


PATHFINDER[®] ADVENTURE PATH™

SHATTERED STAR

ADVENTURE PATH  PART 5 OF 6

INTO THE NIGHTMARE RIFT

SHATTERED STAR

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ADVENTURE PATH™

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SHATTERED STAR



OKAY, OKAY... LET'S GO TO LENG!

H. P. Lovecraft is no stranger to the pages of Pathfinder Adventure Path, and in this volume, his influence returns once again to Golarion, courtesy of Richard Pett's "Into the Nightmare Rift" and Greg A. Vaughan's "Leng: The Terror Beyond Dreams." There are three monsters drawn from Lovecraft's tales in this month's bestiary as well—which I converted to the Pathfinder RPG and originally intended to include in the bestiary of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #46: Wake of the Watcher*. At the time, when I found out from Wes that these three monsters had to be cut from that bestiary for space reasons, I was the typical cranky author railing against the cruelties of the editorial process. And as with most cranky authors railing against cruel editors, it turns out I should have instead been humbly thanking said editors, because as it happens, the bhole, the flying polyp, and especially the nightgaunt work SO much better as new monsters in this volume.

I've made no secret of my admiration of Lovecraft's writing, but strangely enough, this adventure marks the first time that I have personally hard-coded Lovecraftian elements into an adventure during its outline stages. In the early days of Pathfinder, in adventures like *Pathfinder Module: Crucible of Chaos* and Adventure Paths like *Rise of the Runelords* and *Curse of the Crimson Throne*, it was Wolfgang Baur and Greg Vaughan who approached me with the idea to include things like shoggoths, Azathoth, hounds of Tindalos, and Leng in their adventures—suggestions I immediately green-lit, of course. Richard Pett's *Pathfinder Module: Carrion Hill* was likewise an idea he'd had years and years ago for creating a fantasy RPG version of Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror," and the Lovecraft-heavy "Wake of the Watcher" mentioned above was, if I recall correctly, as much Wes Schneider's idea as anyone else's.

FOREWORD

The thing is, I'm quite aware of the fact that not everyone likes Lovecraft in their fantasy games, and as such, I've kind of been a bit *too* hesitant to suggest things like, "Let's put Cthulhu in this adventure too!" Fortunately, my co-workers and freelance authors know what I like, I guess, and judging from feedback from readers, a lot of you out there like Lovecraft stuff in your games as well. And so, when it came time to outline Shattered Star and I was looking at themes from our first three Pathfinder Adventure Paths to build upon, one of the things I kept coming back to was Leng.

We've been talking about Leng since *Pathfinder Adventure Path #6: Spires of Xin-Shalast*, and in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Great Beyond* we officially made it one of the planes, cementing its presence in Golarion's cosmology. But we'd never done much more than hint at it. This adventure, as a result, was always "the one where we'd finally go to Leng," even before I settled on Cadrilkasta as the villain and Guiltspur as the location. In fact, those two choices were made, in large part, because it was easy to use established lore and hints to make Guiltspur into a sort of Leng embassy, where Karzoug first started talking with that realm's denizens to help him accomplish his goals in the climax of *Rise of the Runelords*.

As always when we do an adventure that draws so much inspiration from Lovecraft, I'd like to give the fine folks at Chaosium a shout-out for being one of the primary influences on a young James Jacobs back in junior high. *Call of Cthulhu* remains one of my favorite games, and in a lot of ways, Golarion would be a very different place if not for it. If the information on Leng we give you here isn't enough, by all means check out Chaosium's *H. P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands* supplement for *Call of Cthulhu*.

Because I'm assuming all of you have already read Lovecraft's novella *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Right? RIGHT?

HIGH-LEVEL DUNGEONS

One of my goals for the Shattered Star Adventure Path was to build a campaign that was nostalgic and old school in a lot of ways, primarily by having significant parts of each adventure take place in a dungeon. Unfortunately, dungeon adventures tend to be more and more difficult to finesse the higher in level your PCs get because those pesky spellcasters start getting access to spells like *screaming*, *teleport*, *passwall*, and the like—spells that some GMs might think of as having been invented specifically to destroy dungeons.

I generally try to avoid including elements in dungeons that simply and categorically shut down entire types of spells. *Teleport* and *screaming* effects, in particular, are hit with this limitation a lot. It's frustrating to finally gain access to spells like *teleport* and then be told that they don't work in any of the dungeons. I've avoided doing too many

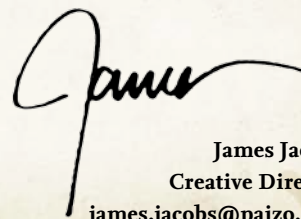
ON THE COVER

It's hard to believe that it took us 65 volumes of Pathfinder Adventure Path to feature a dragon as the iconic cover character, but Wayne Reynolds' elegantly menacing depiction of the blue dragon Cadrilkasta is well worth the wait!

anti-teleportation effects in previous high-level dungeons, but here in the Guiltspur Depths, you'll find two and a half dungeon levels that do precisely that. One of the big reasons I decided to go with this was not because I was trying to rob spells from the players, but because I needed a reason why a powerful dragon like Cadrilkasta would be forced to dig out a buried dungeon using enslaved giants rather than just teleporting into it. And it's important to note that even despite that, the effects of this anti-teleportation, anti-screaming field don't cover every room—and even better, the PCs can eventually get to the cause of this effect and break it. Not only does this give the GM a chance to enjoy a dungeon the PCs can't scry and teleport into and out of, but it also gives the PCs a satisfying and perhaps therapeutic opportunity to get revenge on it as well!

A lot of the encounters in this adventure are difficult. There are two reasons for this. First, high-level characters are pretty good at escaping, resting, preparing, and returning to hit adventures hard when they're well prepared. Making key encounters particularly difficult helps to play to this truth. Second, we want to actually reward groups that bother exploring dungeons rather than skipping straight to the end. A group that painstakingly explores Guiltspur is going to find a lot more treasure, build up a lot more experience, recruit more allies, and perhaps most importantly, find out a lot more about what lies ahead. So when the group that carefully explores reaches these hard encounters, those PCs will be better prepared than the group that simply skips to the end.

Have any advice of your own for high-level dungeon crawling? Want to let us know what did and didn't work well for your group in this dungeon? Curious to find out how other groups fared in this or other adventures? Head on over to the paizo.com messageboards and find out—I'll be there to answer questions, give advice, and commiserate with GMs whose players ruined their favorite dungeons!



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