

PATHFINDER[®] **ADVENTURE PATH**[™]

SHATTERED STAR

ADVENTURE PATH  PART 6 OF 6

THE DEAD HEART OF XIN

SHATTERED STAR

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ADVENTURE PATH™

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SHATTERED STAR



SHATTERED NO MORE!

While I'm very pleased with what Brandon Hodge did in this final adventure for the Shattered Star Adventure Path, I'd be lying if I also said I was 100 percent happy with it. Magnimar's one of my favorite creations for Golarion, you see—it's been a part of Golarion from nearly the start, but Magnimar's existed much longer than that. It's one of several cities I transplanted into Golarion from my homebrew setting. While Wes wrote the initial gazetteer of Magnimar for *Pathfinder Adventure Path #2* back in the day, I'd had a fair amount of my own ideas about the city from my long-running home campaign as well. It was a great delight to get the chance to expand on Wes's work and get in a lot of my own ideas for the city in *Magnimar, City of Monuments*, and even more fun to be able to have the city serve as home base for an entire campaign.

Which is why I was dreading this adventure. Because this is the one where Magnimar gets hit by a tsunami.

Now, I have no one to blame but myself. I've known from the start that having the island of Xin rise would make a great climax to the Shattered Star Adventure Path. But now that I'm here and I'm ordering illustrations of monsters attacking the city and drawing notes on the map of Magnimar to indicate what parts of the city get destroyed, I have to admit... I feel a little guilty!

PLOT TROUBLESHOOTING

"The Dead Heart of Xin" is an unusual adventure in that its plot hinges on the PCs doing something that they might decide they'd rather not do. I do suspect that most parties, after spending the bulk of an Adventure Path tracking down a shattered artifact, will jump at the chance to rebuild the object of their quest. But if writing and running adventures has taught me anything over the past 30 years, it's that players are fond of surprising you.

FOREWORD

In this final adventure, the quest to recover the Shattered Star is over. If the PCs decide they'd rather not rebuild the artifact—the adventure's climax never even begins. Of course, you can certainly have "Into the Nightmare Rift" serve as the climax to your campaign if you want, but I've always been frustrated by other artifact-hunting campaigns that come to an end just as the PCs finally gain the artifact they've spent their entire careers searching for. I'm pretty sure your group will be itching to rebuild and use the *Sihedron* too, and Brandon's adventure gives them plenty of opportunities to do so. But they still need to make the decision to rebuild the *Sihedron* in the first place.

From a baseline viewpoint, rebuilding the artifact is a good thing, since all indications are that the *Sihedron* would be a great tool to use against powerful foes (such as runelords) who might rise up to cause problems sometime in Varisia's future. But it's possible the PCs might decide that reforging the *Sihedron* isn't a great idea, especially if they use divination spells to try to determine the repercussions of such an act.

If the PCs use spells like *commune*, *contact other plane*, or *divination* to look ahead at what they might face by rebuilding the *Sihedron*, you should not obscure the fact that great danger looms in the near future associated with this event. Don't give out details, but use the opportunity to let the PCs know that while rebuilding the *Sihedron* is in and of itself a good thing for Varisia's future, they'll need to be quick on their feet. For example, a *divination* spell might result in a short warning that the very act of reforging the *Sihedron* could attract the attention of dangerous foes. In short, the PCs should want to rebuild the *Sihedron*, but should also be prepared to act quickly once things go bad. If the PCs do a lot of divinations, in fact, you can reward them for their diligence by telling them that they're well prepared, and by giving them a +2 or even a +4 bonus on Fame checks made later in this part to help Magnimarians get to safety.

If the PCs decide not to rebuild the *Sihedron* but hand over the shards to another group, such as the Pathfinder Society, then you can simply have that other group reforge the artifact. In such an event, the PCs may need to take a side trek to reclaim the *Sihedron* for their use, or might even need to attempt to stop Xin's army without the artifact's aid at all!

Finally, if the PCs simply refuse to rebuild the *Sihedron*, you can always flip things around. In such a development, you can say instead that the rising of Xin was on a long-term timer, and that at some point after this adventure begins, that timer runs out. In fact, once the PCs decide to not rebuild the *Sihedron*, you can smile and nod and congratulate them on gathering the shards, then explain that for the next several weeks or months or years or even decades, they live out lives in semi-retirement, until one day a sudden earthquake and tsunami strike the city. At this

ON THE COVER

Wayne Reynolds introduces us to the clockwork reliquary! And while he's at it, he also presents the founder of the nation of Thassilon! (Although given that he's a partially complete skeleton imprisoned in a crystal the size of a coffin, I'm guessing most of Xin's old acquaintances wouldn't recognize him...)



point, you can run the rest of this adventure more or less as is, after which the knowledge that the island-city of Xin has risen soon comes to the PCs' attention. Whether or not this event convinces them to finally rebuild the *Sihedron* or not, they can certainly come out of retirement to go stop Xin's army of golems from awakening!

WHAT'S NEXT?

Once your players complete this adventure, make sure to check out the "Continuing the Campaign" article if you're eager to give the PCs more chances to use the *Sihedron*. Rob McCreary's article about the runelords gives you seven other reasons the PCs might want to continue their adventure—any one of these ancient wizards could make for a great bad guy to fight (even if one of them might need a *resurrection* spell before he's in any shape to tangle with the PCs). The *Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition* has more powerful magic items and monsters with appropriate themes for high-level play in Varisia, and if you're looking for even more spells, items, and artifacts to vex and reward your players with, don't forget the *More Magic of Thassilon* web enhancement we did long ago for *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #5! We've updated some of those items and spells in the *Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition*, but others in the web enhancement, while still presented in the rules of an older edition, offer plenty of great ideas waiting to be rediscovered.

Of course, if you're eager to start an entirely new Adventure Path, we've got you covered there as well. It's starting to feel a bit chilly, in fact. You should probably gather up your cold-weather gear and your anti-witch tools, and let your friends and family know you'll be gone for a while, because once the Reign of Winter begins, you won't believe the places you'll be visiting!

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