


# **PATHFINDER** ADVENTURE PATH™

## **SHATTERED STAR**

ADVENTURE PATH  PART 3 OF 6

# **THE ASYLUM STONE**



# SHATTERED STAR

# PATHFINDER

## ADVENTURE PATH™

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# SHATTERED STAR



## RETURN TO THE CITY OF STRANGERS

**J**ames Jacobs tricked me into writing this adventure. Don't get me wrong—I'm glad he did. But it's been a long time since I've written an adventure, and even longer since Wes and I collaborated on "The Lightless Depths" for the Savage Tide Adventure Path in *Dungeon*, back when we were still figuring out how APs worked. Jacobs had been prodding me to write a Pathfinder adventure for years, and while the appeal was always there, other things—the chance to write a plane-hopping novel (*Death's Heretic*), or to detail Golarion's solar system (*Distant Worlds*)—always got in the way.

It wasn't until *Shattered Star* and our return to Varisia that Jacobs finally figured out my weakness. When it came

time for him to present the Adventure Path outline to the editorial staff, he looked straight at me with his up-to-mischief grin and said, "We're also going to set one of the adventures in Kaer Maga. Sure hope nobody messes it up..." By the next morning, I had my outline finished.

You see, while we all work together to build Golarion, it's no secret that everyone at the office has his or her particular favorites, and Kaer Maga is my baby. I created it out of whole cloth more than 5 years ago as the setting for the Pathfinder Module *Seven Swords of Sin*—a module that started out as a Gen Con delve, with employees at Paizo competing to see who could build the deadliest room. In addition to handing me a bizarre menagerie of encounters



# FOREWORD

to somehow weld together, Erik Mona opined that, along with my vague ideas of a Mos Eisley-style hive of scum and villainy, our newborn campaign setting really needed a Castle Greyhawk sort of megadungeon. No pressure, right?

Kaer Maga only got one page in the back of that module, but it was a dense one. In an effort to make the city seem bizarre and diverse, I dropped in all sorts of names and references that caught folks' attention. What was a wormfolk? Who were the lip-sewing Sweettalkers, or these bloated magic-users with their leech jars?

I had no idea. Yet a few months later, I needed a setting for the Pathfinder's Journal in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #3—my first story featuring Eando Kline, and the one that would set me on the road to ultimately becoming Paizo's Fiction Editor. Again, Kaer Maga sprang to mind, and this time my story came up short, requiring the addition of several sidebars. What better way to fill space than to present an overview of the city's districts and the weird groups that live there? When I was finished, I realized I had more than just an outline for a city. I had an outline for a book.

*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers* was the first sourcebook I wrote completely on my own, and it was a true labor of love. After getting permission from Erik and copious advice from my fellow developers, I wrote it quietly and at its own pace, doing everything I could to make sure each entry in the gazetteer was fun and adventure-worthy. Following in the footsteps of Wes and Jacobs—whose maps I remain in awe of to this day—I also spent countless hours drawing tiny building shapes on a giant city map.

The book was finally published in 2010, to a surprisingly warm reception. In the years since, I've been privileged to lay the groundwork for many different parts of the setting—the solar system, the First World, Kyonin, Hermea, the Hold of Belkzen—but Kaer Maga will always be the city nearest and dearest to my heart.

Which is why writing this adventure was like coming home. It was fun to flip through *City of Strangers* once more and try to figure out how many different faces and factions I could slip in here. Yet I don't mean to imply that writing this adventure was self-indulgent—rather, it was *extremely* self-indulgent. Because I didn't just seed things from *City of Strangers*. If you're a long-time Pathfinder reader, you'll find all sorts of tie-ins and cameos, with continuity Easter eggs from the early days of Pathfinder Adventure Path right up through *Distant Worlds*. You'd best believe that when this one hits subscribers and stores, I'll be lurking on the messageboards, waiting to see who recognizes what!

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

For me, one of the problems with writing an adventure set in Kaer Maga is the feeling that for every toy you play with, you're leaving two or three still in the box. Fortunately, if you're looking to make the adventure bigger—either to

## ON THE COVER

On this month's cover, Wayne Reynolds introduces us to the Dark Rider, Varisia's answer to the Headless Horseman. In his cavern forest deep beneath Kaer Maga, the PCs will learn many ancient secrets—as well as the wisdom of not riling up a nest of wyverns.

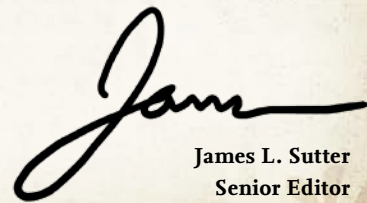
make up some extra experience, or simply because your party isn't quite ready to leave the Asylum Stone behind—there are a number of options.

The adventure is primarily a series of dungeons, yet Kaer Maga is at its heart a political city, with a seething mass of different families and factions all precariously holding each other in check. The article "Gangs of Kaer Maga," beginning on page 60, presents three of the groups most tied to this adventure, along with details on how they're organized, their leadership, potential membership for PCs, and ways in which they can be incorporated into the adventure. These, combined with the wealth of setting details in *City of Strangers*, should give GMs plenty of fodder for political maneuvering and roleplaying encounters, from simple information gathering and shopping expeditions to full-blown turf wars.

If dungeons are more your thing, the Kaer Maga module *Seven Swords of Sin* is conveniently the same level range as this adventure, making it easy to slot those encounters and additional Thassilonian workshop levels into this adventure to create a gigantic megadungeon.

Last but not least, if you or your players are particularly intrigued by the Bone Sage or the otherworldly landscapes viewed through the enchanted window in the Dark Rider's castle, *Distant Worlds* provides extensive gazetteers of the other worlds around Golarion's sun. It might be fun to turn that window into a transporter, dropping the party onto another planet for as long as you like before yanking them back to the Dark Forest to finish the job. Or maybe those strange arcane engines hidden in the castle can be reprogrammed to take the whole structure to some other world, plane, or time...

Of course, Jacobs might not approve of sending the campaign totally off the rails in this manner. But that's what he gets for going around tricking authors.



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