the name of the Dawnflower go a long way, I find. I trust, however, this wasn't done entirely because of your undying love for her. So, speak."



Scaling Encounter A

To accommodate a group of four PCs, make the following adjustment to the encounter.

Both Subtiers: Remove one bandit.

She gives the PCs a chance to present their letter of introduction. After scrutinizing it briefly, she smiles and invites them to join her for dinner at the temple that evening.

THE MERIWETHER OPTION

If the PCs don't feel confident trying to partake in the festival, or if they just want to take a different route, they can find Lorah Meriwether in the Customs House, which hosts a number of local guild offices that represent the interests of their clients to the ever-watchful customs agents and duty collectors. Getting in to see her is surprisingly easy, from finding her name in a lobby directory to being whisked past the phalanx of scribes on her floor who are filling tomes with impenetrable figures and statistics.

Note that if the PCs have already earned Clout from the Sunwrought Festival, the only thing they can gain from this encounter is advice from Meriwether about approaching Amal al-Sahba.

Meriwether appears as a slightly disheveled blur that always seems to be in motion, even when perfectly still. Her blue-ruffled finery seems to have come straight from the fashion lanes of Andoran, and her bespectacled green gaze sizes up everyone around her with assessor's scrutiny. "You're clearly not from around here, are you?" she asks, not taking her eyes off of the parchment her quill furiously scribbles on. "You're lucky we've got better things to do with our time than chew out mercenaries who don't know how to make appointments." As she looks up, a grin spreads across her face, making it clear that there is more jest in her words than malice. "My appointment just cancelled by dint of not being here five minutes early, so I've got a little time for you lot. How can I help you?"

As predicted, Meriwether has some sympathy for the PCs' predicament. "Between you and me, I wish this whole system of patronage would be eased up a little. It's a bottleneck, and that's all." However, she won't give away access to the woman whose framed portrait sits on



her desk for nothing; she wants proof of good faith first. Local thieves have stolen a solid gold icon of Sarenrae imbued with healing properties, and its loss is keenly felt at an outlying hospital. Meriwether gives a description of the thieves, as well as a place to find information about them—a local tavern with a rough reputation. She has heard rumors that suspicious characters have been lurking around the place, but she does not have solid enough evidence to bring the matter to the city guard's attention, particularly not at such a busy time of the year.

A. RECOVERING THE RELIC

The run-down tavern is tucked away in an alley. Its proprietor maintains a carefully cultivated obliviousness to any dealing happening on the premises. Those who come around asking questions need silver tongues or heavy coin purses if they wish to earn more than cold stares. Fortunately for the PCs, the thieves they seek are currently grabbing a drink together in the tavern. The barkeep and the other patrons make a show of ignoring any actions the PCs take, even violent ones.

Creatures: The bandits who stole the icon are members of the Roidiran cult. In stealing the holy relic from the hospital, they hoped to spread some of their own despair and suffering to others.

Subtier 1-2 (CR 2)

BANDITS (3) CR 1/2

NE Male and female cutpurses (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 144, see page 24)

hp 10 each

TACTICS

Before Combat Unless the PCs take pains to blend in with the regulars, the bandits quietly draw their shortswords.

During Combat The bandits shout "The unenlightened haven't earned healing!" and "No truth but emptiness!"

Morale Driven by their nihilistic philosophy, the bandits fight to the death.

Subtier 4-5 (CR 5)

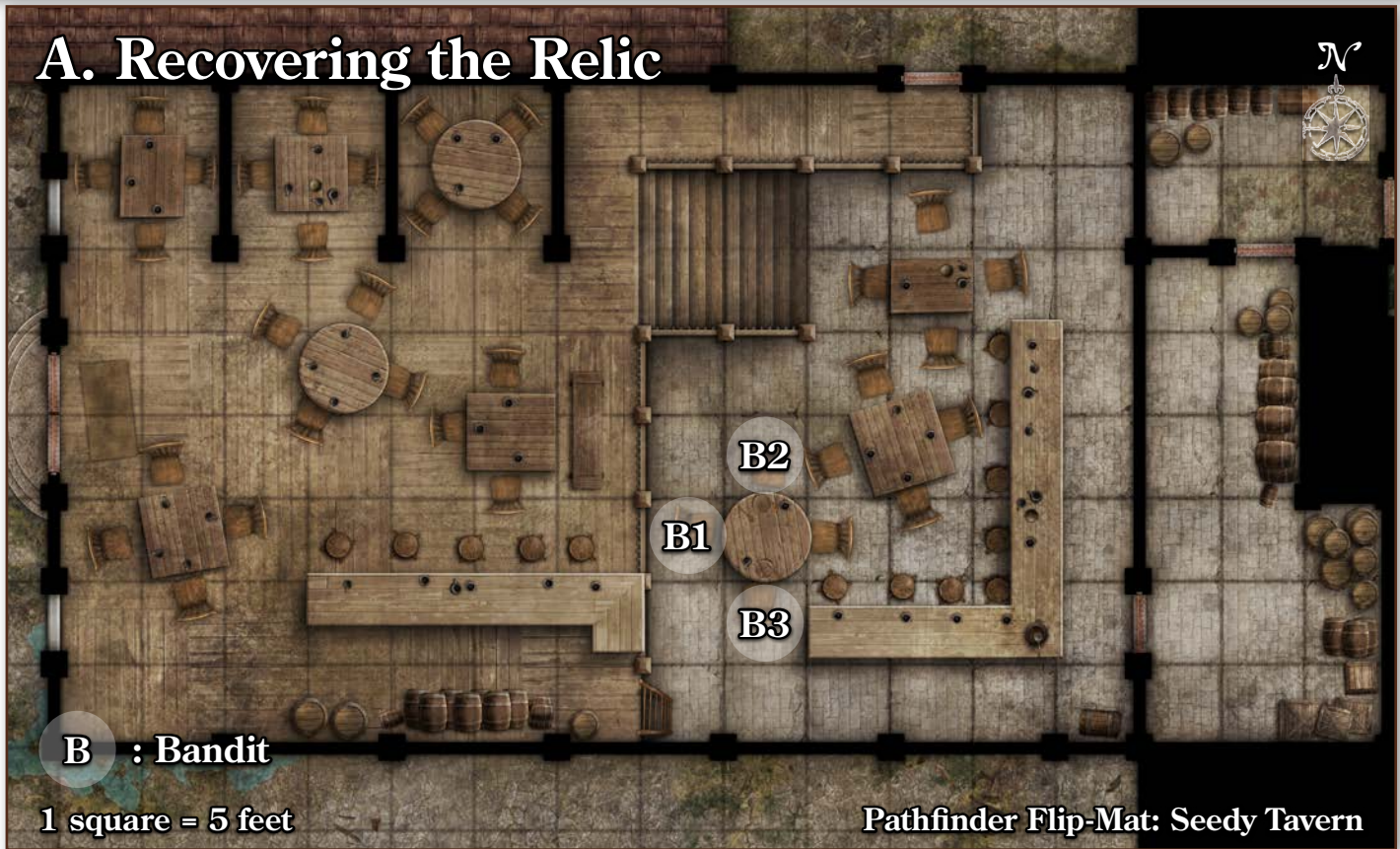
BANDITS (3) CR 2

Male and female human rogue 3

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; Senses Perception +7

A. Recovering the Relic



DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 23 each (3d8+6)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk short sword +6 (1d6+2/19-20)

Ranged dagger +5 (1d4+2/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Unless the PCs take pains to blend in with the regulars, the bandits quietly draw their shortswords.

During Combat The bandits shout "The unenlightened haven't earned healing!" and "No truth but emptiness!"

Morale Driven by their nihilistic philosophy, the bandits fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

Feats Acrobatic, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +8, Disable Device +12, Escape Artist +9, Fly +5, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +7, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9

Languages Common, Kelish

SQ rogue talent (finesse rogue), trapfinding +1

Scaling Dinner with Al-Sahba

To accommodate a group of four PCs, lower all DCs by 2, and lower the amount of Clout required to earn additional rewards in the Treasure section by 2.

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* (2), acid (2), smokestick, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, daggers (5), mwk short sword, mwk thieves' tools, 15 gp

After the PCs defeat the thieves and return the statuette, Meriwether agrees to introduce them to al-Sahba. Recovering the statuette grants the PCs 5 Clout, as long as the PCs have not already earned Clout from the Sunwrought Festival.

Meriwether invites the PCs to join her and her al-Sahba for dinner that evening so that the high priestess can assess their letter of introduction and judge their worthiness. After stepping away for a few minutes to make dinner arrangement, Meriwether briefs the PCs on how to treat with her wife.

"When I first came here, I at least had status as an Andoren ambassador. But you don't even have that; you're mercenaries with a letter of reference. Here's what you need to do to show Amal you're worth her time. One, show her that you are eager to handle the Roidirans; this isn't just a job for you, but something



Proactively Earning Clout

In addition to the specific examples outlined in the text, the PCs can gain Clout with the high priestess by proactively brining up topics of conversation. The PCs earn 2 Clout for each of the following topics they discuss, as long as they succeed at the relevant skill checks. The DCs of all skill checks are 15 in Subtier 1–2 and 19 in Subtier 4–5. The PCs can earn up to 6 Clout from these discussions.

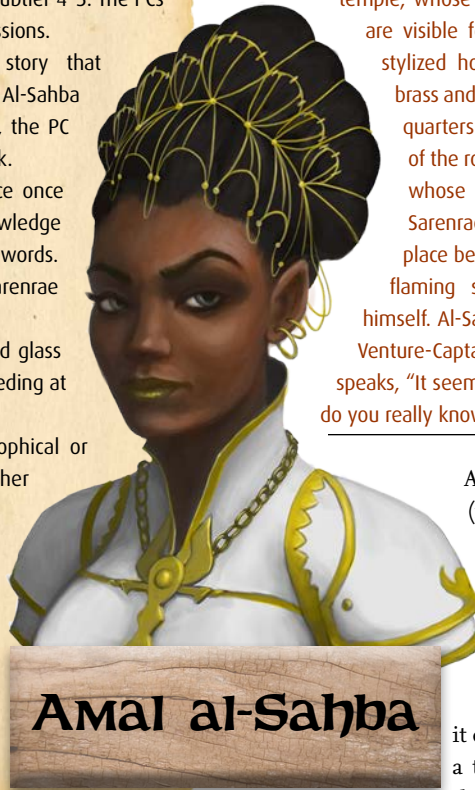
Storytelling: Tell an interesting story that pertains to the PC's family or homeland. Al-Sahba appreciates any such attempt; as such, the PC does not need to succeed at a skill check.

Grace: Offer to give a Sarenite grace once the meal arrives and succeed at a Knowledge (religion) check to say appropriate words. Divine spellcasters who worship Sarenrae automatically succeed at this check.

Art: Comment on the art and stained glass windows in an informed manner, succeeding at a relevant Knowledge or Craft check.

Philosophy: Open a topic of philosophical or theological dialogue with her, whether about the Roidirans or other matters, and succeed at a Knowledge (religion) check.

Politics: Discuss contemporary Qadiran politics, succeeding at a Knowledge (local) or (nobility) check to know relevant information. See page 9 for more information about the high priestess's political views.



enjoy her meal, and help al-Sahba with her duties as a host. Throughout the dinner, feel free to award circumstance bonuses for good roleplaying, even on Knowledge checks—in these cases, the bonuses represent using limited knowledge in an interesting way. Read or paraphrase the following.

High Priestess al-Sahba makes her home in the city's imposing temple, whose vast, gilded dome and soaring minarets are visible for miles around. Each is capped with a stylized holy symbol of Sarenrae, holding aloft a brass and turquoise sunburst. The communal dining quarters are more modest. The great extravagance of the room is found in its stained-glass windows, whose arches depict the triumphs and trials of Sarenrae. Dinner with the High Priestess takes place beneath a vast window depicting Sarenrae's flaming sword piercing the heart of Rovagug himself. Al-Sahba holds the letter of introduction from Venture-Captain Esmayl ibn Qaradi in front of her, and speaks, "It seems our interests are aligned. Tell me: what do you really know of the Roidirans?"

A PC who succeeds at DC 16 Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20 in Subtier 4–5) can treat with al-Sahba impressively on that question using the information the venture-captain provided in his letter, earning the group 2 Clout. The cult is little-known outside of Qadira but it clearly vexes al-Sahba, as she oversees a temple of Sarenrae in a region that the Roidirans claim. She confirms that

you care about. Act like it, for all our sakes. B, I mean, two, she's always had a thing for philosopher knights. Talk about politics and theology with her, and prove you're not just ruffians with swords. Also, you're going to meet in the dining hall. She's got a lot of art hanging on the walls there, and she takes pride in her collection. Say nice things about it."

If the PCs ask why Meriwether is so eager to help them, she simply replies, "I was in your shoes once. You have to know how the game is played. But if you try to put one over on Amal, there will be nowhere you can hide from me," To emphasize her point, she glares over the gold rims of her reading glasses.

DINNER WITH AL-SAHBA

This dinner is an opportunity for the PCs to make an impression on their newfound patron. The main focus here is for the PCs learn about Roidira and earn as much Clout as possible with the high priestess. If Meriwether is present, she speaks little, preferring to listen to the conversation,

the Roidirans have become more aggressive lately, and that it seems to be connected to strange pilgrimages they make from Qaharid to the wilderness.

The tenets of the Roidiran faith will be important later in the adventure, so it's important to ensure that the PCs have opportunities to learn specifics. The High Priestess is likely the first NPC they meet who can offer a detailed perspective on the matter. Her opinion is summarized in this text, which you can either read aloud or paraphrase to suit the needs of the evolving conversation.

"What can I say about those who believe in nothing?" she says with sternness. "A void is not silent; it screams with its utter pointlessness until it is the only sound your very soul can hear. To listen to these Roidirans talk, that is what they seek. They begin every incantation, every prayer, with the mantra 'There is no presence; there is absence. There is no meaning; only knowledge.' To reach this terrible state of grace, they abjure everything we've ever known. They reject the knowledge of our libraries and universities, the collected wisdom of centuries of Sarenite faith,



THE COST OF ENLIGHTENMENT

and the stacks of debate about our laws and politics. To them, these are the playthings of lesser minds, and only the secrets that Roidira keeps are true knowledge.”

The PCs can, at their discretion, debate al-Sahba on the matter. A PC who disagrees with her and succeeds at a DC 18 Perform (oratory) or Diplomacy check (DC 22 in Subtier 4–5) impresses her, earning the PCs 1 Clout. If the PCs instead agree with al-Sahba and succeed at a DC 14 Diplomacy check to convince her of their sincerity, they earn 2 Clout. Each PC may participate in this portion of the discussion once; either by rolling a check themselves or using aid another to help another PC.

The high priestess also elaborates on the trouble the Roidirans have caused.

“Sarenrae is not an evangelist, and she condemns faith imposed by the sword. As in her heaven, so on Qadira’s earth. Our laws enforce religious pluralism, and this protects even Roidira’s devotees. But as of late, they have not returned the gesture of goodwill. You were fortunate to arrive on a day free of disruption from them. Yesterday they flooded the Temple Square holding signs and haranguing festivalgoers, even children! Telling them that there is ‘only darkness’ and that ‘even breathing is pointless.’ This incensed citizens, some of whom started fights. I myself had to intervene in a scuffle—on my temple’s doorstep! It’s all gone too far.”

Al-Sahba explains that under such conditions she cannot leave the city, especially not at the apex of the Sunwrought Festival, which practically doubles the city’s population. But clearly something must be done, and if the Pathfinders can do it, and act on her behalf, then so much the better. “I even hesitate to send my own paladins into the wilderness with matters so tense in Qaharid.”

On the White Feather, her views are more sanguine, and she shares her view if the PCs ask. “They are somewhat unsettling, but they are more content to keep to themselves, save for one notable exception I would like you to investigate.”

If the PCs ask, al-Sahba shares her political views. “It is true that the imperial capital is far removed from our concerns, but there is a paranoia that grips Katheer even at the best of times about our neighbors. The war with Taldor is not the first and final word on our destiny in Avistan. There is so much mistrust between us all; my people fear many Avistani, and many Avistani think us all entryists who will subvert their countries from within. My dear wife was disowned by some of her countrymen when she married me

and applied for Keleshite citizenship. This is not how things should be; we should lead the way to more enlightened relations. Avistani-born distractions like the Roidirans don’t help,” she says under her breath.

At the conclusion of the meal, to formalize their patronage relationship, al-Sahba gives each PC a brass ring emblazoned with her house’s device, which provides an ongoing +2 bonus

on Diplomacy checks for the rest of the adventure. She

suggests two places, each representing very different sectors of Qaharidi society, to investigate as a way to find more information about the Roidiran cult. The first is a local

tavern and gambling hall frequented by mine workers, and

the second is an elite club for the city’s

great and good. For the latter, she gives the name Vashti al-Amiyyah, the White Feather that she alluded to earlier, suspecting that Vashti’s tongue may be loosened by al-Sahba’s patronage of the PCs.

She concludes their meeting with the following words.

“There is another matter. As your venture-captain most certainly told you, I serve the satrap as one of his Peerless advisors. While I am not at liberty to discuss the satrap’s precise wishes, know that he has taken an interest in this matter as well. Powerful forces indeed are watching your moves from here on out. My shade to you tomorrow, Pathfinders. Go with Sarenrae.”

Development: Before sending the PCs away to investigate the Roidiran cult, al-Sahba opens the heavy doors of the temple storeroom to them (see the Treasure section below for details). This is also an ideal time for PCs to visit the shops before they close for the day, as al-Sahba’s patronage earns them preferential treatment and a 10% discount on an item of their choice (this benefit appears on this adventure’s Chronicle sheet). This discount also applies to any purchases the PCs wish to make that do not persist past the end of the adventure, such as the cost of an inn stay or refreshments. Should the PCs wish to shoulder the expense, the city’s finest hotel, the Satrap’s Oasis, also opens its doors to them upon sight of the rings.

Treasure: Amal al-Sahba provides two *potions of endure elements* and one *potion of cure light wounds* for each PC. In Subtier 4–5, she gives the PCs a *wand of lesser restoration* with 14 charges remaining. If the PCs earned at least 10 Clout, she also gives the PCs a *pyxes of redirected focus* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 317). In Subtier 4–5, her additional reward includes a pair of *healer’s gloves* (*Ultimate Equipment* 238).



Rewards: If the PCs do not meet with Amal al-Sahba, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount. If they meet with her but do not earn at least 10 Clout, reduce each PC's gold earned by the amount in parentheses.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 158 gp (or 83 gp).

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 402 gp (or 187 gp).

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 596 gp (or 291 gp).

THE FLAMING SCIMITAR

The Flaming Scimitar is a gambling hall and bar that is popular among the city's burgeoning working class. As the dinner hour passes, it bustles brightly with activity. Two bouncers bar the way. They initially look skeptically at the PCs, but they part like curtains once they catch sight of the PCs' signet rings.

The Flaming Scimitar thrives at this hour. The clatter of dice and gems on tables threatens to drown out the surging conversation and clinking steins around the bar. It's a rough place, where the smoke clings to the ceiling as if in respect of the strength and grit thronging beneath it. The smell of tobacco and incense is thick enough in the air to drink. It seems every dockworker, sailor, miner, and farmer in Qaharid is here, the men and women whose labor moves the city.

If the PCs succeed at a DC 14 Knowledge (local) check or Diplomacy check to gather information (DC 18 in Subtier 4–5), they find someone who can provide useful information. Two knowledgeable citizens are detailed in the Key Informants section below. As the PCs interact with each of these citizens, they obtain information from the Scuttlebutt of the Tavern section below. As a rule of thumb, the PCs should need to interact with both informants to discover all of the listed intelligence, which they need to advance their investigation. For example, the first knowledgeable citizen the PCs interact with may provide information about two of the topics, while the second provides information about the third. If the PCs come up with a different way to obtain critical intelligence, feel free to substitute other skills or abilities in place of the ones listed in the Key Informants section as long as they fit the situation and don't break the investigation.

Key Informants

The two individuals listed below can provide useful information. All saving throws and skill checks in this section have a DC of 14 (or 18, in Subtier 4–5). If you introduce other informants, have the PCs roll a check at the appropriate DC.

Samajida al-Haqira (CG female human rogue 3): Samajida is a tall, sinewy woman hunched over the bar, whose bare arms reveal the strong muscles that hold up the length of rope coiled over her shoulder. Happily married to a successful date salesman who sells the produce of

the family farm, this miner lives a contented life, though she drinks to push away thoughts of her son who is now deep into his 2 years of mandatory military service. She is skeptical of the PCs at first, but she entertains conversation if the PCs succeed at a Diplomacy check to convince her of their good intentions. If the PCs fail the check, she demands top-shelf whiskey in exchange for what she knows. "Clearly you want something. Well, so do I." The whiskey costs 20 gp (100 gp in Subtier 4–5).

Adar al-Zareef (N male human warrior 3): Adar is a barrel-chested man with a long, coiled black beard and rosy cheeks that peak from his wide smile and generous laugh. Recently promoted to the rank of mine foreman, he's taken to his new role as "management" with relish. He lives cheerfully as a bachelor, spending his newfound disposable income at the Scimitar, gambling and drinking with his friends every other night of the week. To get him to open up, the PCs have to be willing to join in the fun. They can either challenge him to a drinking contest or gamble with him, attempting a Fortitude save for drinking or a Profession (gambler) or Sleight of Hand check for gambling. Even if the PCs lose the contest, Adar is more than willing to talk afterwards.

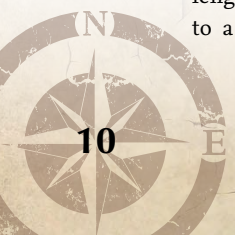
The Scuttlebutt of the Tavern

The tavern informants can provide the information below. Feel free to modify the quotes below to better match the direction of the PCs' questioning.

Roidiran Theology: "There's a camp outside the city where these Roidirans meet up with one another and spend the night before heading north towards the jungle. I don't know where they go after that. But I got some work on the side on my day off escorting these folks to the camp, and they were just wrong. They were chanting or something, starting each new bit with 'There is no meaning; there is the goddess,' something like that. I asked the head guy what they meant. I'll never forget what one of them said to me: 'Only when your mind is empty will you hear the scream of a hundred mouths crying out the goddess's word.' You better believe I didn't say two words to him after that."

The Dead and the Dying: "A whole troop of these Roidiran characters passed by our mine while we were on break and they started preaching to us about going to 'find enlightenment,' that there was a sacred place for their faith in the jungle and asked if any of us wanted to go with. Said they were on 'Roidira's Road,' the path to total knowledge. One of the other miners, Shareef, was actually thinking of doing it! 'What else have I got to live for?' he said, like a damned moron. But then the Roidirans started talking about their 'fallen comrades' in the jungle and something about how the Place of Enlightenment wasn't for the faint of heart. Shareef got cold feet—and good for him too."

The Abandoned Turquoise Mine: "One of these days



Maharev is going to turn into a giant sink hole because of all the earth we've dug up. You think the mines and pits we work at were the only ones? No, there's plenty of old mines out there—and good riddance to 'em, too. My last mine was spooky as Hell, and I was the happiest damn pickaxe-wielder in Qadira when we picked the last bit of turquoise from it. There was writing on the walls from those Roidiran fanatics, our medic said it looked like it was written in blood! Stuff about emptiness and how 'death is knowledge.'” If a PC succeeded at her skill check by 5 or more, the informant leans into whisper, “It wasn't right, I'm telling you. We almost went on strike until management finally promised us they wouldn't send us down at night no more. But after dark there were these...things. Wish we had a paladin there. Ain't some things you can just fix with an axe, you hear?” The informant gives a location for the mine, which is in southern portion of the Maharev Jungle.

THE HOUSE OF TWO RIVERS

The House of Two Rivers is a high-society club that is normally restricted to well-connected people who have purchased memberships. The club's host initially looks askance at the PCs if any of them aren't wearing fine clothing, but the sight of the signet rings sends him scrambling to open the doors.

Merchant princes and princesses, along with high-ranking officers and public officials, gather here for fine drinks in finer glasses, beneath a ceiling painted elegantly in gold leaf with stars. The stars are connected in fanciful depictions of the constellations of the summer sky. In one corner, a woman in a red dress croons to tipsy onlookers, and in another, an unusually ascetic woman in white holds court around people whose dress is far more elegantly ornamented than hers.

At the club, the PCs can easily find the unmistakable White Feather adherent who has attracted so much attention. Though the White Feather faith preaches the kind of austerity that would normally preclude membership in so decadent an establishment, this woman has been granted an exception. She's courted so much attention as an object of curiosity among the idler rich that her value as an evangelist is rated more highly than this minor lapse in ethics. At any rate, she never drinks, eats, or smokes here; she merely talks.

Vashti al-Amiyyah (CG female human wizard 5): Although she was born into a noble family of considerable influence, Vashti came to believe in the ideals of the White Feather. She has seen firsthand how status jostling can cost fortunes and even lives. To her, changing the system from within is useless. It is and always has been, working as intended. The solution, as she sees it, is to find another way altogether, free of class and hierarchy. Pulling her attention from the crowd and convincing her to dismiss her entourage requires a PC to succeed at a DC 18 Diplomacy check or a DC 15 Knowledge (local, history, or religion) check. If the PCs fail, they can find

Scaling Encounter B

Make the following adjustments to the encounter to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Both Subtiers: The monitor lizard recently ate a bad meal and has the sickened condition.

someone else who has been speaking with Vashti to vouch for them, but doing so requires the PCs to buy this other person a dessert or drink worth 20 gp (or 150 gp in Subtier 4–5).

Vashti has a flair for the dramatic in her speech. “To the members of this establishment,” she says, “I am a conversation piece. Most see me as an object of curiosity they can keep around and ogle, for how could I be any more different from them? But there's always one or two who really listen, and that is why I come back.” She also notes that the satrap himself had reached a quiet agreement with her fellow travelers to prohibit the White Feathers from proselytizing in public, but as the club is technically a private affair, it provides a convenient loophole for her to preach to a sizeable audience.

So far as the PCs' investigation is concerned, she adds more detail to the emerging picture of a sacred, secret place for Roidirans in the jungle while adding her own perspective.

“The Roidirans ache for something meaningful, though they don't know it. There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of their faith. They embrace meaninglessness, yet that quest in and of itself is meaningful to them. You've heard the rumors, no doubt, about how we White Feathers and the Roidirans are two sides of the same coin, yes? I am not sure how much I credit that. But the hearsay sticks to us all like tar. I embrace the Roidirans as sister outsiders who understand our lot. That is why I weep for them. They are finding something in the jungle that is tearing them apart, making them unbalanced and enraged. They seem to be grieving, though for what, I do not know. What I do know is that some claim that Roidira's secret lies in the Maharev Jungle. If you wish to investigate, go with care. But try not to hurt them, for they are lost. Know this passphrase: if you are asked ‘Where does brotherhood lie?’ answer, ‘At peace beneath her black wings.’”

At this point, the PCs should have everything they need. They know the location of an abandoned turquoise mine in the Maharev jungle, a key Roidiran passphrase, and some sense of both Roidiran theology and its contradictions. They should leave in the morning for what promises to be a long day's journey. As the PCs leave the city the next day, they pass a group of silently protesting Roidirans holding signs in Kelish that say “Give up now,” and “Embrace the void.” One even holds a grotesque, painted caricature of Sarenrae hanging from gallows. If asked, the Roidiran holding it up says simply, “Your blind eyes wouldn't understand the irony.”



B. The Road to the Jungle



1 square = 5 feet

Pathfinder Map Pack: Desert Sites

B. THE ROAD TO THE JUNGLE (CR 3 OR CR 6)

At an oasis a few hours' hike into the desert, the PCs find an ideal location to rest from the midday sun. Next to the oasis is a patch of dry, cracked ground covered in dead plant matter, the remnants of a second oasis that has mostly disappeared.

Creatures: Whether the PCs make camp or simply pause to drink the fresh water here, a particularly ferocious monitor lizard strikes against them.

Subtier 1–2 (CR 3)

FEROCIOUS MONITOR LIZARD CR 3

Advanced monitor lizard (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 194)

N Medium animal

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 28 (3d8+15)

Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d8+7 plus grab and poison)

TACTICS

During Combat The monitor lizard charges forth at the nearest PC.

Morale The monitor lizard is hungry, unwilling to risk its life for a meal. It flees if reduced to 15 hit points or fewer. If the PCs corner it, however, it fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 19, **Con** 21, **Int** 2, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +7 (+11 grapple); **CMD** 21 (25 vs. trip)

Feats Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Climb +9, Perception +10, Stealth +12 (+16 in undergrowth), Swim +13; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Stealth in undergrowth

SQ poison

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *onset* 1 minute; *frequency* 1/hour for 6 hours; *effect* 1d2 Dexterity damage; *cure* 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Subtier 4–5 (CR 6)

FEROCIOUS MONITOR LIZARD CR 6

Young megalania (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 291, 193)

N Large animal

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+3 Dex, +10 natural, –1 size)

hp 65 (10d8+20)

Fort +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

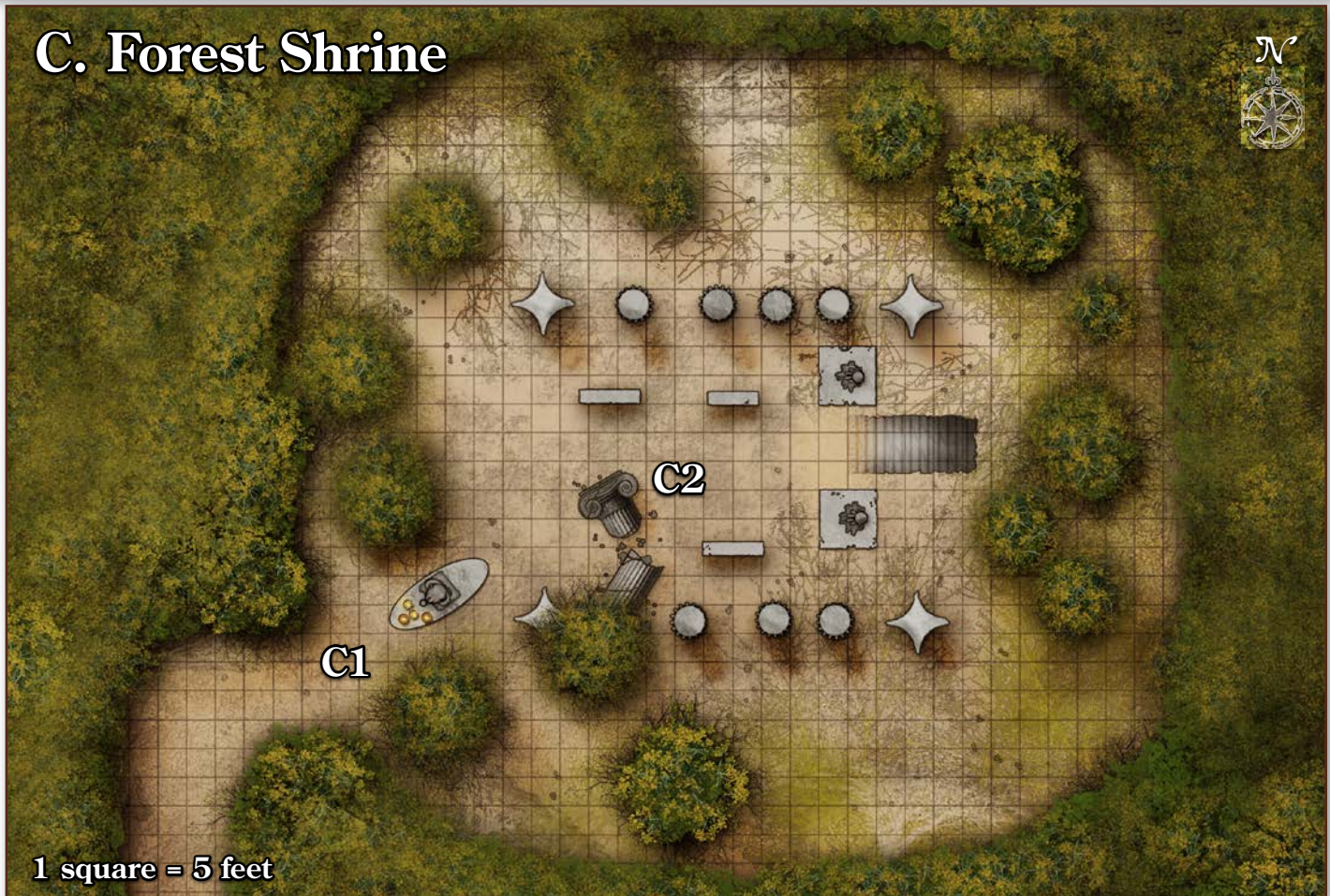
OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d10+9 plus grab and poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

C. Forest Shrine



Special Attacks poison, swallow whole (2d8+9 bludgeoning damage, AC 15, 6 hp)

TACTICS

During Combat The monitor lizard charges forth, targeting the smallest PC first and attempting to swallow that PC whole.

Morale The monitor lizard is hungry, but it isn't willing to risk its life for a meal. It flees if reduced to 15 hit points or fewer. If the PCs corner it, however, it fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 17, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +14 (+18 grapple); **CMD** 27 (31 vs. trip)

Feats Iron Will, Lunge, Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Climb +10, Perception +10, Stealth +16 (+20 in rocks or undergrowth), Swim +14; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Stealth in rocks or undergrowth

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; save Fort DC 19; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d4 Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Treasure: A variety of bones lie scattered around the oasis, the remains of the monitor lizard's victims. Most of their prey were animals, but there is one set of human bones

Mystery and Philosophy

Roidira is a goddess of mysteries and rejecting established wisdom, and each of her followers has a different interpretation of her philosophy and teachings. The revelations that the PCs find within her shrine are ambiguous and at times contradictory. When running this scenario, be sure to communicate to the players that they are not expected to discover objective truths about Roidira here; instead, it falls to them to decide how to act based upon what they find.

as well, still wearing a pair of *boots of the enduring march* (Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment 229). In Subtier 4–5, it is instead a pair of *boots of striding and springing*.

Rewards: If the PCs do not defeat the monitor lizard, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 125 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 291 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 458 gp.

C. FOREST SHRINE (CR 4 OR CR 7)

The equipment from the abandoned mine seems to keep



a respectful distance from a hollow at the cavern's end, as though these trappings of civilization are repelled by what lies on the other end.

C1. Shrine Entrance

A majestic statue of Roidira announces the shrine's entrance, covered in vines. Roidira appears tall and cloaked, with thick curls of hair that are richly detailed in the stone. Her hand is outstretched to the distance as if pointing to some far off but attainable truth. A plaque at the base of the statue states, in both Common and Kelish "Certainty and understanding cannot coexist." Two supplicant Roidirans stand on either side of the statue, all but lost to the world.

C2. Outdoor Shrine

A massive tree toppled one of the twelve columns of imperial stature that line this shrine. Of greater interest are the relief sculptures carved into upright tablets. Each depicts Roidira leading the masses away from the domes and towers of Qadiran

cities to a bright star on the horizon. Each bears an inscription in Kelish and Common, "There is no presence; there is absence," and "There is no meaning; there is knowledge."

Creatures: The upper level of the forest shrine is populated with Roidirans both living and dead. Black-clad Roidirans pray mutely before tablets, shrines, and statues. Whispering between them all are phantoms who seem heedless of the humans in their midst. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check senses that the unfettered phantoms are radiating despair, and that a powerful force binds them to the shrine. The living Roidirans do not look up or acknowledge the PCs and only respond if required to defend themselves. They appear deadened to the world, though observant PCs notice some with tear-stained cheeks.

As the PCs begin looking around, one of the phantoms challenges them. The phantom was once a human woman named Zarisha al-Sakawi, though she rarely uses her name anymore. "There is nothing," the phantom begins in Common, "nothing for you here; nothing for us; nothing for all," before holding up a hand and pointing back the way the PCs came, as if in warning. The phantom responds to attempts to engage it.

Who are you? The phantom gestures to one of the mute Roidirans, almost as if seeing them for the first time, "We are what happens when the true meaning of enlightenment takes hold. We are what they will become. We glory in what she has left behind." A dark irony infuses those sibilant words, and the phantom says no more on the subject.

May we pass? "There is nothing for you here," the phantom repeats, "and if you seek what has made us, then you shall become as us." She gives no further answer to that question.

Will you harm us? "You walk Roidira's Road, yet you are not truly on it. You defile this sacred place. What we have given to her, for her, is not for your ken. Leave."

Persuasion is impossible, and this conversation has drawn the attention of other phantoms, three of which approach. A fight is all but inevitable, except under specific circumstances (see the sidebar Fettering the Phantom on page 15). However, at initiative count 10 the first round of combat, one of the living Roidirans speaks, asking, "Where does the Brotherhood lie?" If a PC answers "At peace beneath her black wings," the phantoms become somewhat uncertain in their attacks, gaining the sickened condition for the rest of the encounter.

Subtier 1-2 (CR 4)

ZARISHA AL-SAKAWI

CR 2

Variant unfettered phantom (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 190)

N Medium outsider

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE



AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural)
hp 17 (2d10+6)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

DR 2/slashing; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +4 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks phantasmagoric slam (despair)

TACTICS

During Combat The phantom shouts imprecations at the PCs about their unworthiness and insignificance. Amidst the fight, she strives to make the PCs feel her despair.

Morale Consumed with despair, Zarisha fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

Feats Dodge, Run^B

Skills Acrobatics +4, Fly +4, Intimidate +2, Perception +5, Sense Motive +5, Stealth +7

Languages Common, Kelish

SQ incorporeal step

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Incorporeal Step (Su) When an unfettered phantom moves more than 5 feet, it becomes incorporeal until it stops moving.

Phantasmagoric Slam (Su) An unfettered phantom's attacks are considered magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Its slams have an additional effect based on its emotional focus. This phantom's emotional focus is despair. A creature hit by a despair unfettered phantom's slam attack must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 11) or take a –2 penalty on attack rolls and damage rolls for 1 round. The DC for the slam's effects is Charisma-based.

ROIDIRAN PHANTOMS (3)

CR 1/2

Variant unfettered phantom (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 190)

N Medium outsider

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 8 each (1d10+3)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Immune mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +3 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks phantasmagoric slam (despair)

TACTICS

During Combat One phantom attacks together with Zarisha, while the other two target a different PC.

Morale Consumed with despair, the phantoms fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Fettering the Phantom

A spiritualist PC (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 72) or a PC with levels in another class that grants a phantom could choose to release her current phantom in exchange for the phantom of Zarisha al-Sakawi. This choice has several effects. First and foremost, it neutralizes the threat from the remaining phantoms, as they no longer see the PCs as intruders. Second, the PCs gain access to some more intimate knowledge of Roidiran lore and the character of the phantom—who, in life, was a former blacksmith turned Roidiran cultist. Zarisha can act as a resource to help the PCs understand what they're seeing in the shrine, though she does not give any direct details about the source of her despair, only speaking in riddles about "enlightenment" and "what the Goddess left behind."

In the final encounter with Roidira, Zarisha can supply the PC with all the answers about dogma necessary to satisfy the Goddess, such as reciting the proper mantras. Though the PCs are still responsible for explaining them, the GM can use Zarisha as a vehicle to feed them clues and suggestions that point them in the right direction.

Bear in mind that delving into the details of her shattered faith before her goddess's image is traumatic experience for Zarisha, however, and this should be made clear to the PCs. Making her step forth into the interior shrine is taking her back to the source of her life's greatest pain and, essentially, forcing her to relive it. This is an ethical decision that should have consequences, and forcing Zarisha to "help" during the final encounter with Roidira produces challenges for the spiritualist. It is also up to the PCs to decide whether to inform Zarisha about the information Roidira provides about the "enlightenment" she has bestowed on her followers. Zarisha is profoundly disbelieving at first, but the knowledge gives her some cause for reflection.

Scaling Encounter C2

Make the following adjustments to the encounter to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Both Subtiers: Remove two of the Roidiran phantoms.

Feats Dodge, Run^B

Skills Acrobatics +2, Fly +2, Intimidate +0, Perception +4, Sense Motive +4, Stealth +5

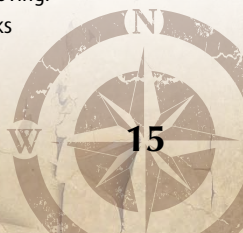
Languages Common, Kelish

SQ incorporeal step

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Incorporeal Step (Su) When an unfettered phantom moves more than 5 feet, it becomes incorporeal until it stops moving.

Phantasmagoric Slam (Su) An unfettered phantom's attacks



Scaling Encounter D2

Make the following adjustments to the encounter to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Both Subtiers: Remove one disillusioned Roidiran.

Optional Encounter

If fewer than 90 minutes remain in which to complete the scenario, the disillusioned Roidirans do not attack. Instead, they simply cry out the phrases they would have said during combat to the PCs.

are considered magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Its slams have an additional effect based on its emotional focus. This phantom's emotional focus is despair. A creature hit by a despair unfettered phantom's slam attack must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 9) or take a –2 penalty on attack rolls and damage rolls for 1 round.

Subtier 4–5 (CR 7)

ZARISHA AL-SAKAWI

CR 4

Unfettered phantom (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 190, see page 24)

hp 42

Melee 2 slams +8 (1d6+3)

Special Attacks phantasmagoric slam (despair)

Languages Common, Kelish

TACTICS

During Combat The phantom shouts imprecations at the PCs about their unworthiness and insignificance. Amidst the fight, she strives to make the PCs feel her despair.

Morale Consumed with despair, Zarisha fights until destroyed.

ROIDIRAN PHANTOMS (4)

CR 2

Variant unfettered phantom (use the statistics for Zarisha al-Sakawi in Subtier 1–2 on page 15)

hp 17 each

TACTICS

During Combat Two of the phantoms attack together with Zarisha, while the other two target a different PC.

Morale Consumed with despair, the phantoms fight until destroyed.

Rewards: If the PCs do not defeat or otherwise bypass the phantoms, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount. This amount represents treasure that the PCs receive after reporting back to al-Sahba.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 104 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 225 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 347 gp.

D. FOREST SHRINE LOWER LEVEL

The lower level of the shrine is carved into rocky ground. Its construction is somewhat unstable, as evidenced by the collapse in the southeast corner, but it is steady enough that the PCs' actions are almost certain not to trigger further cave-ins.

On either side of the stairs leading into the forest shrine's lower level are two curved pieces of stone, each polished to a mirror sheen and inscribed with the same sentence over and over again in a variety of languages. The sentence on the northern stone is "All truths are lies," while the sentence on the southern stone is "All lies are truths."

D1. Statue of Roidira

A smaller version of the statue seen at the entrance to the shrine presides over the center of this small chamber. In front of the statue, a suppliant kneels in silent contemplation.

D2. Chapel (CR 3 or CR 6)

The chapel itself is muted. The altar is adorned only with a pair of candles and a lavish piece of red fabric, and the wooden pews are dusty and worn.

Creatures: Four Roidirans meditate in this chamber. The appearance of the PCs shakes them out of their meditative state, and they are overcome with a confused desire to protect their shrine. During combat, they cry out questions like "But if miracles are real and gods are lies, who makes miracles?" or "If knowledge comes from the void but the void retreats, from whence is knowledge?" and "If nothingness ceases to be, then what remains?"

Subtier 1–2 (CR 3)

DISILLUSIONED ROIDIRANS (4)

CR 1/2

Human ex-cleric of Roidira 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 14 each (2d8+2)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee heavy mace +3 (1d8+2)

TACTICS

During Combat The Roidirans attack with their heavy maces.

Morale The Roidirans are intensely distraught, but some portion of their hearts still cling to hope. A Roidiran surrenders if reduced to 4 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Alertness, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Knowledge (arcana, history, nobility, planes) +5,

D. Forest Shrine Lower Level



1 square = 5 feet

Knowledge (local, nature) +2, Knowledge (religion) +6,
Perception +5, Sense Motive +5

Languages Common, Kelish, Osiriani

Gear leather armor, light wooden shield, heavy mace, broken
holy symbol of Roidira

Subtier 4-5 (CR 6)

DISILLUSIONED ROIDIRANS (4)

CR 2

Human ex-cleric of Roidira 4

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +1 Dex, +2 shield)

hp 29 each (4d8+8)

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee heavy mace +6 (1d8+3)

TACTICS

During Combat The Roidirans attack with their heavy maces.

Morale The Roidirans are intensely distraught, but some portion of their hearts still cling to hope. A Roidiran surrenders if reduced to 6 hit points or fewer.

Scaling The Reflecting Pool

Both Subtiers: To accommodate a group of four PCs, reduce all skill check DCs by 2 and all saving throw DCs by 1.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 17

Feats Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness

Skills Knowledge (arcana, nobility, planes) +5, Knowledge

(dungeoneering, engineering, geography, local, nature) +2,

Knowledge (history, religion) +8, Perception +5, Sense Motive +5

Languages Common, Kelish, Osiriani

Gear leather armor, heavy wooden shield, heavy mace, broken
holy symbol of Roidira

D3. The Reflecting Pool

This area is the heart of the shrine. Here the PCs find a circular, shallow pool that glows with otherworldly power at the center of a smaller crater also overgrown with trees and open to the sky. A sharp odor emanates from the water, at once smoky, earthy, and sweet. At each of the cardinal directions is a Roidiran supplicant, knelt in mute prayer. The words "All

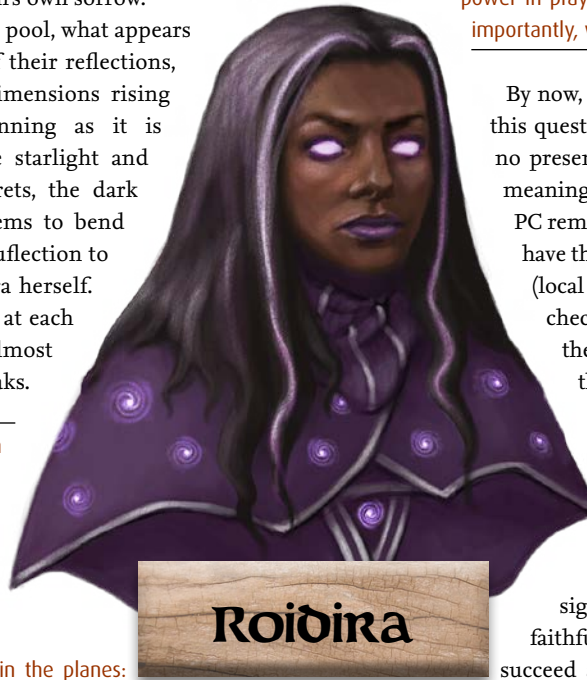


discoveries reflect the beholder” are inscribed in glowing letters along the pool’s side. Each PC perceives these words in her native language.

If a PC accepted Zarisha as a phantom, Zarisha comments that the pool ahead is the “source of knowledge” and entreats the PC to let her wait upstairs. If the PC insists that she accompany them, she acquiesces, but the PC suffers the effects of *crushing despair* for the remainder of this encounter, a manifestation of the phantom’s own sorrow.

When the PCs approach the pool, what appears before them—first in place of their reflections, then as an entity in three dimensions rising from the water—is as stunning as it is unmistakable. With eyes like starlight and voluminous hair full of secrets, the dark and striking woman who seems to bend all attention and space in genuflection to her is none other than Roidira herself. As she materializes, she looks at each PC in turn, her solar eyes almost painful to meet; then, she speaks.

“Welcome, supplicants. I am Roidira. You have walked my Road and now, at last, you are ready to drink from this most perilous of cups. Answer my questions truthfully, with an open mind, and you shall be rewarded with the greatest gift in the planes: my Enlightenment. Fail, and wander forever in the darkness of the ignorance you laughably call ‘wisdom.’”



What the PCs are seeing, exactly, is difficult to discern. A PC who succeeds a DC 16 Spellcraft check can sense that while the magic here is powerful, it emanates from no known source, and its nature is elusive. The goddess projects a distinct presence, yet her form is insubstantial.

If the PCs attack the image of Roidira, the image retaliates in the following ways.

Piercing Starlight: If a PC behaves disrespectfully toward Roidira’s image, her gaze intensifies in luminosity until the targeted PC feels as if she is gazing into the heart of an exploding sun. The PC must attempt a DC 21 Will save (DC 24 in Subtier 4–5), with failure meaning the PC must avert her gaze from Roidira for the remainder of the encounter.

The Scream of the Void: If a PC persists in disrespectful behavior or attacks Roidira’s image, the PC faces the relentless power of Roidira’s domain. She waves her hand at her target, enveloping the PC in a perfect darkness that deadens him to the world. It is not blindness—were the PC to hold his hand in front of his face he would see it—but a total absence of all other sensory stimulation. She releases this PC from the

darkness and cures him of his deafness only at her whim, when she is satisfied the offending party has learned his lesson (generally after the PC apologizes and has been unable to participate in the answer to one question).

During her interrogation, Roidira does not require each PC to answer, but each PC may attempt to give an answer.

“What must every good Roidiran say before calling upon my power in prayer or speaking an incantation? More importantly, why must you do so?”

By now, the PCs have heard the answer to this question a few times already: “There is no presence; there is absence. There is no meaning; there is only knowledge.” If no PC remembers or took notes from earlier, have the PCs attempt a DC 16 Knowledge (local or religion) or Intelligence check; on a successful result, remind the PCs of the phrase. The DC of the Knowledge check increases by 4 in Subtier 4–5 to reflect the overwhelming nature of Roidira’s presence.

What Roidira is really looking for is some effort by the PCs to grapple with the significance of these words to the faithful. To satisfy Roidira, a PC must succeed at a DC 22 Diplomacy or DC 16 Knowledge (religion) check to provide a

weighty reply, mentioning at least some of the following themes (in Subtier 4–5, increase the DCs by 4). An excellent answer describes the importance of clearing one’s mind of preconceived notions to accept unpopular truths, and emphasizes that tradition and obeisance to existing academic canon, law, and theology can cloud the judgment of even the greatest human mind. The mantra reminds Roidirans to be humble before the immensity of everything they do not know. On a deeper level, Roidira also appreciates grappling with the second part of the mantra and why “meaning” is dangerous. In her eyes, contemporary meaning, especially in nations like Qadira, stems from wealth, social status and hierarchy, and one’s ability to recite the known quantities of popular education and theology. This is what is considered “meaningful,” and her theology rejects this concept. Feel free to give the PCs up to a +4 circumstance bonus on their skill check based on the thoroughness of their answer.

Failure: If the answer does not satisfy Roidira, she sighs and waves her hand, causing the answering PC to fall to her knees, shuddering, and dealing 1d4+2 points of damage (or 2d6+4 points of damage in Subtier 4–5). A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Fortitude save takes half damage (DC 15 in

Subtier 4–5). “This is basic; essential! How can you be open to Enlightenment if you cannot even grasp this? Do not let it be said that I am unmerciful, however. Empty yourselves of what you have learned, and let another voice proclaim its understanding.” PCs can retry this check, but Roidira grows impatient with repeated failure; each attempt after the first by the same PC deals the PC 2d4+4 points of damage (or 4d6+8 points in Subtier 4–5). If a different PC attempts the check instead, she does not take this additional damage.

Success: Roidira smiles and claps quietly as she lowers her gaze at the PCs. “Good.”

“Thus you have learned the true significance of emptiness. Tell me, as a good Roidiran, then, do you believe in nothing?”

This is something of a trick question. To hear Amal al-Sahba answer it, she’d say unequivocally that Roidirans are functionally faithless. But as the White Feather Vashti al-Amiyyah hinted, there’s more to the story. A central tension of the Roidiran faith is to reject most meaning structures and pursue what it is left in their absence. Such a practice, however, becomes a positive expression of meaning. In other words, giving up on all other beliefs is itself a kind of belief. Faith in any deity is, by definition, belief in something. Roidira is not looking for a definitive answer here, only one that shows awareness of this tension in the faith—its forceful abjuration of belief while itself being a belief. A PC who succeeds at a DC 16 Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20 in Subtier 6–7) knows what kind of answer Roidira wants to this question; if the PCs come to this conclusion on their own, they do not need to succeed at this check to give an answer that satisfies Roidira.

Failure: An unsatisfactory answer results in another strike, dealing the same amount of damage as failure against the first question, with the same results for repeated failures. “Pitiful. Can you not master philosophy if it does not come to you as received wisdom from an old man’s textbook? Feh!”

Success: She simply nods, smiles, and carries on.

“Now for my final question: is true knowledge even possible?”

This is the most open-ended question that admits the widest possible number of acceptable answers. What Roidira wants is someone who engages with her belief that most protestations of objective truth are, in fact, false and based on belief or a need to create meaning. This gets close to what Roidirans consider enlightenment: the understanding that nothing is certain, and that everything is contingent and perpetually changing. Established knowledge is a tool to reinforce power and hierarchy. True humility means bathing in the enormity of everything you don’t—and may never—know. But most important of all, it is about thought without end, recognizing that there may never be a final

resolution to certain questions. It is the journey, Roidira’s Road, which counts the most.

Failure: Roidira allows the PCs the time to speak and ponder. The only way to fail on this check is to say something that suggests true knowledge is whatever Roidira believes. “I grant you this was not easy, but come now, show some intellectual backbone, some rhetorical bite! Enough with these answers filled with platitudes and flattery! Stand, and speak a true sentence, supplicant!”

Success: Roidira smiles and exhales, as if a burden has been lifted. “So, you claim understanding. You have mastered the ways of the tongue, now let us test the deepest rafters of your mind.”

“Now you may drink from this fountain of enlightenment,” she says, as she gestures to the pool beneath her feet. “Sup on the knowledge that shall shatter all you hold dear,” she says, with a strange edge of intensity. “All of you, step forth.”

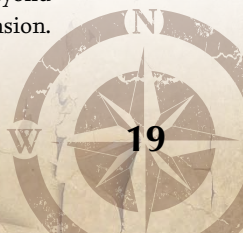
Each PC can drink from the pool as if gathering fresh water from a stream. The water is redolent of mulled wine and the sting of narcotics. What follows can best be described as a vision.

The PCs must now wrestle with the effects of the bracing waters of enlightenment. Each PC who fails a DC 12 Fortitude save takes 2d6 points of damage. In Subtier 4–5, each PC who fails a DC 15 Fortitude save takes 4d6 points of damage. For those who remain conscious, a vision comes to them, playing out over the course of a minute. Give each PC a different one of the following visions—be sure to include the first three visions before the rest. If there are five PCs at your table, one PC experiences two visions with a gap in between; if there are four PCs, two PCs experience two visions. These extra visions do not cause the PCs to take any additional damage.

Vision 1: All of the PCs’ senses fade, leaving her floating in a dark and silent void. In this silence, a telepathic presence presses itself upon her mind, “I am not, and I have never been. Lesser minds construct reality from ephemeral illusion, forcing the trappings of existence upon that which has never worn them. All the void can grant are echoes.”

Vision 2: Roidira, fully corporeal, stands before this very pool in some age when the shrine was better maintained, polished and swept with reverence. Standing in the pool, she produces a long, curved sword. Leaning her head back, strong arms skillfully maneuver the sword until its point presses into her starry robes. With a single breath and thrust, she runs herself through and dissolves into the pool, a shower of white feathers fluttering down before all fades to black.

Vision 3: Roidira speaks, “You are not Roidirans. Did you all really think to take me for a fool? No matter. Hear me now, for no one, least of all my wretched faithful, shall ever believe you: I have no use for followers. Where I now walk is beyond your imagining, beyond the realm of your comprehension.



So-called “Roidirans” became what I despised: inflexible dogmatists who put posturing performance before the pursuit of truth. Instead of walking Roidira’s Road as a way of life, they thought of it as a road with a destination. So, I gave them one: this place, where I could crush their stupidity in one fell swoop. They think signs with childish drawings that mock other divinities are my way? They think my path is one of street brawls and shouting evangelism? They are worse than you, lower than you, for they know less than nothing. Emptiness was not to be an end in itself, but a beginning. These fools,” she gestured to the mute Roidirans, “never understood that. Thus, I took from them the one thing they loved most. Myself. What I do now is beyond their comprehension, as it is beyond yours. Farewell.”

Vision 4: A scholar stands in a grassy field gazing up at a field of stars, a quill in hand. The scholar stabs at a star with her quill, causing the star to pop like a bubble and vanish. A cluster of new stars appears elsewhere in the sky. The more the scholar tries to destroy the stars, the more appear. The scholar snaps her quill in frustration, which causes her to vanish. After she is gone, the stars fade.

Vision 5: A horse carrying a rider gallops across a desert landscape with sand of gleaming gold grains. Many days pass, and eventually the horse dies. The rider continues the journey on foot. As the rider grows older, his pace slows, until he ultimately collapses upon the sand and sinks. Winds blow the sand over the fallen form, and a horse emerges from the golden grains, galloping away.

Vision 6: The PC is standing in a pitch-black room. The sound of water slowly dripping onto a hard surface echoes around her. Each time a water drop falls, a spectral figure appears in the corner of the PC’s eye. These figures feel vaguely familiar, but any time the PC tries to look directly at a figure or focus on it, it disappears.

Vision 7: A PC who drinks from the well a second time experiences soaring through an endless void in an unknown direction. If the table has seven players, this vision instead appears before the seventh PC to drink from the well.

The fog of the water-induced fugue state clears, but a distinct “buzz” remains. A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Heal check recognizes that the “water of enlightenment” is laced with some reality-altering substance. There is no indication about whether anything the PCs have just seen and heard is real. The water’s glow fades, and its smell becomes stale.

Development: As the vision dissipates, all PCs heal up to full hit points; even PCs who died in the shrine are immediately restored to life as per *true resurrection*. Is this one final gift of the shrine, or the influence of Dark Sister of Knowledge herself? Either way, there is nothing left in the pool but the PCs. The Roidirans around the shrine speak to the PCs, filling in some of the details that the PCs may have missed. Note that the Roidirans know that they have lost their connection to

the goddess, and some of them have seen Vision 1 or Vision 7, but none of them have seen Visions 2-6. They believe that their goddess has revealed to them that she does not exist, and are lost within the paradox. They begin the conversation with, “So, you know too now. She does not exist. How are we to contemplate existence without even the solace of emptiness?”

The PCs may be able to provide the Roidirans with some comfort. In their vulnerable state, they are receptive to other perspectives and listen carefully to any alternative faiths or philosophies the PCs propose. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Diplomacy or a DC 14 Knowledge (religion) check makes enough of a lasting impression that the Roidirans around the pool decide to return to Qaharid with the PCs and begin a new search for meaning, perhaps incorporating the PC’s beliefs (increase the DCs by 4 in Subtier 4–5).

Rewards: If the PCs do not receive at least one vision from the reflecting pool, reduce each PC’s gold earned by the following amount. This amount represents treasure that the PCs receive after reporting back to al-Sahba.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC’s gold earned by 120 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC’s gold earned by 574 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC’s gold earned by 454 gp.

CONCLUSION

Al-Sahba eagerly awaits news back at the temple. She is enjoying a late dinner with Meriwether as they arrive and bids the PCs to join them “as the first of many rewards for their hard work.” If the PCs reveal the situation at the shrine, including the visions they saw, the news of what happened astonishes al-Sahba.

“What unspeakable cruelty. I have no love for the Roidiran faith, but surely her followers deserved better than losing their goddess among a sea of riddles. Questions of divine philosophy can be the most challenging questions we face. It is not surprising that a divinity known for cloaking herself in secrets would make such questions even more unapproachable. Yet, I believe there is much to consider with what you have said. Perhaps the paradox of Roidira’s nature could be understood through the lens of other absences that we tend to give names. It could be, in that sense, that as cold is the absence of heat, ignorance is the absence of knowledge, and darkness is the absence of light, Roidira represents the absence of something else. While I have studied theology extensively, you have seen more of Roidira’s nature than I have. No matter the faith, she who experiences the touch of the divine becomes an authority the wise should heed. What are your interpretations of what you have witnessed?”

After digesting the PCs words, and her plate of roast dire boar, she takes a deep breath and speaks again. “The satrap wished for me to find a way to discredit both the White Feather and the Roidiran cult. In truth, I am uneasy about

treating both in the same way. If you were to have your say, How would you have me use the knowledge you uncovered at the shrine?"

Here the PCs can offer their thoughts on how to proceed, depending on what they revealed to the priestess. As GM, you should feel free to encourage creativity in their suggestions. Al-Sahba hears out all of the PCs' suggestions. One critical choice she seeks their advice on is whether to focus her efforts just on the Roidirans, or try to spin the shrine revelations into a narrative that sweeps up the White Feather as well. The image of Roidira's "suicide" in Vision 2 admits wide interpretation, but the white feathers that showered the site where she supposedly fell are too blunt an image to be ignored.

"Many would have doubts," al-Sahba muses, "but doubt and confusion are like acid to a cult's rigidity." These are the issues you can engage the PCs thoughts on for this final conversation, and al-Sahba is grateful for their input.

After the PCs finish their conversation with al-Sahba, she asks them to keep her signet ring as a sign of her patronage, even if they did not make it through the shrine far enough to see the visions. As a result, all PCs who completed the initial dinner encounter with her before leaving the city gain the High Priestess's Patronage boon. Additionally, she grants them further rewards based on their successes in the temple (see below).

Each PC who witnessed one of Roidira's visions after drinking from the waters of the pool gains the Visions of the Void boon on her Chronicle sheet. Finally, if a PC replaced her phantom with Zarisha, she gains the Roidiran Phantom boon on her Chronicle sheet.

Treasure: If the PCs dealt with the Roidiran phantoms, High Priestess al-Sahba gives them a satchel of *seer's tea* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 319) and a *potion of resist energy* (fire, CL 7th). In Subtier 4–5, she gives them two *potions of resist energy* instead of one as well as a *lesser merciful metamagic rod* (*Ultimate Equipment* 190).

If the PCs received at least one vision from the reflecting pool, the high priestess also gives them a *dawnflower sash* (see sidebar), and, in Subtier 4–5, a jar of *restorative ointment*. The values of these treasure items are accounted for in the sections in which the PCs earned them.

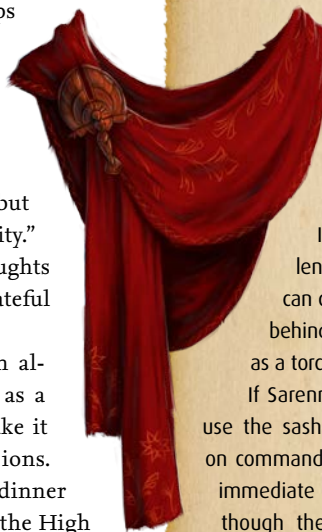
REPORTING CONDITIONS

The following options do not encapsulate all possibilities; check whichever of boxes A, B, and C is closest to the result of the scenario. Check box A if the PCs asked al-Sahba to report that Roidira exists but is evading her followers. Check box B if the PCs asked al-Sahba to report that Roidira does not exist. Check box C if the PCs asked al-Sahba to let

Dawnflower Sash

This blessed sash appears on page 262 of *Pathfinder RPG: Inner Sea Gods*.

DAWNFLOWER SASH		PRICE 2,500 GP
SLOT belt or head	CL 5th	WEIGHT —
AURA faint abjuration		



This long strip of red Qadiran fabric is wrapped around the wearer's waist or head several times and held in place by an ank-shaped clasp of red gold. The wearer is protected as if by *endure elements*, but only in warm environments.

If the wearer unwraps the sash to its full length and holds the clasp in her hand, she can cast *feather fall* once per day, briefly leaving behind a trail of pleasant red-gold light as bright as a torch that lasts for 1 round.

If Sarenrae is the wearer's patron, the wearer can use the sash to cast *cure light wounds* once per day on command. The wearer can trigger this ability as an immediate action if reduced to –1 hit points or fewer, though thereafter the sash must be recharged by placing it in strong sunlight for 8 continuous hours. As a swift action, the wearer can cause the clasp to shine as brightly as a torch or cease this illumination; the light is warm, feels like sunlight, and is bright enough to make sun-fearing creatures slightly uncomfortable but not so bright as to cause them harm.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	COST 1,250 GP
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Craft Wondrous Item, *cure light wounds*, *endure elements*, *feather fall*, *light*

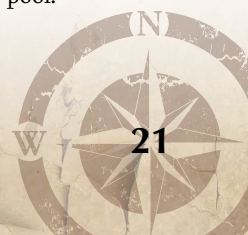
people decide the truth for themselves, either by keeping the visions secret or reporting the details of multiple visions. Finally, check box D if the PCs asked al-Sahba to report a connection between Roidira and the White Feather.

PRIMARY SUCCESS CONDITIONS

If the PCs received at least one vision from the reflecting pool and reported to al-Sahba, they fulfill their primary success condition and earn 1 Prestige Point.

SECONDARY SUCCESS CONDITIONS

The PCs achieve the secondary success condition if they either earn at least 12 Clout with al-Sahba (10 for a 4-player table) or view at least 4 visions from the reflecting pool. Doing so earns each PC 1 additional Prestige Point.



HANDOUT: Venture-Captain's Letter

Pathfinders,

I regret that business has forced me away from the lodge, and so I must settle for a simple letter instead of providing you with a proper greeting.

An unusual pair of cults—The White Feather and the Roidirans—has taken root in the Qadiran mining town of Qaharid. The White Feather are ascetics who believe enlightenment comes from giving away all worldly possessions and status, while the Roidirans follow the goddess Roidira, the Dark Sister of Knowledge. To Roidirans, nothing matters more than following their goddess' example and rejecting established wisdom to uncover universal truth. Recently, Roidirans have been returning from forays outside of Qaharid in the throes of grief and causing quite a few disturbances. Whatever knowledge the Roidirans have found in their pilgrimage must be significant, and so I'm asking you to investigate it further.

This mission requires poking your noses in affairs that Qadirans might deem embarrassing. For that you'll need a properly powerful patron, and one well-versed in matters of faith. No patron would be better for this situation than High Priestess Amal al-Sahba, who not only oversees Sarenite activities in all Maharev, but has the ear of the satrap himself as one of the exalted Peerless—his handpicked council of elite advisors. If anyone can help you, she can. When you meet with the high priestess, be sure to put your best effort into impressing her. Represent yourselves well, and she could prove a powerful ally in the future.

I've enclosed a sealed letter of recommendation, but it won't be enough to just go up to al-Sahba and hand her the letter; she's a busy woman with a province to run. Fortunately, by the time you arrive, there will be an ongoing festival celebrating the invincibility of the sun and Sarenrae's eternal light. Like most religious festivals, it is open to foreigners; perhaps you can get her attention there.

If you can't reach her directly, however, try her wife, Lora Meriwether. She's not quite at her spouse's level of prestige, but she heads a local trading guild, has plenty of connections, and—of course—has direct access to al-Sahba. On top of all that, she's foreign, and may be more sympathetic to your situation. If your attempts to gain the high priestess's attention at the festival fail, find Meriwether during her office hours in the Customs House and talk to her.

When you have finished your business in Qaharid, I invite you to join me for a full-course dinner at the Katheer Lodge. I look forward to hearing your report over spiced cake and tea.

May Shade Never Be Far,

Venture-Captain Esmayl ibn Qaradi

APPENDIX: STAT BLOCKS

The following statistics appear in this adventure.

CUTPURSE

This armored human skulks in the shadows, shortsword in hand.

CUTPURSE	CR 1/2
<i>Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex 144</i>	
NE Medium humanoid (human)	
Init +7; Senses Perception +3	
DEFENSE	
AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +3 Dex)	
hp 10 (1d8+2)	
Fort +1, Ref +5, Will -1	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft.	
Melee short sword +3 (1d6+2/19-20)	
Ranged dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)	
Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6	
STATISTICS	
Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12	
Base Atk +0; CMB +2; CMD 15	
Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse	
Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb +6, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +7, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7, Swim +6	
Languages Common	
SQ trapfinding +1	
Combat Gear <i>potion of cure light wounds</i> , acid (2), smokestick, tanglefoot bag; Other Gear masterwork studded leather, daggers (5), short sword, thieves' tools, 25 gp	

UNFETTERED PHANTOM

This strange ghostly creature seems to writhe in the throes of some uncontrollable emotion.

UNFETTERED PHANTOM	CR 4
N Medium outsider (phantom)	
Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8	
DEFENSE	
AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural) or AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 deflection, +1 dodge) when incorporeal	
hp 42 (5d10+15)	

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.

Melee 2 slams +8 (1d8+3)

Special Attacks phantasmagoric slam (anger)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 21

Feats Dodge, Fleet, Power Attack, Run

Skills Acrobatics +11, Fly +11, Intimidate +9, Perception +8, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +11

Languages Common

SQ incorporeal step

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Incorporeal Step (Su) When an unfettered phantom moves more than 5 feet, it becomes incorporeal until it stops moving.

Phantasmagoric Slam (Su) An unfettered phantom's attacks are considered magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Its slams have an additional effect based on its emotional focus. Each phantom has one of the following emotional foci. This phantom's emotional focus is anger, and is already reflected in the statistics above. The DCs for the slam's effects are Charisma-based.

Anger: An anger unfettered phantom's slam attack deals damage equal to 1d8 + its Strength modifier instead of the normal amount of damage (1d6 + its Strength modifier).

Dedication: When a dedication unfettered phantom hits a creature with its slam attack, it gains a +2 bonus to its AC against that creature for 1 round. If the unfettered phantom hits the same creature multiple times, this bonus stacks.

Despair: A creature hit by a despair unfettered phantom's slam attack must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 13) or take a -2 penalty on attack rolls and damage rolls for 1 round.

Fear: A creature hit by a fear unfettered phantom's slam attack must succeed at a DC 13 Will saving throw or become shaken for 1d4 rounds.

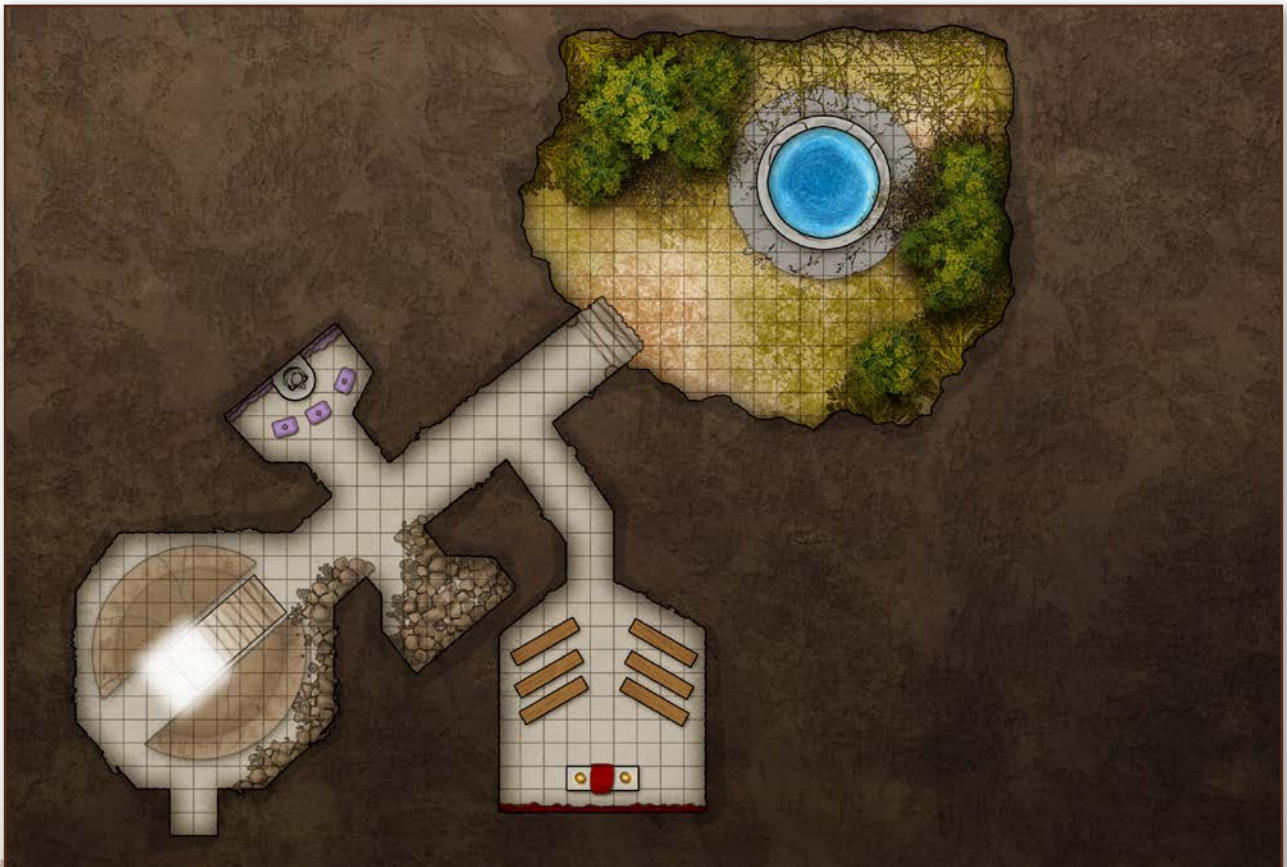
Hatred: A hatred unfettered phantom gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls with its slam attack against the creature that most recently harmed it.

Jealousy: A jealousy unfettered phantom gains sneak attack +1d6 when using its slam attack.

Zeal: A zeal unfettered phantom's slam attack has a critical threat range of 19-20 and a critical multiplier of ×3.



PATHFINDER SOCIETY SCENARIO



THE COST OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Pathfinder Society Scenario #9-01: The Cost of Enlightenment

Event _____

Date _____

GM # _____

GM Character # _____

GM Name _____

GM Prestige Earned _____

- ☐ Dark Archive ☐ Silver Crusade ☐ Sovereign Court ☐ Liberty's Edge
☐ Scarab Sages ☐ The Exchange ☐ Grand Lodge
☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Character # _____

Prestige Points

Character Name _____

- ☐ Dark Archive ☐ The Exchange ☐ Grand Lodge ☐ Liberty's Edge
☐ Scarab Sages ☐ Silver Crusade ☐ Sovereign Court

Character # _____

Prestige Points

Character Name _____

- ☐ Dark Archive ☐ The Exchange ☐ Grand Lodge ☐ Liberty's Edge
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Character # _____

Prestige Points

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Character # _____

Prestige Points

Character Name _____

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☐ Scarab Sages ☐ Silver Crusade ☐ Sovereign Court

Character # _____

Prestige Points

Character Name _____

- ☐ Dark Archive ☐ The Exchange ☐ Grand Lodge ☐ Liberty's Edge
☐ Scarab Sages ☐ Silver Crusade ☐ Sovereign Court

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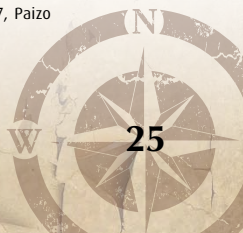
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Pathfinder Society Scenario #9-01: The Cost of Enlightenment

Character Chronicle #

☐ Core Campaign

A.K.A. _____

Player Name _____

Character Name _____

Organized Play # _____

Character # _____

Faction _____

This Chronicle sheet grants access to the following:

High Priestess's Patronage: You possess a signet ring from Amal al-Sahba, a member of the Peerless advisors to the satrap of Qadira and an influential priestess in the faith of Sarenrae. This ring announces al-Sahba as your patron, and grants you a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks in Qadira and Diplomacy checks against worshippers of Sarenrae. If you purchased an item for a 10% discount during the adventure, write the item in the space below this boon. If you did not make a discounted purchase, you may do so when you receive this Chronicle sheet.

Roidiran Phantom: You chose to replace your existing phantom with the tormented spirit of Zarisha al-Sakawi. Zarisha is a despair phantom (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 81) with the following modifications: her starting Intelligence score is 11, and her emotional focus skills are Intimidate and Knowledge (religion) instead of Intimidate and Stealth.

Visions of the Void: You witnessed one of Roidira's mystifying visions. This vision may provide inspiration, or it may hamper you. Before rolling a skill check, you can cross off this boon to add 1d6-2 to your result.

DAWNFLOWER SASH**PRICE**
2,500 GP**SLOT** belt or head**CL** 5th**WEIGHT** —**AURA** faint abjuration

This long strip of red Qadiran fabric is wrapped around the wearer's waist or head several times and held in place by an ank-shaped clasp of red gold. The wearer is protected as if by *endure elements*, but only in warm environments. If the wearer unwraps the

sash to its full length and holds the clasp in her hand, she can cast *feather fall* once per day, briefly leaving behind a trail of pleasant red-gold light as bright as a torch that lasts for 1 round.

If Sarenrae is the wearer's patron, the wearer can use the sash to cast *cure light wounds* once per day on command. The wearer can trigger this ability as an immediate action if reduced to -1 hit points or fewer, though thereafter the sash must be recharged by placing it in strong sunlight for 8 continuous hours. As a swift action, the wearer can cause the clasp to shine as brightly as a torch or cease this illumination; the light is warm, feels like sunlight, and is bright enough to make sun-fearing creatures slightly uncomfortable but not so bright as to cause them harm.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS**COST** 1,250 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *cure light wounds*, *endure elements*, *feather fall*, *light*

Subtier 1-2

boots of the enduring march (1,500 gp; *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 229)
dawnflower sash (2,500 gp; see above)
potion of resist energy (fire, CL 7th; 700 gp, limit 1)
pyxes of redirected focus (1,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 317)
seer's tea (550 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 319)

Subtier 4-5

boots of striding and springing (5,500 gp)
dawnflower sash (2,500 gp; see above)
healer's gloves (2,500 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 238)
lesser merciful metamagic rod (1,500 gp, *Ultimate Equipment* 190)
potion of resist energy (fire, CL 7th; 700 gp, limit 1)
pyxes of redirected focus (1,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 317)
restorative ointment (4,000 gp)
wand of lesser restoration (14 charges; 1,260 gp, limit 1)

MAX GOLD	SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
	1-2	254	507
	SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
MAX GOLD	Out of Subtier	591	1,181
	SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
	4-5	928	1,855
MAX GOLD	SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
	—	—	—
	SUBTIER	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Normal
EXPERIENCE	Starting XP		
	GM's Initials		
	XP Gained (GM ONLY)		
	Final XP Total		
	Initial Prestige Initial Fame		
FAME	GM's Initials		
	Prestige Gained (GM ONLY)		
	Prestige Spent		
	Current Prestige Final Fame		
	Starting GP		
GOLD	GM's Initials		
	GP Gained (GM ONLY)		
	GM's Initials		
	Day Job (GM ONLY)		
	Gold Spent		
Total			

For GM Only

EVENT

EVENT CODE

DATE

Game Master's Signature

GM Pathfinder Society #