

PATHFINDER SOCIETY

YEAR OF THE SERPENT



THE TWISTED CIRCLE

By John Cazares



THE TWISTED CIRCLE

Pathfinder Society Scenario #7–12

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Pathfinder Society Scenario #7-12: The Twisted Circle 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 Organized Play campaign, but can easily be adapted for use with any world.

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THE TWISTED CIRCLE

BY JOHN CAZARES



The thousand-year conflict between the wizards Geb and Nex left behind the devastated strip of land known as the Mana Wastes. The war turned the once-fertile fields into a wasteland and made magic in the region wildly dangerous and unpredictable.

With his nation's food supply in ruins, Nex enlisted the aid of the druid Ghorus to create a new form of plant life that could thrive in the scarred land. Over the following centuries, these plants evolved into a race of sentient creatures, the ghoran. Each ghoran sprouts from a single Ghorus seed, which it can plant and raise into a new body. Because ghorans cannot reproduce but can die to violence, their numbers have slowly declined over the years. A group of powerful ghoran druids attempted to draw upon what they could gather from Ghorus's original rituals to create a new member of their kind. Their ritual was partially successful—the seedling on which they experimented developed a rudimentary form of sentience, but it gave off a form of radiation that caused ghorans in close proximity to quickly wither and die. Fearful, the druids sealed the seedling away in a state of dormancy and left the region.

The sleeping seedling dreams, however, and in those dreams it sees itself as a benevolent protector. Calling itself the Verdant Spark, the seedling has learn to influence the surrounding land across several miles, causing plants to flourish and nearby humanoid creatures to undergo a metamorphosis that turns them partially into plants. The first people to witness these transformations were a group of intrepid settlers dissatisfied with their lives in Alkenstar; they happened across this area of lush life and chose it as the location for a new village. The adult settlers gradually fell ill, as the Verdant Spark attempted to unsuccessfully alter their physiology. When the settlers returned to Alkenstar, the city's guard turned them away at the gates, fearful that their strange mutations were contagious. Despair turned to hope as their children began to undergo the same transfiguration and emerge on healthier than ever, but otherwise seemingly unchanged. In honor of their children's health, the villagers named their home Mercy.

WHERE ON GOLARION?

The Twisted Circle begins in Katapesh, and primarily takes place in the palisaded town of Mercy in the Mana Wastes, just south of Alkenstar. To learn more about these locations, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide*. If you wish to add more detail to the section in Alkenstar, an article on Alkenstar appears in *Pathfinder Module: Wardens of the Reborn Forge*. Both of these sources are available at bookstores and game stores everywhere and online at paizo.com.



In the decades since, the Verdant Spark has continued to protect and provide for the people of Mercy, with each generation undergoing its own metamorphoses. Recently, when a storm of primal magic raged nearby, Mercy and its people were entirely unharmed. Word of this miracle reached Osirion's temple of Nethys, and they sent an operative to uncover the reason behind the town's salvation. This investigator, Amenira, made significant progress toward unraveling the town's mysteries, though the onset of the same disease that infected Mercy's original settlers slowed her work. The Verdant Spark's unlikely defender, a paranoid cloaker, feared that she was getting too close to the truth. It stole Amenira's possessions, including several dolls that she had crafted for the local children, to draw her away. When Amenira tracked the cloaker to its lair,

GM RESOURCES

This adventure uses the following Pathfinder RPG products: *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* (APG), and *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* (UE). You can find these rules in the Pathfinder Reference Document online at paizo.com/prd, and the relevant rules from the Bestiary volumes are reprinted at the back of the adventure for the GM's convenience.

it ambushed and killed her. However, she managed to project a portion of her soul into one of the toys right before she died, animating it as a soulbound doll. The cloaker still lurks near Mercy, and Amenira's doll keeps to the shadows, hoping for vengeance.

SUMMARY

The Pathfinder Society sends the PCs into the Mana Wastes to find a missing investigator and solve the mystery of a small town's salvation. After a short stopover in Alkenstar, the PCs travel to the town of Mercy. Along the way, they are set upon by a mutated gnoll near the entrance to a cavern. Within the cavern is an altar to Azathoth, where the cloaker sacrificed several other gnolls.

When the PCs arrive in Mercy, the town's sheriff confiscates their large weapons and answers some of their questions. As the PCs explore Mercy, they might learn more about the investigator's fate, the town's religion, the supernaturally healthy crops, and the mysterious transformation that all of Mercy's children undergo. During their time in Mercy, the PCs meet what is left of the investigator—a soulbound doll whose fragmented memories drive her to unusual behavior—and the cloaker spurs a swarm of bats to attack the town.

In the aftermath of this terrifying event, the villagers ask the PCs to track down the cloaker. If the PCs have maintained a positive reputation with the townsfolk, the sheriff politely asks the PCs for their aid and provides them with some additional resources. On the other hand, if the PCs have angered the

townsfolk, they blame the PCs for the attack, and demand that the PCs slay the cloaker as atonement.

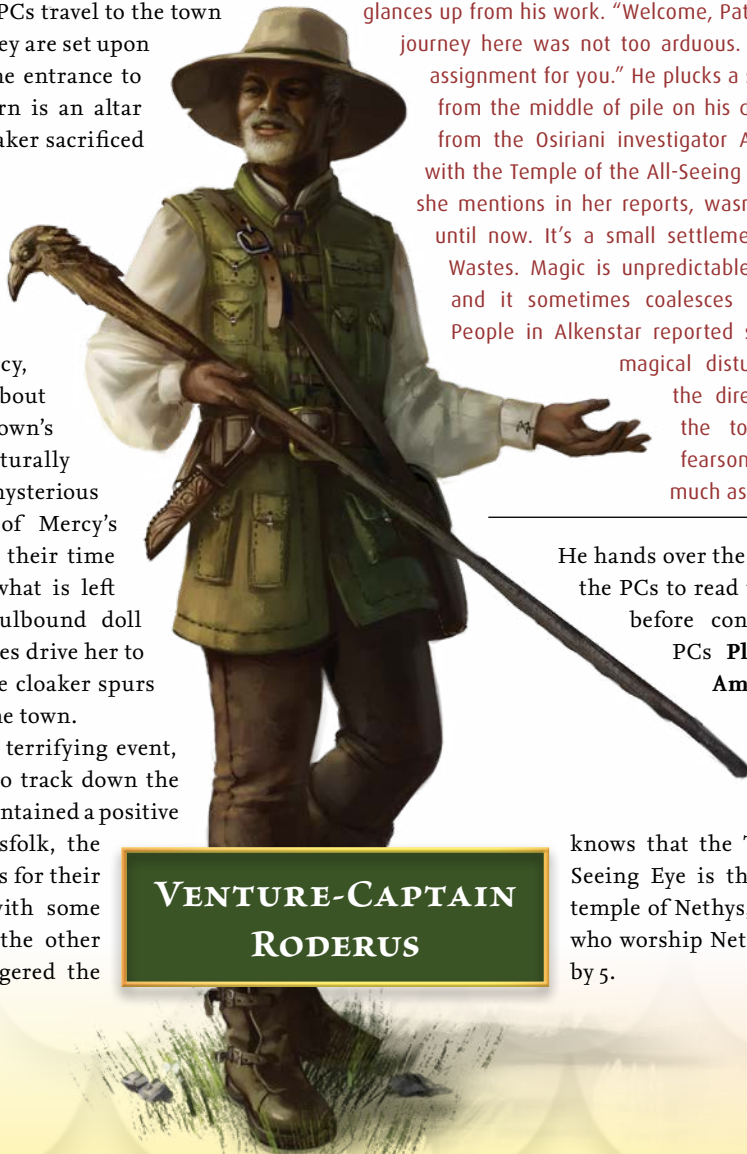
If time permits, the PCs find the cloaker in an underground forest buried beneath a chasm outside of town. Otherwise, they discover signs of its passing. Deep underground, the PCs discover the seedling that is source of the region's flourishing crops as well as the children's transformations. The PCs may either leave the Verdant Spark in place or detach it. If they remove the seedling, it creates yellow musk creepers to defend itself, and the nearby plants begin to wither and die. The PCs may then attempt to replace the Verdant Spark in its cradle, or they may take it with them back to the Pathfinder Society.

GETTING STARTED

Once the players are ready, read or paraphrase the following to get the adventure underway.

Venture-Captain Roderus sits at his desk in the lodge beneath the popular Winding Road Inn in Katapesh. Maps cover every wall of his workspace, and precarious stacks of journals and papers nearly reach to the ceiling. The venture-captain glances up from his work. "Welcome, Pathfinders. I hope your journey here was not too arduous. I have a fascinating assignment for you." He plucks a single sheet of paper from the middle of pile on his desk. "This is a letter from the Osirian investigator Amenira, who works with the Temple of the All-Seeing Eye. Mercy, the town she mentions in her reports, wasn't even on our map until now. It's a small settlement out in the Mana Wastes. Magic is unpredictable out in the Wastes, and it sometimes coalesces into deadly storms. People in Alkenstar reported seeing one of these magical disturbances heading in the direction of Mercy, but the town weathered the fearsome storm without so much as a scratch."

He hands over the sheet and waits for the PCs to read through the report before continuing. Give the PCs **Player Handout #1: Amenira's Report** (on page 24). A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check knows that the Temple of the All-Seeing Eye is the most prominent temple of Nethys, god of magic. PCs who worship Nethys reduce this DC by 5.



**VENTURE-CAPTAIN
RODERUS**

The venture-captain clears his throat. “One of my contacts at the temple received this missive from her four months ago, and he hasn’t heard anything from her since. I’m sending you to Mercy to figure out why. If she’s still there, ask her why she hasn’t contacted anyone in months and help her finish her investigation; if she isn’t, find out what happened to her. While you are there, see how much of the mystery of Mercy you can unravel. Several of the clergy within the temple are intensely curious about why the mana storm didn’t level the town, and so am I. I will gladly provide you with additional pay for the information that you retrieve. I’ve booked a ship to the city of Alkenstar, which is a few days’ journey from Mercy itself. The ship departs in three hours. If you have any questions, ask them now. You’ll have time to purchase supplies when you arrive.”

The PCs likely have questions for the venture-captain.

What is the Temple of the All-Seeing Eye? “The Temple of the All-Seeing Eye is the most prominent temple of Nethys on Golarion. It is a center for arcane scholarship, and it holds substantial sway over the politics of Osirion.”

What do you know about the Mana Wastes? “It’s a dangerous place, particularly the farther you stray from pockets of civilization. The war between Geb and Nex millennia ago devastated the land, physically and metaphysically, and the scars linger to this day. Expect areas where magic doesn’t work or becomes unpredictable. Clouds of poison and storms of terrible power erupt spontaneously. There are mutated creatures, undead horror, and monstrous scavengers, among other things. Use your best judgment, be ready for danger, and don’t go wandering off into the Wastes more than absolutely necessary.”

Who are Geb and Nex? “Geb and Nex were two of the greatest mages in Golarion’s history. In the Age of Destiny, they founded neighboring nations, which they named after themselves. Eventually, their territorial ambitions led to a bitter war that raged for over a thousand years. They drew upon the most powerful of spells to unleash devastation upon each other, inflicting an untold numbers of casualties and ruining the land itself in the border between their nations.”

Do you know anything else about the town of Mercy? “It’s a small town roughly twenty miles south of Alkenstar. Ask around when you arrive in Alkenstar, and I’m certain you’ll find someone who knows more about it than I do.”

When the PCs depart for Alkenstar, read or paraphrase the following.

The ship travels down the coast of the Obari Ocean, tacks northwest up the Elemion River, then sails south down the Ustradi River, finally stopping at the city of Alkenstar. It docks slightly short of a five-hundred-foot-tall waterfall in the middle of the city, where southbound ships painstakingly ride a winding

elevator to the river above. Nearby, carriages wait to lead passengers into the smog-covered city.

The city of Alkenstar boasts a population of over 50,000 people, mostly humans, with a sizable number of dwarves and halflings as well. The unreliable nature of magic in the Mana Wastes has made the city a center of technological advancement. Alkenstar’s most famous inventions are firearms, and while strict laws regulate their possession to members of the nobility, unscrupulous dealers make a tidy profit selling these weapons on the black market. Magic functions normally in the portion of the city to the east of Ustradi River, and does not function at all in the western portion of the city.

Diplomacy (gather information) or Knowledge (local)

While in Alkenstar, the PCs can gather information about the town of Mercy. The PCs learn all of the information whose DC is less than or equal to the result of their check.

15+: Mercy is located a little over 20 miles south of Alkenstar. The people there worship an obscure nature deity. Rumors speak of a vampire who occasionally hunts travelers along the road.

20+: The people of Mercy have a reputation for being insular and extremely devout to their god Robori. The town has rigid, inflexible rules, but the quality of its harvests encourages traders to occasionally stop by the town to purchase produce.

25+: For the past year, an Osiriani woman from Mercy named Amenira came to Alkenstar every month. She traded for supplies and sent large collections of letters before returning to Mercy.

No matter how high the PCs roll on a Knowledge (religion) check to identify Robori, they have not heard of him—Robori is a false deity whose worship is unique to Mercy. For more information on Robori, see the Temple of Robori section on page 13.

A. AMBUSH ON THE WINDING PATH (CR 2 OR CR 5)

The dirt road toward Mercy winds through rocky, tree-lined hills. Sporadic clearings occur where large sections of trees have been destroyed or damaged. Some are only missing a few branches, while others have been split almost in half vertically or chopped down to a short stump. The exposed wood is black and perfectly smooth. One such clearing reveals the opening of a narrow cave in the hillside. The trail splits, leading both into the cave and off to the north.

The recent mana storm in this region chopped apart trees and carried away the pieces. A PC who succeeds at a

A. Ambush on the Winding Path



G2

H2

G1

H1

G : Gnoll

H : Hyena

1 square = 5 feet

Pathfinder Flip-Mat: Hill Country

DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the black sheen on the wood as burnt sap. A PC who succeeds at DC 15 Perception check notices that there should be far more debris in the area.

An invisible magical fog, one of many manifestations of the twisted nature of magic in the Mana Wastes, is currently drifting through the area. Treat all spells as if their caster level were 1 higher, and increase the saving throw DC against spells that affect plants, such as *entangle*, by 2. In addition, any time a character casts a spell during this encounter, a shower of pine needles appears over the spell's area, and the caster smells of pine trees for 1 minute.

Creatures: The cloaker used this cave to sacrifice several gnolls to its profane deity. The local band of gnolls has tracked the cloaker's movements to this cave. A gnoll scout waits outside the cave with her hyena, hoping to ambush whomever comes near. In Subtier 4–5, two gnolls lie in wait with their hyenas. If the PCs deal damage to a gnoll, they notice that the gnoll's blood is tainted with the same green fluid that trickles from its maw.

Subtier 1–2 (CR 3)

MANA WASTES GNOLL CR 2

Gnoll Mana Wastes mutant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 155, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Bestiary* 28)

CE Medium aberration
(augmented humanoid, gnoll)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.;
Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 natural)
hp 13 (2d8+4)
Fort +5, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects
DR 5/cold iron; **Immune** disease, poison; **SR** 13

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee spear +4 (1d8+4/x3), slam –1 (1d4+1 plus disease) or
slam +4 (1d4+4 plus disease)
Ranged longbow +1 (1d8+2/x3)

TACTICS

Before Combat The gnoll attempts to ambush the PCs, even though she isn't particularly stealthy. At the first chance she gets, she shoots an arrow at the nearest PC, starting

SCALING ENCOUNTER A

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of 4 PCs.

Subtier 1–2: The gnoll, fearing the cloaker's return, has the shaken condition.

Subtier 4–5: Replace the two gnoll champions with Mana Wastes gnolls that use the same statistics from Subtier 1–2.

the fight from a distance.

During Combat The gnoll fires her bow at the PCs until they enter melee range, then switches to attacking with her spear and slam attacks.

Morale The gnoll assumes that the PCs are allied with the cloaker and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 10, **Con** 15, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 6
Base Atk +1; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18
Feats Power Attack
Skills Stealth +0
Languages Gnoll

SQ deformed leg, disease

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** chain shirt, composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, spear, climber's kit

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deformed Leg The gnoll's deformed leg reduces its base speed by 10 feet and grants it a +4 racial bonus to CMD.

Disease (Su) The Mana Wastes gnoll carries a deadly magical contagion that it spreads with its slam attacks.

Mana fever: injury; save Fort DC 13 *onset* 1d4 minutes; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d2 Con damage, 1d2 Cha damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

HYENA CR 1

hp 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 179, see page 27)

TACTICS

During Combat The hyena waits for the PCs to attack the gnoll, then it focuses its attacks on the strongest-looking PC.

Morale The hyena flees if it is reduced to 3 or fewer hit points, or if the gnoll falls unconscious.



MANA WASTES GNOLL

Subtier 4–5 (CR 6)

MANA WASTES GNOLL CHAMPIONS (2) CR 3

Gnoll Mana Wastes mutant fighter 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 155, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Bestiary* 28)

CE Medium aberration (augmented humanoid, gnoll)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 29 each (3 HD; 2d8+1d10+7)

Fort +8, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1; +4 vs. mind-affecting effects

DR 5/cold iron; **Immune** disease, poison; **SR** 14

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk longsword +8 (1d8+5), slam +3 (1d4+2 plus disease) or
slam +8 (1d4+7 plus disease)

Ranged composite longbow +3 (1d8+5/x3)

TACTICS

Before Combat The gnolls attempt to ambush the PCs.

During Combat The gnolls fire their bows at the PCs until the PCs enter melee range, and then switch to attacking with their longsword and slam attacks.

Morale The gnolls assume that the PCs are allied with the cloaker and fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

Feats Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Step Up

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +5, Survival +3

Languages Gnoll

SQ disease, shattered mind

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Other Gear** mwk chain shirt, composite longbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows, mwk longsword, 10 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Su) The Mana Wastes gnolls carry a deadly magical contagion that they spread with their slam attacks. *Mana fever*: injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *onset* 1d4 minutes; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d2 Con damage, 1d2 Cha damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Shattered Mind The gnolls take a –2 penalty to Intelligence, but gain a +2 racial bonus on Will saves.

HYENAS (2) CR 1

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 179, see page 27)

TACTICS

During Combat The hyenas wait for the PCs to attack the gnolls, and then focus their attacks on the strongest-looking PC. They flank with each other or with the gnolls whenever possible.

Morale A hyena flees if it is reduced to 3 or fewer hit points, or if both of the gnolls fall unconscious.

Development: A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Survival check (DC 16 in Subtier 4–5) notices footprints of a tiny humanoid wearing shoes leaving the nearby cave, perhaps a very young human or a halfling child. There is no corresponding set of footprints entering the cave. The cave holds a dim lingering aura of profane energy, which the PCs can observe with *detect evil*. If the PCs enter the cave, read or paraphrase the following.

Pictographs on the walls of this shallow cave show an indistinct winged creature navigating through a sea of swirling patterns and black dots. A clumsily constructed altar sits at the center of the cave. Dozens of small niches are carved into the wall, most filled with an odd assortment of items; teeth, scraps of clothing, a jar of white liquid, a wooden staff, several pieces of parchment, a cloth pouch, a leather satchel, and several identical wooden dolls.

Amenira tracked the cloaker to its hideout here. Although the investigator was prepared for a fight, the cloaker managed to ambush her by hiding among the shadows of the cave’s ceiling. The cloaker bested her in combat, but before it killed her, she enacted a last ditch plan to cast her soul into one of her dolls. She attempted to continue the fight in her new form, but the cloaker panicked and fled. It later returned to move her body elsewhere (see area C2). The footprints that the PCs may have noticed outside are the doll’s footprints. They originate from one of the niches in the wall.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check knows that this altar is dedicated to madness. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (planes) check recognizes that it is an altar of the Outer God Azathoth. The PCs notice dried blood on the altar that has been sloppily wiped away with a DC 15 Perception check (DC 18 in Subtier 4–5). This is gnoll blood that has a faint green tint to it.

Treasure: The teeth are a mixture of human and gnoll teeth, and the white liquid in the jar is rancid cashew milk. The three wooden dolls are of exceptionally high quality and are almost identical—they look like the soulbound doll Nira (see page 16), except they do not have branches growing out of them and their necks are not broken. The wooden staff is masterwork quarterstaff covered in obscure symbols of Nethys. PCs can identify these symbols with a successful DC 15 Knowledge religion check; PCs who worship Nethys reduce the DC of this skill check by 5. The cloth pouch is a spell component pouch. Several items in this room are magical. Two of the pieces of parchment are a *scroll of speak with plants* and a *scroll of mount* (CL 5th), and the leather satchel, which once belonged to a gunslinger from Alkenstar, contains an *oil of silence* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 313), three +1 *seeking bullets*, and one

tracer bullet (*Ultimate Equipment* 162). In Subtier 4–5, the leather pouch also contains a single *lesser burrowing bullet* (*Ultimate Equipment* 153).

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

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 141 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 326 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 511 gp.

THE TOWN OF MERCY

The town of Mercy rests a mile south of the banks of the Ustradi River. A wooden palisade encircles a collection of its approximately one hundred wooden buildings. Hardy trees laden with red and yellow fruit dot the surrounding landscape. The road leads to a wide gate, which bears a prominent sign with orange-painted letters.

The PCs arrive in Mercy 1 hour before sunset, passing through fields of cashew trees. The sign attached to the gate reads, "Mercy does not allow dishonesty, firearms, or large weapons within town limits. Respect the curfew."

As the PCs approach, **Sheriff Molume** (LG male augmented human expert 4/warrior 1) opens the gate. Molume acts as the town's sheriff, head gardener, and carriage agent. In performing his duties, he is firm and fair with a dark, dry sense of humor. The sheriff is the only person in Mercy who carries weapons. He greets the PCs with a neutral but polite, "Welcome to Mercy. I'm Sheriff Molume, and I keep the peace around here. As you can see from the sign, we don't allow people to walk around with large weapons around here. Before I let you inside, I need to ask you to hand them over." If they comply with his request, the sheriff stores all of their weapons except light melee weapons and quarterstaves in a weapons locker in the carriage house. He notices any hidden weapons that a PC carries unless the PC succeeds at a DC 20 Sleight of Hand check to conceal them. If the PCs hand over their weapons without significant protest and the sheriff does not catch them hiding weapons, the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks against everyone in Mercy for the rest of the scenario.

Once he has collected the PC's weapons, the sheriff explains the terms of their stay. "We pray and attend

temple twice daily, once at sunrise and once just after sundown. We ask that you stay inside the guesthouse from 1 hour before sunset until 1 hour after sunrise. That gives you 10 hours each day to wander around. When you hear the triple bell you can leave the guesthouse, and when the triple bells ring again, return to the guesthouse and draw the curtains. Curfew begins shortly."

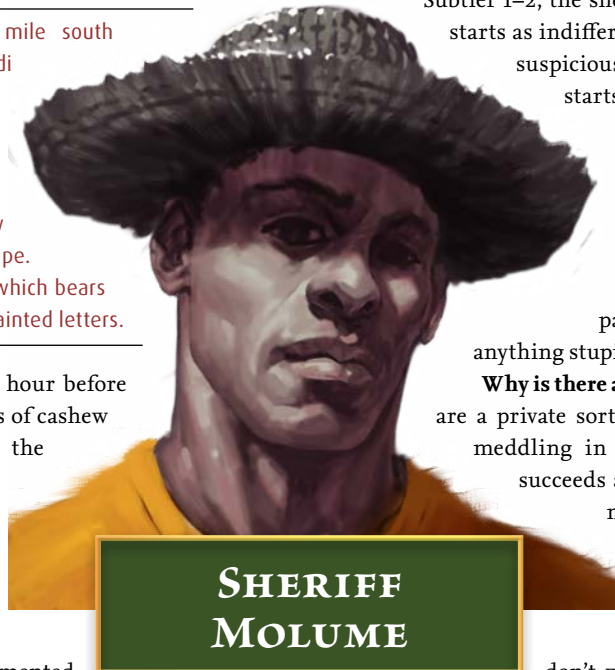
The PCs may have additional questions for Sheriff Molume. Any time the PCs speak to the sheriff during the scenario, he provides the answers listed below. In Subtier 1–2, the sheriff's attitude toward the PCs starts as indifferent. In Subtier 4–5, he is more suspicious of outsiders, and his attitude starts as unfriendly.

What do you consider dishonest? "Trying to go around twisting the definition of 'dishonest', for one. Use your common sense, remember how your parents raised you, and don't do anything stupid."

Why is there a curfew? "The people of Mercy are a private sort and don't we want outsiders meddling in our ceremonies." A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Sense Motive check notices that the sheriff is telling the truth, but that he is also omitting significant details. The main reason that the people of Mercy don't want outsiders poking around is not to prevent them from seeing their ceremonies to Robori, but rather to prevent them from seeing the town's children.

Which deity do the people here worship? "We worship Robori, the God of Trees. He grows at the center of the village and protects the town with his blessed Circle of Life. You can speak with the priests if you would like to convert." A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check notices that he does not say Robori's name with particular reverence. If the PCs press further, he says, "Three things I don't discuss with strangers: politics, religion, or marriage. No offense, but you outsiders usually give weird advice." The sheriff shakes his head in bewilderment.

Do you know Amenira? "Of course. She lives in the orange house on the west side of town. She's been hanging around Mercy for about a year now. Every month, she goes into Alkenstar to send letters to her family. She's not a proper one of us, but she's nice enough, and follows the rules, so we don't mind her sticking around. She makes good toys for the children. Or at least, she used to. She's been in Alkenstar a mighty long time. I would've thought



MERCY'S ODDITIES

The small, cloistered community has given rise to several traditions that may seem bizarre or creepy to outsiders. Below are some examples of traditions that the PCs come across, and the reasons behind them. The GM is free to add others if she wishes.

The villagers wear wooden armor, full helmets, and thick leather greaves and gloves when picking cashews. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (nature) check knows that juice from the cashew fruit is acidic enough to burn flesh.

Some pockets of Mercy smell like rotten vegetables. These areas are where the children play. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception or Survival check notices dozens of small footprints. A PC who succeeds at this check by 5 or more also finds a large bit of yellowish folded skin, a piece of plantlike flesh that shed off of one of the children while he was playing.

The townsfolk all wear matching orange tunics and slacks with yellowish-orange scarves and belts. The priests' clothing is made of a slightly finer material. The bright orange color of the robes comes from a dye made from an onionlike plant. After many washes, the color begins to fade, and the folk repurpose the cloth into scarves and belts.

she'd be back by now. Maybe she decided to go back to city life, but it's awfully rude of her not to at least stop by and say goodbye first."

How long Amenira been gone? The sheriff regards the PCs suspiciously, and asks them why they want to know. If the PCs provide a plausible reason and succeed at a DC 14 Diplomacy check, he tells them that she has been gone for 2 months. In Subtier 4–5, the PCs must improve his attitude to indifferent with a DC 15 Diplomacy check before he is willing to share this information.

What happens if we break rules? "Try not to, all right? We'd rather not have to kick you out of town."

Is there a vampire in the area? "I've heard rumors about one, but I haven't seen any evidence. There sure are a lot of bats though. The cashew fruit draws them in. I hate the little flying rats."

Is anyone missing from the town? "No, everyone's in town. Well, except Amenira, if you count her."

Why do you seclude the children away from outsiders? The sheriff's shoulders stiffen, and he tailors his answer to only address the points that the PCs bring to light. He says, "We mind our own. We provide free food and shelter to those that need it. We tend to our garden and we raise our children right, away from the corrupting influences of the outside world." If the PCs provide enough details that the sheriff cannot deflect their concerns simply, he

continues, "Outsiders don't understand and fear the worst. It's none of your business anyway." The PCs can press him further with a successful DC 19 Diplomacy check (DC 22 in Subtier 4–5). If they succeed at this check, the sheriff sighs heavily and continues, "Since you don't seem likely to leave well enough alone, I'll tell you this much—its part of how we grow up here in Mercy. We all went through that part of our lives and came out stronger than before. Why don't you ask people in Alkenstar what they think of people with the touch of the Wastes about them? I'm sure they'd be more than happy to fill your ears with hateful drivel about 'mutants.' We're different than what you see out deep in the Wastes, but would they understand that?"

Once the PCs have finished asking the sheriff questions, he escorts them to the guesthouse, a large building at the edge of town that the people of Mercy leave open for visitors. No one else is currently visiting Mercy, so the PCs have the building to themselves.

Before he leaves, the sheriff points out a large box near the guesthouse's front door with an orange flag in it, and explains that it is their message box. He assures them that the townsfolk always provide for their visitors, and that they will deliver food to the box three times a day. Additionally, he tells the PCs that if they need anything outside of curfew, they should place the orange flag on the box to signal him or someone else to come over.

As the sheriff promised, the villagers deliver baskets of food to the message box at sunrise, noon, and sunset—fresh raw vegetables, berries, onion bread, cashew milk, and cashews, as well as jugs filled with fresh, clear water. The town's high priestess, Zuri, knows that the water here is poisonous to outsiders, so she casts *purify food and drink* on the water before delivering it to the PCs. If the PCs eat local food or drink local water that has not been purified, they do not suffer immediate effects. However, a saving throw in area C3 becomes more difficult (see page 22). More information on Zuri appears in the Temple of Robori section on page 13.

Exploring Mercy

The PCs can investigate the areas of Mercy in any order. The most prominent landmarks in the town are Amenira's painted house and the temple of Robori, which is next to a spectacular twisted tree with vanilla orchids growing up and around the trunk. If the PCs are at a loss of where to start their investigation, the sheriff or someone else in Mercy suggests that they visit the temple. The PCs may also chose to visit artisan's square to investigate the rivalry between the town's blacksmiths and carpenters, the carriage house to retrieve their weapons, or a villager's house. The villagers' houses are simple one-room thatched cottages, each of which has a thriving garden. Many of the houses keep their windows covered in orange curtains at all

times. More details about each of Mercy's locations appear starting on page 12. If the PCs wish to explore other areas, such as the fields, there are no specific clues for them to find beyond what they can find from talking to the townsfolk. The townsfolk are usually awake an hour before sunrise and working by sunrise.

If the PCs wait until late at night, breaking curfew is not difficult. By three hours past sunset, everyone in Mercy is in bed. Each hour that a PC is outside after dark, she can attempt a DC 23 Perception check to notice what appears to be a small child following her. She walks with an unusual lurching motion and her head hangs at an odd angle as if under great weight. This figure is Nira, the soulbound doll that holds the last fragments of Amenira's soul. If the PCs find her, she wordlessly offers them the scrunched up scroll in her hand. It is a *scroll of enter image* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 219), the spell she used to gain information about the children in town. She then says, "I am Nira. I do not know you. You are not from Mercy. You find Mercy. You find murder." Nira is extremely disoriented by her existence as a doll, but her desires to find someone to uncover the mysteries of Mercy and to avenger her murder drive her to wander the streets each night. She does not remember any information about her investigation, other than the following statement, "Dolls see why children hide." However, if the PCs present her with information that they find in their investigations before they reach area C, she eagerly confirms it, though she seems perplexed by false information. If the PCs let her, she stays in the guesthouse with them. Her attitude toward the PCs is friendly unless they show her hostility.

The People of Mercy

The townsfolk are sternly polite, though reasonably suspicious of outsiders. They all wear orange shirts and orange belts and scarves that have faded toward yellow. They are usually indifferent to the PCs for the purpose of Diplomacy checks. A typical person in Mercy has a Charisma score of 8, a total Sense Motive skill bonus of +0, and a Will save bonus of +0. If you need statistics for a person in Mercy, use the ones for a pig farmer (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 256) without the animals or gold pieces. If the PCs talk to the people of Mercy while breaking curfew, the villagers' starting attitude is unfriendly. In Subtier 4–5, the villagers are more wary of outsiders, and DC of all Diplomacy checks to influence them increases by 3. See the Gathering Information in Mercy section below for information on what the villagers know.

The villagers react negatively whenever the PCs break the rules of Mercy. In addition to the rules posted on the town gates, the townsfolk maintain several unspoken taboos, which are detailed in **Player Handout #2: Unspoken Rules of Mercy** on page 25. As the PCs learn

these rules, either by speaking with the villagers or by acquiring **Player Handout #2** in the painted house (see page 13), they can garner a more favorable reaction from the villagers.

For each rule that the PCs break during a conversation with a group of villagers, they take a cumulative –2 penalty on Diplomacy checks to influence that group. If the PCs succeed at a DC 15 Sense Motive check while they are breaking a rule, they notice that the villagers seem displeased with something. If they succeed at a DC 20 Sense Motive check, they notice which of their behaviors is offensive. Until the PCs discover the rule against blue clothing, there is a 25% chance that a given PC is wearing some piece of clothing with blue on it. The GM may forgo rolling this chance for players who have described the colors of their characters' attire. Each time the PCs break a known rule, either the rule against dishonesty or large weapons, or a taboo that the villagers have explicitly taught them, this –2 penalty applies to all of the PCs' Diplomacy checks to influence the villagers for the rest of the scenario. Penalties for breaking known rules across multiple encounters stack.

It is difficult to avoid the sheriff while he is nearby—his bonuses on Perception and Sense Motive checks are both +10—but his work takes him all over Mercy over the course of the day, and so the easiest way to evade him is to wait for his duties to take him elsewhere. His Will save modifier is +6. If further statistics for the sheriff are necessary, use the ones for a barkeep (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 303).

Gathering Information in Mercy

The PCs are likely to speak with Mercy's villagers. The townsfolk are willing to share some of their knowledge about various topics. Read or paraphrase this information as appropriate.

Amenira: If the villagers' attitude toward the PCs is at least indifferent, they explain, "A woman named Amenira lives in the painted house and makes toys for the children. She's an outsider, but she dresses like one of us. If she would convert to Robori, maybe she could join us someday. She's been gone for a while now." If the PCs improve a villager's attitude to friendly, he also shares, "Amenira has been gone for two months now, and people are starting to worry about her. No one remembers her saying anything about being gone for longer than her usual trips back to Alkenstar to send letters to her family." If a PC asks a friendly villager about Amenira's toys, he says, "Her favorite ones to make are dolls. She has an odd habit of making dolls that look like her." Finally, the first time the PCs ask a helpful villager about Amenira, the villager confesses, "We were all suspicious of Amenira when she showed up. The sheriff told us that he would keep an eye on her and that we should go about our lives. I'm ashamed to say I disobeyed him and started

following Amenira. I saw her wandering off after curfew, and the sheriff caught me skulking in the bushes like a bandit. I should have trusted the sheriff. Sure, she breaks curfew, but she keeps to herself, roaming the Wastes for Robori knows what reason.”

Bats: A villager explains, “The bats have always been part of life in Mercy. Some of them feed on the cashew fruits, and others on the insects that our crops draw. They can be real pests sometimes, but some people like them, even enough to keep them as pets.”

Mana Storm: The villagers share that Robori saved the town from the mana storm. If the PCs improve a townspeople’s attitude to at least friendly, she adds “When Robori saved us, big trees with white bark and yellow leaves appeared in the sky and formed a shield. I’ve never seen trees like that. The storm rolled right over them.” These trees were a manifestation of the Verdant Spark’s power.

Robori: If the villagers’ attitude is at least indifferent, they explain, “Robori is the God of Trees. He lives in the tree at the center of town, and protects us all from harm, and makes the plants grow. Talk to High Priestess Zuri at the temple if you want to learn more.”

The Rules of Mercy: If the PCs improve a villager’s attitude to at least friendly, that villager shares two of the unspoken rules of Mercy from **Player Handout #2**. The villagers don’t think of these rules as a list, and instead speak of them in terms of “things that just aren’t right to do,” sprinkled among oddly specific rude behaviors like “don’t throw food at people” and “don’t fall asleep in the middle of the street.”

Vampire: Unless a villager’s attitude toward the PCs is at least friendly, she walks away if the PCs mention a vampire. A friendly villager cautions the PCs that it is bad luck to talk about the vampire. A helpful villager sighs, takes the PCs out of earshot of other people in Mercy, and explains, “The people who have seen the vampire say it flies through the air on giant wings. It has a horrible maw filled with sharp teeth and a tail with a stinger as long as a sickle blade.” A PC who hears this description and succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check realizes that the “vampire” is actually a cloaker.

The Plants of Mercy

After spending half an hour in Mercy, the PCs can attempt a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check. PCs who succeed at this check realize that something is very odd about the plants in town: they are exceptionally healthy despite the harsh climate. The townsfolk are growing garden crops that typically grow poorly together, as well as crops that are not in season. Crops that require enormous amounts of pollination flourish despite a marked lack of bees in the area. If the PCs investigate

this oddity with *detect magic*, they find no magical auras. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (nature) check remembers that a renegade druid named Ghorus created a new form of plant life that could survive the blighted landscape of the Mana Wastes many centuries ago.

The PCs may also chose to investigate by casting *speak with plants*. The plants of Mercy are cheerful and eager to converse. If the caster succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or Sense Motive check, she can tell that the plants are accustomed to conversation. The plants can feel their connection to the Verdant Spark 3 miles south and endlessly talk with it. Not being very bright, the plants can’t effectively communicate who or what is speaking to them, and they describe their conversations with overwhelmingly positive but nonspecific terms, such as happiness, light, and love. Most of the plant’s statements are variations on the following three quotes.

“We eat the food the earth provides us!” The plants insist that they “eat” from the earth itself. A PC who succeeds at a DC 12 Knowledge (nature) check knows that plants typically draw their energy from the sun.

“We love the daylight! Warm and bright!” The plants repeat these phrases when they don’t understand a question the PC asks.

“The old tree in the center is mean!” The plants can’t really explain why the tree is mean. They don’t like it because it never participates in their group communication with the Verdant Spark.

Oddly the plants give little thought to water, and don’t talk about it unless the PCs ask directly. They aren’t particularly interested in the “sky water that fell a long time ago”, any more than they are interested in the way the wind blows.

The tree in the center of town reacts differently to the PCs (see the Temple of Robori section on page 13).

ARTISANS’ SQUARE

There is a fierce rivalry between the carpenters and the blacksmiths as to who is the most useful to the townsfolk. The carpenters build and repair the walls and homes but the blacksmiths provide them with the necessary nails and metal tools. The first morning the PCs approach the artisan’s square, which is just south of the guesthouse, they overhear a heated argument to this effect between the two groups of craftspeople.

If the PCs attempt to intervene in this angry debate, they must succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check to calm down the participants. When the discussion becomes more civil, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices children in the distance wearing the same orange garb as the other villagers; their hands, arms, and faces are covered in what appears to be bandages.

Some adults quickly usher the children out of view. The PCs' reputation with the townsfolk isn't damaged if they see the children, as the villagers blame themselves for letting the children linger outside for too long. The villagers dodge questions about the children's "bandages." If the PCs' questioning is particularly aggressive or protracted, the townsfolk send someone to get the sheriff, who escorts the PCs back to the guesthouse and asks them to stop causing trouble.

CARRIAGE HOUSE

The carriage house holds several large wagons. It is also the home of Sheriff Molume, and hosts the largest garden in Mercy. The sheriff spends the middle portion of the day tending his garden. A small bell tower is attached the southern side of the building. The sheriff rings this bell to signal the beginning and end of curfew each day. If the PCs seek out the sheriff to ask him more about Mercy beyond the questions detailed in the Town of Mercy section on page 9, he launches into a ramblingly dull account of marriages, children, and construction in an attempt to bore the PCs into leaving.

If PCs wish to retrieve their weapons, they must break into the weapons locker inside the carriage house. The locker is secured with a simple lock (DC 20 Disable Device to unlock). Sheriff Molume carries the keys with him at all times. If PCs return their weapons before sunrise, when the sheriff checks to make sure that the weapons are still in the locker, no one is the wiser. If the sheriff notices the PCs have taken their weapons, either because the PCs leave signs of their entry into the carriage house, or because PCs carry their retrieved weapons openly, he doesn't confront them. However, if the PCs walk around with weapons drawn in front of the townsfolk, the sheriff tracks them down and demands that they return the weapons to him immediately.

PAINTED HOUSE

This well-kept wooden building, painted in festive shades of orange, is the only painted structure in Mercy. A pair of cashew trees flanks its front entrance.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) check realizes that this house was built in the last few years, and that it is newer than most other buildings in Mercy. After several months living in the guesthouse, Amenira convinced the villagers to let her build her own home. She painted it orange in an attempt to show respect for local traditions while still acknowledging her status as an outsider. The interior is a mess of workbenches, tools, toys, and dolls in varying stages of completion. A PC who succeeds at a DC Perception 15 check notices that

this house's occupant packed up weapons, armor, and other items before leaving in a hurry.

Amenira quickly deduced that the town's great secret centered on the children. She created dolls and toys for the children—many of which had her face on them—then used the spell *enter image* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 219) to spy on the children through the toys. She observed the metamorphosis of the children and vowed to stay in the town and assist in any way she could, while slowly unraveling the mystery behind their transformation.

A search of the toy maker's bedroom reveals her spellbook and her journal. She has not written in the journal in some time. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check or a DC 12 Linguistics check, or who spends several hours reading the entire journal, finds a page within dictating the rules of Mercy. Give the players **Player Handout #2: Unspoken Rules of Mercy**. The soulbound doll Nira rests on the bed during the day, but hides underneath it if she hears the PCs approaching. She does not take the time to remake the bed before hiding; the bed shows clear signs of a small child sleeping there and also contains small pieces of snapped twigs. The PCs find Nira hiding under the bed if they succeed at a DC 23 Perception check.

Treasure: Amenira also left her spellbook on her desk. It contains *alarm*, *burning hands*, *comprehend languages*, *dispel magic*, *enter image*^{APG}, *feather fall*, *flaming sphere*, *floating disk*, *glitterdust*, *hydraulic push*^{APG}, *identify*, *locate object*, *mage armor*, *memory lapse*^{APG}, *resist energy*, and *sleep*. In Subtier 4–5, Amenira also left a *scroll of make whole* (CL 12th), a jar of *defoliant polish* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 291) in her desk drawer, as well as a coin pouch containing 20 gp.

Rewards: If the PCs do not search the painted house, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 56 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 116 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 176 gp.

TEMPLE OF ROBORI

The temple is the largest building in Mercy. Wooden pews line the east and west side of the building, with a garden on the south. An enormous, twisted tree takes up the north side of the building. A pleasant walkway snakes around the tree up to the temple opening, which has no door. Animals made of twisted twigs adorn the branches, and vanilla orchids flourish in the shade.

No matter how high of a result the PCs get on a Knowledge (religion) check, they do not recognize the god Robori, because Robori is a fake deity whose worship is isolated to this town.

As strange growths sprouted on the children born in the town and began to encase their bodies, the village descended into chaos, and a few people in the town spoke of sending the children off into the Mana Wastes before they infected the rest of the village. A desperate and charismatic villager invented an explanation, based around the large tree at the center of town. He declared that the transformation was a blessing from Robori, God of Trees, and the children would flourish despite the strange changes they were undergoing. He had only hoped to buy time to protect the children, but when the transformation proved to be a boon, the villagers flocked to his fake religion and he, dumbfounded, became the high priest of Robori. The granddaughter of the original high priest, **Zuri** (N female augmented human adept 1), serves as high priestess today, and is one of the few people in Mercy who knows that Robori is not a real deity. If statistics for her are necessary, use the ones for an acolyte (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 244) without all of the listed weapons and armor. She typically prepares *bless* and *cure light wounds*.

The tree at the center of town is ancient—before the ghorans fled the site of their failed experiment, they buried what they could of their fallen siblings in the earth, and marked their grave by planting this tree above it. As a result, the Verdant Spark doesn't communicate with this tree. PCs breaking curfew might catch a glimpse of a ceremony involving multiple townsfolk getting dowsed in bright orange liquids at the base of the tree while the priests call out “wood blessings” and “flower dreams” to the folk. The scent of the strange oil, similar to that of dried hay, lingers for hours as it seeps into the tree roots. Zuri instituted this ritual 20 years ago, and has not noticed that the liquid has begun to poison the tree. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or Survival check (DC 18 in Subtier 4–5) notices the roots of the tree are afflicted with a blight, though the branches and trunk are not. The tree will not survive another decade at this rate. If the PCs converse with the tree with *Speak with Plants*, it talks about “biting snakes in the earth”, a reference to the poisoning oil, and frequently declares, “I am Robori.” If the PCs figure out that the oil is the source of the tree's woes and inform the high priestess privately, she declares them “blessed children of Robori”, and the PCs gain a +4 bonus on all Diplomacy checks to influence the people of Mercy. If the PCs make this observation in front of townspeople who are not in the clergy of Robori, they instead gain only a +2 bonus—some townsfolk respect the PCs more for looking out for Robori, while others see them as meddling heretics.

The priests of Robori, particularly the high priestess, are elusive in conversation. They insist the tree is the deity Robori and that it protects the town; further, they have no interest in proving these claims. However, they are happy to bless the party with a prayer to Robori, “Wood of the tree speaks a whisper to thee. The sun rises soon.

To you, a boon. Such is the will of Robori.” Only the high priestess has divine spells. If the PCs ask one of the other priests about spellcasting, they explain that only the high priestess has received that “highest among blessings”, but that she saves them for times of dire need.

VILLAGER'S HOME

Three sets of orange robes hang from the clothesline outside of this simple cottage. Two of them are sized for adults, while the other one is sized for a child. The orange flag on this house's message box is raised. Orange curtains cover all of the windows.

This encounter represents a typical house in Mercy. Three people share this cottage: Kato the weaver, Efua the cashew picker, and their 11-year-old daughter Roboria. This family also has a pet bat that roosts in the rafters during the day. The family's message box contains a pot of skin ointment. On the first full day in town, the box also contains a letter from the Sheriff, reminding the family to “be mindful of the curtains with visitors in town”.

Roboria's transformation is particularly advanced, with plantlike growths covering almost every inch of her skin, so she does not leave the house. She spends her time helping her father with the weaving and playing with a collection of wooden toys, including a doll that looks just like the dolls in the painted house (see page 13) and in area A. Her father applies copious amounts of the ointment to Roboria's skin throughout the day to relieve the itching.

B. FEAST OF BATS (CR 2 OR CR 5)

On the third night that the PCs are in Mercy, a group of bats descends upon the town, goaded by the cloaker's unnerving cries. The GM may move this encounter to an earlier night if the PCs finish their investigations particularly quickly. This encounter happens in the market square. The guesthouse where the PCs are staying is the large building on the northern end of the map.

Screeches fill the air, accompanied by the sound of thousands of wings crashing through leaves and branches, and the occasional “thud” of something hitting the ground from a great height. The people of Mercy are out in the square, slinging rocks into the trees to frighten away the mass of bats attacking the town.

A swirling collection of shadows appears along the wall of the carriage house. As the people in the square cry out in surprise, the shadows collect themselves into distinct forms. A figure wearing a large cape flees from a small child who lurches forward with an unnatural gait.

There are four lit torches in sconces on the wall outside the guesthouse that the PCs may use against the bats. A PC can detach a torch as a move action.

B. Feast of Bats



1 square = 5 feet

Pathfinder Flip-Mat Classics: Town Square

SCALING ENCOUNTER B

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of 4 PCs.

Subtier 1–2: While most of the villagers in the square throw stones at the bat swarm, several of them teamed up to throw a pot of boiling water instead. The bat swarm begins the encounter with 10 hit points remaining.

Subtier 4–5: Remove one of the bat swarms.

Creatures: The villagers scatter at the sight of the unexpected shadows, which are the result of a *silent image* spell cast by the cloaker who killed Amenira. The capricious creature frequently changes its name; it is currently calling itself Delightful Smiling Shadow of Flight. The cloaker is currently disguised as a black tarp covering a market stall; a PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check (DC 29 in Subtier 4–5) sees through its disguise. The cloaker does not believe in coincidences, and it assumes that the PCs’ arrival in Mercy is of momentous importance. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perform check or a DC 17 Sense Motive check can tell this “performance” is an attempt to communicate.

A few rounds after the performance begins, a lone figure wanders into the square—the soulbound doll Nira. She calls out a single word: “Murder.” A sound like a sheet whipping through gale wind fills the air, followed by a renewed screeching of bats, as the cloaker takes flight. The cloaker gathers the bats and sets them against the PCs, but does not itself attack the PCs, choosing instead to fly above the bats.

Both Subtiers

NIRA CR 2

Variant soulbound doll
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*
2 255)

N Tiny construct

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural, +2 size)

hp 19 (3d10+3)

Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

DR 2/magic; **Immune** construct traits

Weaknesses susceptible to mind-affecting effects

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee thorn +4 (1d3–2)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +2)

3/day—*light*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*
1/day—*levitate*

Special Attacks splintering joints, splinterspray

TACTICS

During Combat After she appears in the square, Nira flees into the guesthouse. She leaves the door slightly ajar and watches the fight. If she believes that the PCs are doing poorly, she runs out and uses her splinterspray ability to assist them, and then retreats to the guesthouse.

Morale Nira hides or flees threats if at all possible. If cornered, she fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 7, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 11

Feats Improved Initiative, Toughness

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +13

Languages Common

SQ soul focus

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Susceptible to Mind-Affecting Effects (Ex) The weakened conviction of a soulbound doll’s soul makes it susceptible to mind-affecting effects, despite the fact that it is a construct.

Soul Focus (Su) Nira’s locket holds a piece of Amenira’s soul, functioning as the soul focus that powers the doll. As long as this locket remains intact, it can be used to animate another doll, using the same cost as creating a new construct. The soul fragment in the locket retains its personality and memories from its previous body or bodies. The locket has hardness 8, 12 hit points, and a break DC of 20.

Splintering Joints (Ex) As a swift action, Nira can cause vicious splinters and thorns to emerge from her joints, which deal 1d6 points of damage per round to any creature grappling her.

Splinterspray (Ex) Nira can unleash barrage of splinters and brambles from her body three times per day as a standard action. This effect creates a 15-foot conical burst of jagged splinters, dealing 3d6 points of piercing damage to all creatures in the area. A DC 11 Reflex saving throw halves this damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.



NIRA

SMILING SHADOW OF FLIGHT

CR 5

CE cloaker (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 47, see page 26)

hp 51

TACTICS

During Combat The cloaker flies overhead, using his moan ability to produce the unnerve effect. If the PCs start attacking him, he uses his shadow shift ability each round to create a *mirror image*. He does not attack the PCs.

Morale The cloaker flees if the PCs disperse all of the bats or if the PCs reduce it below 30 hit points. It also flees if the only swarms that remain have failed the saving throw against its unnerving moan's trance.

Subtier 1–2 (CR 2)

BAT SWARM

CR 2

hp 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 30, see page 26)

TACTICS

During Combat The bat swarm tries to attack as many PCs as possible.

Morale The swarm fights until the PCs disperse it or the cloaker flees, unless it fails a saving throw against the cloaker's unnerving moan.

Subtier 4–5 (CR 5)

BAT SWARMS (3)

CR 2

hp 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 30, see page 26)

TACTICS

During Combat The bat swarms spread out to attack as many PCs as possible.

Morale Each swarm fights until the PCs disperse it or the cloaker flees, unless it fails a saving throw against the cloaker's unnerving moan.

Development: If PCs reach this point with a penalty on Diplomacy checks to influence the townsfolk greater than -2 , the high priestess attempts to rile the crowd against them.

"The outsiders and their false gods have been not even two days in Mercy, and they have spit upon our hospitality by inviting a vampire into our home! They should be cast out! Cast out the outsiders! Cast out the outsiders and their false gods!"

The townsfolk attempt to forcibly escort the PCs out of town, with the sheriff maintaining order. He assures the PCs that he will fetch anything they've left in the guesthouse, and tells them not to even think of returning to Mercy until they have tracked down the vampire and dealt with it.

If, on the other hand, the PCs have a penalty on Diplomacy checks to influence the townsfolk no greater

than -2 (or if they have a bonus to those checks), the high priestess does not lead a charge against them, and the townsfolk do not blame the PCs for the vampire's appearance. The sheriff catches the eye of the PCs and says, "Let me get everyone calmed down and settled at home. I'll come by the guesthouse in half an hour and talk to you in private."

If the PCs return to the guesthouse, they have a chance to speak with the doll Nira, and later the sheriff when he returns. If they do not, the doll and sheriff both seek them out. See the Exploring Mercy section on page 10 for information about Nira's interactions with the PCs. Before they set off to track the cloaker, Nira attempts to express her desire to accompany them. It is up to the PCs whether they allow her to join them.

When the sheriff arrives, he looks weary. Read or paraphrase the following.

The sheriff sighs, "The world out there is full of evil and terrible things—undead horrors that live for thousands of years, dragons the size of cities, and forces from beyond our world that try to ruin everything they touch. I'm grateful for whatever it is that shields Mercy from storms, keeps us healthy, makes our crops grow, and protects us from monsters like whatever that thing was that swooped overhead today. Does Robori watch over us? Honestly, I'm not so sure, but I'm not as willing as most people around here to leave matters in the hands of faith alone. We need your help. I'm asking you to deal with that monster. Vampire or not, if it can make bats attack like that, it's a danger to our town, and I can't risk going off into the Wastes and leaving folk here undefended."

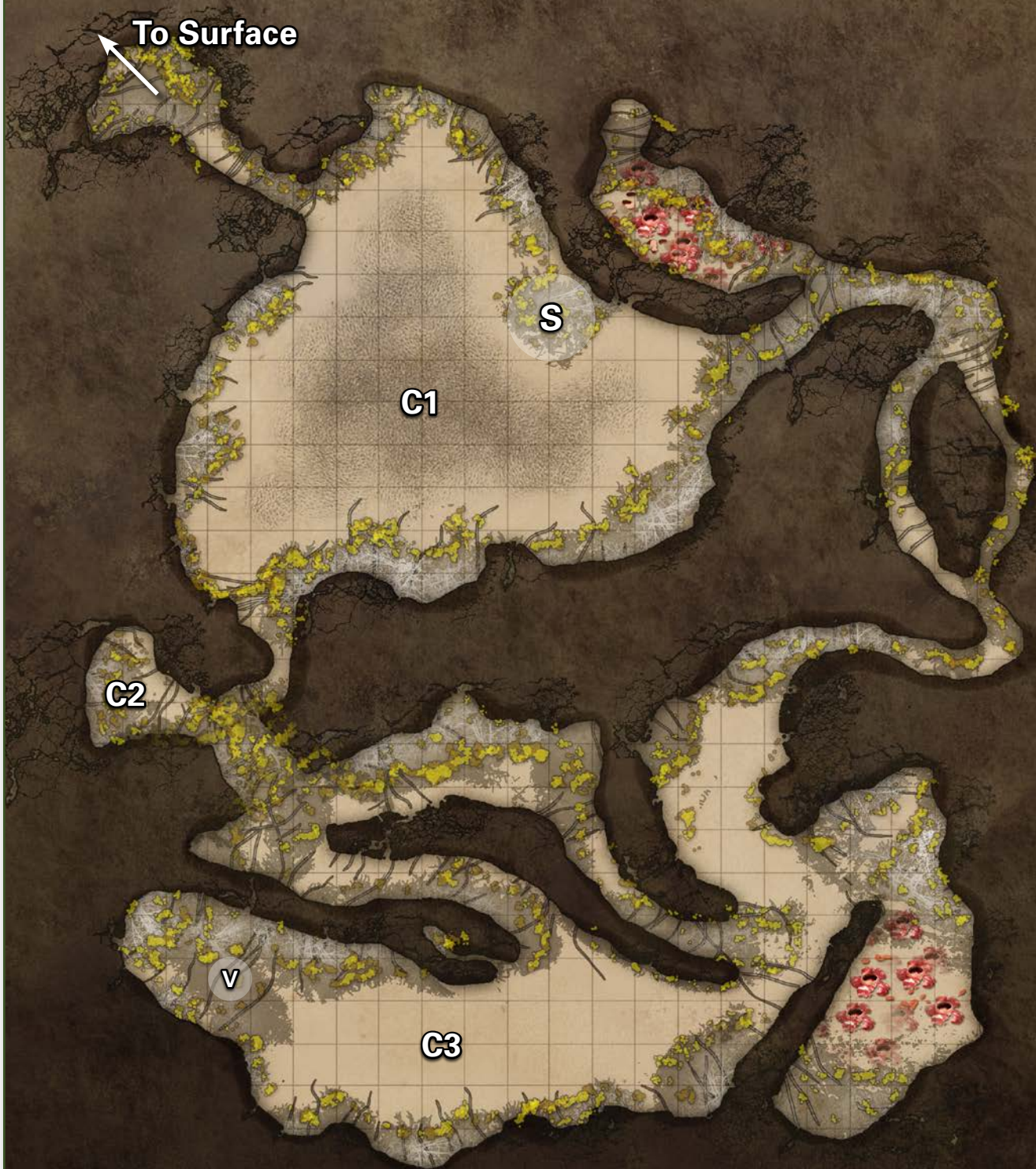
If the PCs agree to the task, he returns their weapons. He informs them that he's seen a figure like that flying with the bats quite a few times over the last few years, but it's never acted up like that, and he didn't want to worry the townsfolk. He suggests that they follow the bats back to wherever they live, and offers them additional treasure to assist them in their task: a longspear, a *scroll of scorching ray*, and a *wand of bless* with 20 charges remaining. He also presents them with a glowing arrow, stating "this arrow has been handed down in my family for generations. My great-grandmother used an arrow just like this one to strike through the heart of a wild creature that was trying to tempt people to a watery grave. It wouldn't feel right not to give you everything I can to help you defend Mercy." The arrow is a $+2$ *cold iron fey bane arrow*. In Subtier 4–5, he hands them a pair of $+4$ *fey bane arrows*, as well as a masterwork longspear.

Bats continue to fly out of Mercy to the south throughout the night, and they fly to and from the south on each subsequent night. Their flight path is easy to follow and leads to area C.

C. The Impossible Forest



To Surface



1 square = 5 feet

V : Verdant Spark

S : Smiling Shadow of Flight

Rewards: If the PCs are run out of town by the people of Mercy after the encounter with the bats, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 71 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 150 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 229 gp.

C. THE IMPOSSIBLE FOREST

Five miles south of Mercy, a dark crevice splits open the landscape. An oppressive heat pours out of the fracture, and the area smells like rotting flesh.

PCs must climb down for 30 feet before the crevice opens up into a narrow hallway leading to a vast cavern (area C1). Unless otherwise noted, the cavern is shrouded in darkness.

The descent is dark, warm, and claustrophobic. The PCs must succeed at a DC 5 Climb check to descend the first 15 feet without falling. Halfway down, slippery vines and tangles of branches make the climb more treacherous, increasing the Climb DC for the last 15 feet to DC 10. At the bottom of the crevice, the caves are thick with an underground forest, and trees grow out of the walls and ceiling at odd angles. The entire cavern emanates a moderate aura of transmutation and conjuration.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the two most prominent species of plant in this cavern. The trees are all part of clonal colony of quaking aspen trees, each connected to a single root system. These trees gain their name from the way their leaves shake at the slightest breeze. Quaking aspen trees should not be able to survive underground, and they do not appear anywhere else in the surrounding area. Nonetheless, they match the description the villagers may have given the PCs of the force that protected Mercy. The giant blossoms that reek of rotting flesh are parasitic plants called corpse flowers. They feed off the nutrients of other plants—in this case, the vines surrounding the trees.

In Subtier 4–5 only, the vegetation on the ground throughout the entire cavern is thick enough to count as difficult terrain. The plants in this forest do not respond to *Speak with Plants*.

C1. Delightful Smiling Shadow of Flight (CR 2 or CR 5)

The fissure widens and opens into an underground forest. A mass of leafless vines covers all of the cavern's walls, and a colony of trees with white bark and pale yellow leaves emerges from the walls and ceiling. Thousands of bats hang from the tree branches, and a thick layer of guano carpets the ground of hard-packed dirt.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER

Encounter C1 is an optional encounter. If fewer than 90 minutes remain in which to complete the scenario, the cloaker is not present in this area. In Subtier 1–2, do not run this encounter if Nira does not accompany the PCs to the impossible forest. If you do not run the encounter, the PCs spot the cloaker fleeing the cave in the direction of Alkenstar as they leave it after completing area C3. Shortly before they arrive back in Alkenstar, they find the cloaker by the side of the road, riddled with bullet holes.

SCALING ENCOUNTER C1

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a party of 4 PCs.

Subtier 1–2: The cloaker is terrified of the soulbound doll and has the shaken condition for the entirety of combat. The first time he takes damage from the doll's thorns, he is frightened for 1d4 rounds, and flees out of the cave. He returns to attack Nira once this duration wears off.

Subtier 4–5: The cloaker flees if he knocks two PCs unconscious at the same time or if it is reduced to 20 hit points or less.

In the southwest corner of the wall, the vines are particularly sparse. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices that the cavern continues behind a curtain of vines into area C2.

Creatures: If time permits, the PCs find the cloaker in this cavern. The creature reacts based on its warped perception of events since the PCs have arrived in town. In the lower subtier, it is convinced that the soulbound doll is a murderous being whose coming was foretold in a prophecy of Azathoth that it interpreted in the gnolls' ashes, and that its survival depends upon killing her first. The CR of the lower subtier encounter is adjusted to take into account Nira's assistance and the cloaker's focused tactics. In the higher subtier, the cloaker doesn't even notice the doll's presence, and instead believes, for its own inscrutable reasons, that Azathoth wants it to kill three people today. The bats in this cavern do not attack. If the PCs attack the bats, they flee rather than fighting back.

Both Subtiers

NIRA

CR 2

Variant soulbound doll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 255, see page 16)

N Tiny construct

hp 19 (3d10+3)

SCALING ENCOUNTER C3

Subtier 1–2: The yellow musk mother is disoriented by its separation from the artifact, and gains the sickened condition. Reduce the DC of the saving throw to resist the pollen spray ability by 2.

Subtier 4–5: Remove one yellow musk mother from the encounter.

TACTICS

During Combat Faced with creature who murdered her, Nira charges toward him in a fury, unleashing her splinterspray ability. If the cloaker grapples her, she activates her splintered joints ability.

Morale Nira fights to the death.

Subtier 1–2 (CR 2)

SMILING SHADOW OF FLIGHT **CR 5**

CE cloaker (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 47*, see page 26)

hp 51

TACTICS

Before Combat The cloaker uses its shadow shift ability to produce a *blur* effect.

During Combat The cloaker is terrified of Nira and wants to crush her until she stops moving. It attempts to engulf her and continues grappling her until she is destroyed. It only attacks the PCs if they come within its melee reach, lashing out with his tail attack. If Nira does not accompany the PCs to the cave, do not run this optional encounter.

Morale If the cloaker is reduced to fewer than 25 hit points, or if he destroys Nira, he flees.

Subtier 4–5 (CR 5)

SMILING SHADOW OF FLIGHT **CR 5**

CE cloaker (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 47*, see page 26)

hp 51

TACTICS

Before Combat The cloaker uses its shadow shift ability to produce a *mirror image* effect.

During Combat The cloaker opens combat with its nauseating moan. In melee, it targets the smallest PC first. He ignores Nira's presence.

Morale The cloaker flees if it is reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, or it has rendered at least three PCs unconscious at the same time—its latest interpretation of Azathoth's will is that three is a good number of people to kill today, and it assumes that anyone knocked unconscious is doomed to die, regardless of any evidence to the contrary (such as the PCs demonstrating their healing abilities).

C2. Secret Chamber

The vine-covered walls obscure this chamber from plain view. The ghorans used this room as a storage chamber. After the cloaker killed Amenira, it was afraid to let her out of its sight for too long, so it brought her body here. Amenira's body is wearing a set of orange robes like the ones that the people of Mercy wear. A PC who examines her body and succeeds at a DC 15 Heal check (DC 18 in Subtier 4–5) determines that she has been dead for 2 months, and identifies several bite marks on her body that were the cause of her death.

Treasure: Most of the items the ghorans left behind have long since decayed, but some magic items remain. A circular length of vine holds two spherical seedpods. One of the seedpods contains a *potion of desperate escape*, a bright purple liquid that functions simultaneously as a *potion of cure light wounds* and a *potion of vanish* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide 253*). The other holds a gray *potion of protection from alignments*, which has the properties of all of the *protection from chaos/evil/good/law* spells.

In Subtier 4–5, the first potion is instead a *potion of greater desperate escape*, which functions as a *potion of cure moderate wounds* and a *potion of invisibility*. There is also a third seedpod containing a *potion of resilience*, an orange liquid that functions as a *potion of bear's endurance* and a *potion of barkskin*.

Rewards: If the PCs do not discover this secret chamber, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

Subtier 1–2: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 72 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 223 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 375 gp.

C3. The Cradle of Life (CR 3 or CR 6)

The temperature rises toward the back of the cave. A tangle of vines spins and twists out of the rocky ground to cradle an enormous seedling. Both the seedling and the vines glow with a vibrant green light.

The two-foot wide seedling at one end of the cave, also known as the Verdant Spark, has an overwhelming magical aura of transmutation and conjuration.

Creatures: If the PCs remove the Verdant Spark from its cradle, it summons a yellow musk mother as defense (or three yellow musk mothers, in Subtier 4–5). Each yellow musk mother appears within 30 feet of the seedling, at a location of the seedling's choosing. If the PCs move the Verdant Spark more than 30 feet away from the cradle, the plants within the cave begin to wither and die, starting from the back of the cave. This withering has no effect on the yellow musk creatures beyond the effects listed in their statistics. If the PCs successfully reattach the seedling to its cradle, the plants revive, and

the yellow musk creatures disappear into the floor. See the Development section on page 22 for more details on reattaching the artifact, as well as information about what happens if the PCs attempt to communicate with the Verdant Spark.

Subtier 1–2 (CR 3)

YELLOW MUSK MOTHER CR 3

Variant yellow musk creeper (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285)

N Medium plant

Init +6; **Senses** plantsight, tremorsense 30 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 22 (4d8+9)

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

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee tendril +5 (1d4+4)

Space 5 ft., **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks create yellow musk spawn, feed, pollen spray

TACTICS

During Combat The yellow musk mother creates spawn to block the PCs exit, and attempts to hit PCs with their pollen spray whenever possible. If the PCs detach the Verdant Spark and move it more than 60 feet away from the yellow musk mother, the yellow musk mother takes 1d6 points of damage each round (DC 15 Fortitude save negates).

Morale The yellow musk mother fights to the death to protect the Verdant Spark. However, it cannot leave area **C**.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 15, **Con** 16, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills Perception +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Yellow Musk Spawn (Su) As a standard action, the yellow musk mother can gather the vegetation in a 5-foot-square of wall to create one yellow musk spawn (see below). This square of wall can be anywhere within area **C**. The yellow musk mother can only have one spawn active at a time—if it attempts to create a second, the first melds back into the nearest wall.

Feed (Ex) As a full-round action, a yellow musk creeper can bore dozens of tendrils into the brain of a helpless creature to feed, such as a creature entranced by its pollen. This attack inflicts 1d4 points of Wisdom damage per round. When a creature is reduced to 0 Wisdom, it dies.

Plantsight (Ex) The yellow musk mother sees all events that take place in area **C** as if it had eyes in all of the cave's walls. This ability also grants it line of effect for its create yellow musk spawn ability.

Pollen Spray (Ex) As a standard action, a yellow musk creeper can spray a cloud of pollen (ranged touch +4) at a single creature within 30 feet. The target must then succeed on a DC 14 Will save or be entranced for 1d6 rounds. An entranced creature can take no action other than to move at its normal speed into a space within the yellow musk mother's reach, at which point an entranced creature remains motionless and allows the creeper to insert tendrils into its brain.

YELLOW MUSK SPAWN CR —

Variant yellow musk zombie (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285, 288)

N Medium plant

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 12 (2d8+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Immune plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d6+4)

TACTICS

During Combat The spawn attacks the nearest creature.

Morale A yellow musk spawn fight to the death.

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Toughness^B

DESCRIPTION

This humanoid-shaped creature's body is comprised entirely of twisting vines covered in orange flowers.

Subtier 4–5 (CR 6)

YELLOW MUSK MOTHERS (3) CR 3

Variant yellow musk creeper (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285, see above)

TACTICS

During Combat The yellow musk mothers create spawn to block the PCs exit, then attempt to hit PCs with their pollen sprays whenever possible. If the PCs detach the Verdant Spark and move it more than 60 feet away from a yellow musk mother, that yellow musk mother takes 1d6 points of damage each round (DC 15 Fortitude save negates).

Morale The yellow musk mothers fight to the death to protect the Verdant Spark. However, they cannot leave area **C**.

YELLOW MUSK SPAWN CR —

Variant yellow musk zombie (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 285, 288, see above)

hp 12 (2d8+3)

TACTICS

Use the tactics from Subtier 1–2.

Development: Using *Speak with Plants*, the PCs can have a conversation with the Verdant Spark. Though far more intelligent than a normal plant, the seedling's mind has been dulled by years of dormancy. It communicates in dreamy tones, describing its connection to the plants of the surrounding region and the townsfolk of Mercy as if a loving mother would talk about her children. However, the Verdant Spark soon makes it clear that it wishes to change the entire world in the same way that it transformed the villagers if it is ever awoken from its slumber. When confronted with the idea that not everyone would accept such a fate, it doesn't understand why anyone would refuse its "loving embrace." It also warns the PCs that removing it from the cave will cause "the green to wither away."

If the PCs remove the Verdant Spark from its cradle, they can attempt to reattach it. The cradle reaches tendrils toward the seedling in an attempt to assist the PCs. Reattaching the seedling takes 5 minutes and requires a PC to succeed at a DC 18 Knowledge (arcana) check or a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check (these DCs increase to 21 and 18, respectively, in Subtier 4–5). If the PC fails this skill check, the desperate and overzealous cradle's vines grasp at her as well, potentially harming her (+10 to hit, 1d6 damage, or 3d6 damage in Subtier 4–5), after which the PCs can attempt the skill check again. If the PC fails this skill check by 5 or more, two such vines attack the PC, and then the cradle's glow dims for 24 hours. During this time, it does not respond to the PCs in any way and the Verdant Spark cannot be reattached.

The PC's proximity to the Verdant Spark exposes them to a more powerful version of the transformative disease that affected the adults who originally settled in Mercy, as detailed below. Once the PCs leave the cave, each humanoid PC must attempt a Fortitude save to resist the effects of this disease. Non-humanoid PCs and companion creatures, such as animal companions and familiars, are immune. The PCs take a –2 penalty on the initial saving throw because of the proximity of the artifact. Any PC who ate unpurified food or drank unpurified water from Mercy takes a further –2 penalty on all saving throws to resist the disease. Whenever a PC has taken any ability damage from this disease, she develops the same yellow growths as the children of Mercy, though they are more pronounced on the PCs. These growths itch, but not severely enough to impose mechanical penalties.

MERCY'S TRANSFORMATION

Type disease, ingested or inhaled; **Save** Fortitude DC 12 (DC 15 in Subtier 4–5)

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1 day

Effect 1d3 Con damage and 1d3 Cha damage;

Cure 2 consecutive saves

Treasure: A discarded amber necklace lies on the ground, holding a miniature version of the tree that populates this cave within. This necklace is worth 250 gp. Additionally, a seedpod next to the artifact contains one use of *dowsing syrup* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 292). In Subtier 4–5, this seedpod is attached to a *verdant vine* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 275).

Rewards: If the PCs do not discover the artifact, 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 312 gp.

Subtier 4–5: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 500 gp.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs remove the Verdant Spark from its cradle for more than a few minutes, many of the plants in and around Mercy begin to shrivel. If they then return to Mercy, the sheriff approaches them, his face full of horror, and asks, "What have you done? I cannot allow you in Mercy anymore. Leave, before anyone else sees you." At this point, it is not too late for the PCs to restore the seedling to its cradle, which returns the plants to their healthy state.

The return journey to Katapesh is largely uneventful, though if the PCs take Nira with them, the doll attracts strange looks and mutterings from other people who see her. Venture-Captain Roderus requests that the PCs provide him a detailed account of their journeys and discoveries. Refer to the secondary success conditions of the adventure for the information that he finds most interesting. If the PCs return with the Verdant Spark, he assures them that the Society will "research its full capabilities and put it to good use." If they do not, the venture-captain is disappointed, but if the PCs explain that they left the artifact in place to protect Mercy, he praises them for their prudence in considering when a mission should or should not be completed.

Once the PCs have completed their account, Roderus reaches under his desk and withdraws a fat pouch of coins. "I told you I would compensate you for the success of your investigation, and I am a man of my word." He distributes coins to the PCs. "Well done, Pathfinders. It's good to know I can rely on you for future missions."

Each PC who attempted at least one saving throw against the Mercy's transformation disease receives the Mercy's Blessing boon at the end of the adventure. If the PCs take Nira back to the Pathfinder Society and succeed at this adventure's secondary success condition, each PC receives the Nira's Gratitude boon on her Chronicle sheet.

Rewards: Venture-Captain Roderus rewards the PCs for the information that they discovered during the investigation. As long as the PCs complete at least 3 of the objectives from the secondary success condition, they

receive full rewards from the venture-captain. If they do not complete at least 3 of these objectives, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

Subtier 1–2: If the PCs complete only two objectives, reduce each PC's gold earned by 25 gp. If they complete only one, reduced each PC's gold earned by 50 gp. Finally, if they do not complete any of the listed objectives, reduce each PC's gold earned by 75 gp.

Out of Subtier: If the PCs complete only two objectives, reduce each PC's gold earned by 57 gp. If they complete only one, reduced each PC's gold earned by 115 gp. Finally, if they do not complete any of the listed objectives, reduce each PC's gold earned by 172 gp.

Subtier 4–5: If the PCs complete only two objectives, reduce each PC's gold earned by 90 gp. If they complete only one, reduce each PC's gold earned by 180 gp. Finally, if they do not complete any of the listed objectives, reduced each PC's gold earned by 270 gp.

Reporting Notes

If the PCs don't remove the Verdant Spark from its cradle, or if they successfully reattach it, check box A. If the PCs don't successfully reattach the seedling but leave it in Mercy, check box B. If the PCs give the Verdant Spark to the Pathfinder Society, check box C.

Primary Success Conditions

The PCs complete their primary mission if they locate the Verdant Spark, and either return it to Venture-Captain Roderus or explain to him why they decided to leave it in Mercy. Doing so earns each PC 1 Prestige Point.

Secondary Success Conditions

The PCs' secondary success conditions rely upon the success of their investigations in Mercy. If the PCs perform four or more of the following tasks, each PC earns 1 additional Prestige Point.

- Bring the Verdant Spark back to the Pathfinder Society.
- Locate Amenira's remains, and either determine her cause of her death or return her remains to the Pathfinder Society.
- Provide the venture-captain with a thorough summary of the beliefs of the cult of Robori, including the information from the description that either the sheriff or a townsman when asked about the religion and one other fact, such as the fact that the tree in the center of town calls itself Robori, or a description of a prayer ceremony.
- Tell the venture-captain that the Verdant Spark is connected to the flourishing plants in Mercy and the force that protected Mercy from the mana storm.
- Explain to the venture-captain that the children of Mercy are undergoing a transformation of some kind, and bring him back something he can use to investigate further, such as sketch of the condition, a sample of ointment, or a patch of the plantlike skin (a sample from the disease that the PCs may catch at the end of the scenario counts).
- Deliver the soulbound doll Nira to the Pathfinder Society in Katapesh.
- At the GM's discretion, one other significant fact that the PCs discover may count toward their secondary success condition.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1: AMENIRA'S REPORT

12 Lamashan 4715

After six months in Mercy, the local priests are still not totally cooperative. I am still referred to as "the outsider" and nominally kept under curfew, though they've stopped caring when I break it, so long as I keep to myself.

The rivalry between the carpenters and the blacksmiths is intensifying, and I've noticed restrained violence between the two groups. I will investigate further.

The infiltration of the weaver's home was successful, though brief. I have not yet obtained a sample of the ointment.

My illness has been growing steadily worse, which has complicated my work, as it is becoming increasingly difficult to hide.

Something shielded Mercy from another mana storm a few days ago. The storm should have razed the town, but it split into two fronts that bypassed the town before recombining. I strongly doubt that the priests here have the power to evoke such a miracle. Is there an artifact in or near Mercy? Further inquiries are required.

PLAYER HANDOUT #2: UNSPOKEN RULES OF MERCY

The people of Mercy are rather secretive, even about their social norms. I have deduced the following unspoken rules.

1) No meat. Everyone in Mercy is strictly vegetarian, but the opposition to the presence of meat goes beyond dietary choices and seems to have a religious significance.

2) No cursing. They have a broad sense of what constitutes a curse word, and even polite words said in a rude tone are taboo.

3) No blue clothing.

4) No unleashed dogs.

5) No gambling. This includes benign references such as, "I bet" as an affirmative.

6) No spreading of false gospel. The townsfolk refuse to even acknowledge the existence of deities other than their own.

APPENDIX: STAT BLOCKS

The following stat blocks are used in this scenario.

BAT SWARM CR 2

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 30

N Diminutive animal (swarm)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 20 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 size)

hp 13 (3d8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities swarm traits; **Immune** weapon damage

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee swarm (1d6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks distraction (DC 11), wounding

STATISTICS

Str 3, **Dex** 15, **Con** 11, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 4

Base Atk +2; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Fly +12, Perception +15; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception when using blindsense

SQ swarm traits

DESCRIPTION

Hundreds of high-pitched squeaks fill the air as a mass of small, carnivorous bats surges forth, all of them hungry for blood.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Wounding (Ex) Any living creature damaged by a bat swarm continues to bleed, losing 1 hit point per round thereafter. Multiple wounds do not result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped by a DC 10 Heal check or the application of a cure spell or some other healing magic.

CLOAKER CR 5

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 47

CN Large aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 51 (6d8+24)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities shadow shift

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee bite +8 (1d6+5), tail slap +3 (1d8+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (5 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks engulf, moan

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 16, **Con** 19, **Int** 14,

Wis 15, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 23

(can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Disguise +8 (+16 as cloak), Fly +10, Knowledge (religion) +11, Perception +14, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +8;

Racial Modifiers +8 Disguise to appear as a cloak, sheet, manta ray, or similarly shaped object or creature

Languages Undercommon

DESCRIPTION

This ray-like creature opens a toothy maw and leers with glaring red eyes. Behind it whips a menacing tail of segmented bone.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Engulf (Ex) A cloaker can try to wrap a Medium or smaller creature in its body as a standard action. The cloaker attempts a grapple that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and bites the engulfed victim with a +4 bonus on its attack roll. It can still use its whip-like tail to strike at other



targets. Attacks that hit an engulfing cloaker deal half their damage to the monster and half to the trapped victim.

Moan (Ex) A cloaker can emit an infrasonic moan as a standard action, with one of four effects.

Fear: All creatures in a 30-foot spread must save (Will negates) or become panicked for 2 rounds.

Nausea: All creatures in a 30-foot cone must save (Fortitude negates) or fall prone and be nauseated for 1d4+1 rounds.

Stupor: A single creature within 30 feet is affected by hold monster for 5 rounds (Will negates).

Unnerve: Anyone within a 60-foot spread automatically takes a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls. Those in the area for more than 6 consecutive rounds must save (Will negates) or enter a trance, helpless until the moaning stops.

Cloakers are immune to these sonic, mind-affecting attacks.

A creature that successfully saves against the cloaker's fear, nausea, or unnerve moans cannot be affected by that same moan effect from that cloaker for 24 hours. All of the save DCs against a cloaker's moan are DC 15. Save DCs are Charisma-based.

Shadow Shift (Su) When in dim illumination, a cloaker can manipulate shadows as a free action to create one of the following effects: *blur* (lasts 1d4 rounds, self only), *mirror image* (CL 6th), or *silent image* (DC 15, CL 6th, save DC is Charisma-based).

HYENA

CR 1

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 179

N Medium animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 13 (2d8+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d6+3 plus trip)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 15, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +6 (+10 in tall grass); **Racial**

Modifiers +4 Stealth in tall grass

DESCRIPTION

This hyena is covered in shaggy, tan-colored fur with black and brown stripes.





Pathfinder Society Scenario #7-12: The Twisted Circle

Event _____ Date _____

GM # _____ GM Character # _____

GM Name _____ GM Prestige Earned _____

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dark Archive | <input type="checkbox"/> The Exchange | <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Lodge | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberty's Edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scarab Sages | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver Crusade | <input type="checkbox"/> Sovereign Court | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A | <input type="checkbox"/> B | <input type="checkbox"/> C | <input type="checkbox"/> D |

Character # _____ Prestige Points

Character Name _____
 Dark Archive The Exchange Grand Lodge Liberty's Edge
 Scarab Sages Silver Crusade Sovereign Court

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 Dark Archive The Exchange Grand Lodge Liberty's Edge
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Pathfinder Society Scenario #7-12: The Twisted Circle

Character Chronicle #

Core Campaign

	A.K.A.		
Player Name		Character Name	Pathfinder Society #
			Faction

This Chronicle sheet grants access to the following:

Mercy's Blessing: You survived the transformative power of Verdant Spark, and you now have a measure of protection against other conditions that would attempt to harm your body. You can cross this boon off your Chronicle sheet to reroll a saving throw against a poison or disease and take the better result.

Nira's Gratitude: Thanks to your assistance in solving Mercy's mysteries, Nira has slowly started to regain her sense of self and memories as Amenira. After receiving some repairs at the Grand Lodge, she is eager to continue to learn and explore alongside of people who helped her. A spellcaster of at least 7th level can take Nira as a familiar with the Improved Familiar feat. Use the statistics for a neutral aligned soulbound doll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 255). If you make this bond with Nira, you must provide a copy of *Bestiary 2* as if the improved familiar appeared on the Additional Resources page. This boon also bypasses the restriction that soulbound dolls are not normally available as familiars.

If you do not take Nira as a familiar, you can still ask her to follow you. If you do so, you can coax her to remember some of her former abilities at great effort. After you roll a Knowledge check, Perception check, or Sense Motive check but before the results are revealed, you can cross this boon off of your Chronicle sheet to roll a second time using Nira's bonus instead (6 + your character level), representing Nira's insights. This act is mentally taxing, and Nira cannot provide this assistance more than once.

MAX GOLD	SUBTIER <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Normal	1-2	254	507
	SUBTIER <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Normal	Out of Subtier	587	1,174
	SUBTIER <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Normal	4-5	920	1,840
	SUBTIER <input type="checkbox"/> Slow <input type="checkbox"/> Normal	-	-	-

EXPERIENCE	Starting XP
	+ GM's Initials
	XP Gained (GM ONLY)
	= Final XP Total

FAME	Initial Prestige	Initial Fame
	+ GM's Initials	
	Prestige Gained (GM ONLY)	
	- Prestige Spent	
	Current Prestige	Final Fame

GOLD	Starting GP	
	+ GM's Initials	
	GP Gained (GM ONLY)	
	+ GM's Initials	
	Day Job (GM ONLY)	
	- Gold Spent	
	= Total	

All Subtiers	Subtier 4-5
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<p>+1 <i>seeking ammunition</i> (166 gp, limit 3; you can buy any projectile priced as ammunition with this enhancement)</p> <p>+2 <i>cold iron fey-bane ammunition</i> (406 gp, limit 1; you can buy any projectile priced as ammunition with this enhancement)</p> <p><i>dowsing syrup</i> (1,000 gp; <i>Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment</i> 292)</p> <p><i>oil of silence</i> (250 gp; <i>Ultimate Equipment</i> 313)</p> <p><i>potion of desperate escape</i>* (functions as both a <i>potion of cure light wounds</i> and a <i>potion of vanish</i>; CL 2nd, 250 gp, limit 1; <i>Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide</i> 253)</p> <p><i>potion of protection from alignments</i>* (functions as a <i>potion of all of the protection from chaos/evil/good/law</i> spells simultaneously; 350 gp, limit 1)</p> <p><i>scroll of mount</i> (CL 5th; 125 gp, limit 1)</p> <p><i>scroll of scorching ray</i> (150 gp)</p> <p><i>tracer bullet</i> (100 gp; <i>Ultimate Equipment</i> 162)</p> <p><i>wand of bless</i> (20 charges; 300 gp, limit 1)</p> <p>* You can use the potion only once, even if you use a spell or effect that would normally allow you to benefit from a potion multiple times or recreate an expended potion.</p>	<p>+4 <i>fey-bane ammunition</i> (1,006 gp, limit 2; you can buy any projectile priced as ammunition with this enhancement)</p> <p><i>defoliant polish</i> (800 gp; <i>Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment</i> 291)</p> <p><i>lesser burrowing bullet</i> (1,722 gp; <i>Ultimate Equipment</i> 153)</p> <p><i>potion of greater desperate escape</i>* (functions as both a <i>potion of cure moderate wounds</i> and a <i>potion of invisibility</i>, 750 gp, limit 1)</p> <p><i>potion of resilience</i>* (functions as both a <i>potion of bear's endurance</i> and a <i>potion of barkskin</i>; 750 gp, limit 1)</p> <p><i>scroll of make whole</i> (CL 12th; 600 gp, limit 1)</p> <p><i>verdant vine</i> (6,000 gp; <i>Ultimate Equipment</i> 275)</p> <p>* You can use the potion only once, even if you use a spell or effect that would normally allow you to benefit from a potion multiple times or recreate an expended potion.</p>
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For GM Only

EVENT	EVENT CODE	DATE	Game Master's Signature	GM Pathfinder Society #
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