



Call of the Deep

The watery veil is lifted and the Master of the Deep is known. All that remains is killing it and lifting its destructive influence. The dangers that lurk in the unfathomable depths might be the least of your worries.

Part 3 of the Terror from the Deep trilogy.

A 4-Hour Adventure for 11th-16th Level Characters



Pieter Sleijpen
Author

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Producer: Baldman Games

Hulburg Administrator: Pieter Sleijpen

Organized Play: Chris Lindsay

D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team: Adam Lee, Chris Lindsay, Mike Mearls, Matt Sernett

D&D Adventurers League Administrators: Bill Benham, Travis Woodall, Claire Hoffman, Greg Marks, Alan Patrick, Lysa Chen

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Introduction

Welcome to *Call of the Deep*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system.

The adventure takes place Hulburg and an aboleth's lair beneath the waves of the Moonsea.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 11th-16th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 14**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

Adjusting This Adventure

This adventure provides suggestions for making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters,	APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters,	APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters,	APL greater than	Average
5 characters,	APL less than	Weak
5 characters,	APL equivalent	Average
5 characters,	APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL less than	Average
6-7 characters,	APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL greater than	Very strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

Before Play at the Table

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Playing the Dungeon Master

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life.

To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your **players** (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling—play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

Adventure Primer

Hulburg

Hulburg is built on ruins. Like other settlements in the Moonsea region, Hulburg has been sacked, abandoned, and resettled several times. Lord Eorl Hulmaster, a greedy noble from Mulmaster, established the new town and owns much of it.

Amid the ruins, Hulmaster, his followers, and other settlers established a manor, a residential area, and a harbor. The manor is a wooden fortress on the edge of the ruins. Hulmaster and his retainers live in the manor, but the lord's family still lives in Mulmaster.

Tent City, as the locals call the residential area, is a 2-mile trek through ruins from the manor. A sprawl of ramshackle structures, many made of cloth, Tent City rests on a bluff overlooking the Moonsea. Most citizens live and work in this area, which has a deep well and is built on the ruins of a stone fortress.

On the shore below and south of Tent City is the Harbor District. A trail leads to the harbor from Tent City, through a wooden palisade. Most buildings in the harbor are permanent, including guard posts, a tariff office, and Lord Hulmaster's warehouses.

Hulburg life is frontier life. Most people struggle day to day, working as miners in Hulmaster's gem mine in the northeastern hills, or as porters or other sorts of laborers. Crime is common, as is vigilante justice. The lord's soldiers are inadequate to keep the peace. Organized gangs fill the void, keeping a semblance of order, each gang looking out for its own.

Adventure Background

Previously in Hulburg (see *HULB3-1*, *HULB3-2* and *HULB3-3*), an alhoon meddled with tar stones, a strange mineral found in Hulmaster's gem mines. The lich's actions inadvertently weakened the barrier erected around an ancient rift to the Far Realm. This weakening, in turn, awakened the rift's guardians and their master, a mighty aboleth named Zuilp'ithuh. The guardian wants the rift closed once again.

The albino aboleth Zuilp'ithuh is an odd guardian. Its fate is tied to the rift, and it's obsessed with keeping it sealed (as its destruction has proved impossible. Its motivation is unclear. If asked, it might explain that it likes Faerûn as it is, without the chaotic taint of the Far Realm or else that long ago somebody placed an unbreakable *geas* on it. The true origin might even be hidden from the perfect memory of the aboleth. Regardless, it has become a matter of pride

and Zuilp'ithuh will not allow the seals to crack and the rift to open. It is still a monster though, using any means necessary to achieve its goal.

At the start of the trilogy the aboleth sensed an artifact within the ruins of Hulburg, the *Orb of Creation*, and believed it was the cause or at least a method of strengthening the seal again. Zuilp'ithuh sent minions into Hulburg to acquire the orb, as well as sacrifices needed for a ritual to reseal the rift. Having been thwarted by the characters in previous adventures, it has become desperate but is unsure how to proceed.

No one realizes the archmage Danatar Ahrendsen is behind it all. His mind was fractured when investigating the tar stones. While mostly recovered with the aid of adventurers, a small seed of the Far Realm took hold and eventually overtook his sanity.

Learning about the nearby sealed rift into the Far Realm, Danatar's drive to understand the aberrations and their native dimension caused him to start the cult of Dagon, hoping to use it to unseal the rift.

Unaware of the rift's guardians, he was shocked when the aboleth made its presence known. Now he hopes to use the adventurers to get rid of the aboleth and open the way for him to unseal the rift. After all, aboleths are monsters and what adventurer would ever check before acting?

Now after months of work, he is finally ready to finish his work. His hold on sanity slips, and he makes mistakes—mistakes that might ultimately cost his life. Adventurers are not nearly as easy to fool as Danatar seems to assume.

Location and NPC Summary

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

Danatar Ahrendsen (DAHN uh-tahr AH-rend-sehn). Danatar is an archmage. He had a mental breakdown in HULB3, where his mind was fractured through mind flayer's magic and restored by adventurers. He never fully recovered, instead succumbing to the madness of the Far Realm. Completely insane, he manages to keep up appearances at the start of the adventure, but by the end he has totally snapped.

Zuilp'ithuh (ZU-ilp-IT-huh). The powerful and ancient albino aboleth Zuilp'ithuh is the guardian of a sealed rift into the Far Realm near Hulburg's ruins. Zuilp'ithuh wants to keep the rift sealed, having done so for ages. The aboleth is a monster, though, caring little about how it achieves its goals and it has sacrificed many innocents over the centuries. Realizing the characters pose a serious threat to its existence, it finally tries a different approach, but it might be too late.

Series

HULB4-3 Call of the Deep is the third part in the **Terror from the Deep** trilogy, in which the characters deal with the aboleth Zuilp'ithuh in its attempt to reseal an ancient rift into the Far Realm.

The first part is *HULB4-1 Whispers from the Deep*, in which the characters learn something fishy is involving monsters of the deep. In the second part, *HULB4-2 Voices from the Deep*, the adventurers deal with a cult of a kraken who kidnapped the crew of several ships to blackmail Hulburg's authorities into giving the *Orb of Creation* as fuel to the aboleth's ritual to reseal the rift. Now they finally must deal directly with the aboleth and the rift.

It is assumed the characters play the trilogy in order. If the characters have not yet played any of the earlier parts, you need to explain a bit more about events, as there are spoilers about the earlier adventures. If the other parts are played at a later date, things might make sense as flashbacks or standalone adventures.

HULB4 at Winter Fantasy 2018

When HULB4 is run at Winter Fantasy 2018 as part of the DDXP track a fourth adventure is part of the series: *HULB4-S Shouts from the Deep*. The adventures run in the following order:

- *HULB4-S Shouts from the Deep*
- *HULB4-1 Whispers from the Deep*
- *HULB4-2 Voices from the Deep*
- *HULB4-3 Call of the Deep*

Adventure Overview

At first glance, the adventure appears to be linear. The characters are briefed on events, travel to the site of interest, fight their way in, and perform the ritual to reseal the rift.

At some point during the adventure, the characters will likely realize Danatar has betrayed them. Where this happens and how the characters deal with it has a big impact on how the adventure proceeds. Advice is offered, but if you need to make additional adjustments, as always, keep fun at the table in mind and keep an eye on the time.

Part 1. Briefing. The characters are briefed on the situation and send off toward the rift. Danatar hopes the characters take everything at face value, or at least are patient enough to let him smooth over any inconsistencies. If not, the briefing might very well end in a fight with Danatar's minions and even Danatar himself.

Part 2. Knock, Knock. The entrance to Zuilp'ithuh's lair is underwater and guarded by a group of kuo-toa and a guardian naga. While paranoid, the naga can be reasoned with, but getting her to let the characters pass is not easy.

Part 3. Zuilp'ithuh Lair. Once inside, Zuilp'ithuh realizes he needs to reason with the characters. If successful, he guides them to the rift. If the characters are still hostile, they are on their own. The kuo-toa minions make an attempt to stop the characters, but they are weak and likely pose little threat to them.

Part 4. Unwanted Guests. The rift is on the verge of opening fully, but things slipped through it not too long ago. These creatures do not attack Zuilp'ithuh but see the characters as legitimate prey.

Part 5. Closing the Rift. Once through the lair, the characters arrive at the rift. They need to perform a ritual, and if Danatar has not yet shown himself to be a traitor, he does so here. A potential three-way fight ensues among Danatar and his mind flayer ally, Zuilp'ithuh, and the characters. With luck, the characters can reseal the rift before it opens fully.

Adventure Hooks

Events in the previous adventures have the Hulburg authorities and factions worried. Demon and kraken cults, albino aboleths, mysterious artifacts, and now a slowly opening rift?

Characters involved in the previous adventures know what is going and should need little incentive to continue. Rumors abound and an adventurer must have been living under a rock to have heard nothing. No high-level adventurer should be surprised when they are personally asked to attend a meeting in the warehouse called the Vault in the Harbor District of Hulburg to discuss events and deal with it.

What adventurer can turn down such an opportunity to save a town, perhaps the whole Moonsea? And if not out of the good of their heart, there is always the promise of glory, reward, and grateful faction leaders.

Part 1. Briefing

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes if nobody confronts Danatar, 60 minutes if a fight starts

The characters are expected early in the morning at the large stone warehouse known as the Vault. The lone square white-plastered building looks more like a prison on the outside with its narrow arrow-slits, thick iron-clad doors and guards on the roof.

The Vault is a large stone warehouse within the Harbor District, a compound of its own including private docks and a lot of well-armed guards. Once you have identified yourselves, one of the guards escorts you across the courtyard into the warehouse.

The large well-light room is two stories high, surrounded by a catwalk accessed via two wide staircases. A sturdy table in the middle and stacks of crates along the walls are the only furnishings. The table contains a tin decanter, several cups, and a small sturdy chest. Steel doors lead to the back, and wooden doors in the side probably go into an office.

A total of ten uniformed guards stand on the catwalk and along the walls on the ground floor. Your hosts wait near the table: Lord Hulmaster, the archmage Danatar, and High Justice Jarus Grainger.

The guards are disciplined and alert, keeping their distance until somebody threatens their lord with violence. The one-armed Captain Tanya Strongbow leads the soldiers.

The three men at the table are eager to get started, welcoming the characters and making proper introductions. Once the characters have introduced themselves and gotten a cup of watered wine or water, the meeting starts.

Important Note. Up to seven of the ten guards are ordinary human soldiers, five **veterans** and five **archers**. Three (or more) are far-spawn servitors of Danatar – see **Digging for Trouble** below for more information. The exact number depends on the strength of the party.

The far-spawn are humans with a seed of the Far Realm within, indistinguishable from humans through shapeshifting. A character with a passive Insight of 25 or higher who specifically studies them realizes they act a bit more aloof than the others. *True seeing* reveals their true nature, although casting spells near Lord Hulmaster is not well received by the guards, who attack spellcasters until ordered to stand down.

The far-spawn react with violence upon discovery. Danatar's reaction depends on the situation. If he can use it to his advantage (for example, by explaining any meddling with the components and pressing the characters for haste), he does so. If Danatar is going to be treated as a traitor, he reacts as if discovered, fleeing the battle as described below.

Danatar's Protection. Danatar is under the effect of a *mind blank* and *foresight* spell.

Roleplaying Lord Eorl Hulmaster

At thirty-five years of age, Lord Hulmaster focuses on the accumulation of wealth. He has a wife and several young children, but they remain in Mulmaster until he can bring Hulburg to heel. Lord Hulmaster has bold plans for Hulburg, but currently lacks the coin to see those plans fully realized.

While not an evil man, his drive makes him a bit insensitive toward the working conditions of the miners and the living conditions in Tent City. He considers himself better than the characters except for other nobles, and while blunt, he does not act in a rude or condescending manner. He realizes the current situation is bad for business and is well aware of the adage about catching more flies with honey than venom.

Roleplaying Danatar Ahrendsen

Danatar is a middle-aged wandering archmage and sage with a recent interest in aberrations. Danatar comes across as jovial if a little doddering. He is always willing to share his knowledge and almost always manages to do so without becoming pedantic. Recent events left him a touch unhinged and he has developed a few strange quirks.

He considers himself very intelligent, much more so than a bunch of adventurers. If proven wrong, he reacts harshly perhaps even violently (see **Digging for Trouble** below). He is not so far gone that he will monologue, however.

Roleplaying Jarus Grainger

A native of the Dalelands, Jarus found his faith in Tyr late in life, after losing his wife to a long bout of wasting sickness. He is an honest man with a good heart, but he has developed a stubborn streak over his fifty-eight years of living, along with a penchant for speaking bluntly. In spite of his flaws, the residents of Hulburg respect him.

Jarus came to Hulburg because he knew the town needed individuals who cared more for people than profit. Over the last few years, he has risen in the ranks of the clergy and became the liaison of the Order of the Gauntlet in Hulburg.

Briefing

During the briefing, Lord Mulmaster does most of the talking, occasionally interrupted by Danatar and Jarus. They prefer to keep things short and to the point. All three men are nervous and worried.

Adventurers with a passive Insight of 20 or higher realize Danatar is more excited than worried. If confronted with this, he admits that he finds the situation very intriguing from a sage's point of view.

The men offer the following information:

- In the past two ten-days Hulburg has been under attack by creatures from the Moonsea. At first, they struck directly, then later swarmed nearby ships. Survivors of the attacks overheard the sea monsters speak of the albino aboleth Zuilp'ithuh as their leader. The aboleth wanted both a mysterious artifact known as the *Orb of Creation* and living sacrifices for some kind of ritual: likely a ritual to remove the seal on a rift into the Far Realm a few miles into the Moonsea.
- The seals on the rift have been crumbling, and action must be taken soon before it becomes strong enough to twist its local environments.
- Danatar has examined the orb and researched the rift. He has developed a ritual to reseal the rift. While he is willing to risk his life to perform the ritual, he needs adventurers to guard his back and deal with the aboleth and its minions. If nothing is done, he is certain the rift will open.
- The *Orb of Creation's* true purpose and origin is unknown, but the *orb* can be used in the ritual: either to close or open the rift. It would make the ritual a lot easier and faster.
- Danatar can offer some details on the ritual, including identifying some of the ritual components such as the *orb* itself, a key without a lock, pure chaos that can be bound (water, needs to be frozen), and the essence of law (a modron piece taken from the battlefield near Melvaunt). He even has a scroll for others to perform it in case something happens to him. The ritual sounds genuine because it is. Danatar intends to twist it during the performance, and some of the components are not what they appear to be (see **Digging for Trouble**).
- The rift is not big enough to threaten Faerûn entire, but its effects would certainly mean the end of Hulburg and pose a serious danger to civilization in the Moonsea region.
- Nothing is known of the power of Zuilp'ithuh specifically or its remaining minions, although Danatar knows the general abilities of an aboleth (as described in the *Monster Manual*). The monster lost a lot of its minions, so it seems like a good opportunity to strike while it's at its weakest.
- Nothing is known about the aboleth's lair or the rift. Something is blocking all divinations. Danatar

suspects the rift is at least partially responsible, although powerful aboleths certainly have access to magic as well.

- Aboleth's lairs contain water, but also always air-filled caverns. Adventurers should expect underwater exploration. The city is willing to provide the characters with two *scrolls of water breathing* and two *potions of water breathing* as a backup. They expect unused potions back, but the characters can keep the scrolls. If there is no druid, sorcerer or wizard amongst the characters, Danatar gladly casts the spell on them. (If he is gone by the end of Part 1, a friendly wizard performs the ritual on the group, and they gain the potions as a backup, making them a bit more susceptible to *dispel magic*.)
- Long-distance teleporting near a rift into the Far Realm is inadvisable.
- Unless asked, nobody offers a reward, but if pressed they offer each character 1000 gp, and of course the salvage right to keep whatever they find in the aboleth's lair. An advance of 250 gp per character is offered if asked for.
- Danatar refuses to stay behind, and the other two back him up. The adventurers need to fight the aboleth and whatever might come from the rift. Having them being tied up in a ritual is inefficient, not to mention that there is no time for them to truly master it. The scroll is for an emergency if Danatar is not available, as the archmage's casting would be more effective.

Treasure

Two *scrolls of water breathing*. If pressed, up to 250 gp per character as an advanced payment. The characters are asked to return unused *potions of water breathing*, but nobody questions them about it after the adventure.

Digging for Trouble

Danatar wants to avoid any thorough investigation on the proposed ritual and its ingredients, let alone the use of any kind of divination magic. He stresses the need to act quickly to push the characters. He is also somewhat insulted by the insinuation that he is not skilled enough to design a proper magic ritual and gather the proper ingredients.

At first the other NPCs present concur with Danatar, but nobody, even Danatar, is going to object when presented with sound arguments or even a stubborn adventurer. As stated above, there is

nothing wrong with the ritual on the scroll. The components are another matter.

A character who succeeds at a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots the impurities in the water, and the modron part seems to be oddly warped (it is actually part of the mad modron assassin from the CORE1 series of Baldman Games adventures). Most should realize this is odd at best, but characters trained in Arcana know this hints at a ritual aiming to achieve to *open* a rift, not close it.

Danatar is a bad liar, but when confronted with it he tries to act surprised before claiming infiltrators replaced the components. Anybody making a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) realizes he is lying. He sticks to his story though. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check, convincing Jarus to cast a *zone of truth*, or similar tactics get him to act rashly. He orders his servitors amongst the guards to attack the characters while he attempts to escape. See **Confrontation** below.

Something similar is likely to happen when his servitors are exposed, although in that case he tries to keep his distance (and they are certainly easy scapegoats for the corrupted components). Again though, he is a bad liar.

Important Note. It is possible the characters do not convince the NPCs of Danatar's duplicity, nor do they force the mad mage to reveal himself. If the players afterwards refuse to proceed with the wizard on what in that case are basically baseless accusations, remind the players they can always gain more evidence later and be ready for treachery. If they still refuse, the NPCs relent and allow the PCs to go on their own. Danatar simply follows on his own.

Divination Magic

Danatar and Zuilp'ithuh are protected by (the effects of) a *mind blank* spell and as such are **immune** to mind reading or any magic used to gain information about them. The rift and the ritual are unprotected. Using divination indirectly (i.e. not targeted at either of them specifically) and asking the right questions can reveal Danatar's treachery or Zuilp'ithuh's wish to keep the rift closed. Such revelations are fine. Just one more nail on Danatar's coffin.

Important Note. While the planar rift is unprotected against divination magic in general, it does disrupt scrying and teleportation within a 3-mile radius. To get at the rift, the characters need to go through the front door.

Confrontation

When convinced he has been exposed, Danatar reacts with violence. Danatar is sane enough to realize he is unlikely to win a direct confrontation

with the characters, even with the backup of his bodyguards. He also hopes that they still fight and kill the aboleth. He orders his three bodyguards (two **far-spawn guards** and two **far-spawn yochlol**) to cover his retreat while he flees.

Due to the *foresight* spell, adventurers likely cannot stop his escape. If prevented from fleeing, he is conservative with spells and likely to surrender quickly. With a clone stashed away, he knows any spell spent in this fight is one he cannot use later.

Danatar's minions fight to the death, although they are willing to talk to buy time for Danatar's escape. If captured, they recount dreams of an albino aboleth ordering them serve Danatar faithfully.

Adjusting this Encounter

This fight should be moderately difficult, although if the characters block Danatar's route of escape, things can take a turn for the worse quickly. The presence of the NPCs might both make things harder or easier depending on how you use them. They can be in the way of area of effect spells, make for convenient hostages, or offer unexpected support in the form of an assist or even healing magic. In general, though, the NPCs occupy themselves getting out of the way,

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **far-spawn guard** and one **far-spawn yochlol**
- **Weak:** Remove one **far-spawn guard**
- **Strong:** Add a **far-spawn guard**
- **Very Strong:** Add a **far-spawn guard**. The far-spawn guards have 150 hit points each, and a +2 bonus on to-hit, damage and the DC of their effects.

Treasure

If the characters manage to detain or kill Danatar, they can claim his *robe of eyes*. He does not have his spellbook with him.

Development

If everything went according to Danatar's plan, the briefing is short and to the point. It ends with the characters on their way to the rift on a borrowed ship (or on their own). They have some time to buy supplies, but the authorities expect them to leave before noon.

Members of the Emerald Enclave, the Harpers, and the Zhentarim are approached before they leave Hulburg: each faction using their own unique ways. The message is simple. The mage Danatar has been acting a bit strange lately, and they should keep their eyes open.

Proceed with Part 2.

Danatar Defeated

If Danatar is revealed as a traitor, the characters have little option but to proceed as planned. He does not reveal his plans voluntarily, and it is likely the characters conclude he was working for the aboleth. Danatar's minions truly believe this and insist upon this falsehood if captured. Magical interrogation requires the removal of the *mind blank* effect (can only be suppressed by restoration magic) and something like a successful *detect thoughts* to reveal Danatar is working for himself alone.

Regardless, Danatar knows little about the aboleth or its true goal except that it is apparently a rival. He thinks it wants to open the rift and gain control over it, which is also what Danatar wants.

The ritual is real, but three components need replacement:

- **Key Without Lock.** It's rather simple to acquire at the local locksmith or by destroying a lock.
- **Pure Chaos Contained.** Pure sweet water from a well and a simple cantrip such as *ray of frost* will suffice. A much simpler solution would be to simply put the water in a container of any kind. Ritual magic is mostly about symbolism.
- **Essence of Law.** Acquiring a piece of a non-corrupted modrons might be a bit hard, though not impossible at this level (the characters, for example, could teleport to Melvaunt to acquire such a piece). Then again, a law book, the gavel of a magistrate, or even a holy symbol of Tyr would be much easier to obtain and just as valid. Note: That there is no book of laws of Hulburg, nor a true magistrate, but Jarus is a priest of Tyr.

Once the components are replaced the characters are good to go. Proceed with Part 2.

If the characters detained or killed Danatar, nothing changes. Danatar either manages to escape quickly or his backup plan (a nearby *clone*) comes to life, albeit lacking the *robe of eyes*. Unless the characters take an extended rest, Danatar or his clone cannot restore any spell slots lost in the fight.

Extended Rest. Taking a short rest before Part 2, especially if part of the trip is included, has no real consequences for the adventure. Taking a long rest gives the rift more time to open. The exact effects are up to you, but should include a worsening of the environmental effects due to the rift, and perhaps a boost to the power of any aberration near it.

Part 2. Knock, Knock

Estimated Time: 60 minutes

Zuilp'ithuh's lair and the rift within are four hours sailing out of Hulburg, very near the Deep Gaol from *HULB4-2*. The characters reach the lair without any problems. There is no *airy water* this time and it is clear the adventurers need to dive to the bottom of the Moonsea to get at the rift.

Allow the characters to prepare for the dive before proceeding. The lair is about 600 feet below the surface, and the area near the lair is covered in an eternal twilight, plunging the area into gloom.

The Moonsea water is cold and relatively clear, providing about 300 feet of visibility. You spot no life in the water this far from the coast until you reach the lake's rocky floor. Here, a few hardy weeds and cold-water corals grow with a few fishes swimming within the eternal twilight. Below, a large, odd-looking chasm leads into the sea floor. A greenish unnatural glow emanates from it and just looking at it gives you a minor headache. Rocks around it appear weirdly twisted and the fish and plants all have odd looking mutations. It is clear in what direction you need to go.

The chasm is 400 feet long, 100 feet wide and 200 feet deep at its deepest point in the northern end. The light emanates from a large cavern in that area, looking like there is some kind of light underground that's bright enough to sieve through the floor. While there is ample life within the chasm, nothing is big enough to threaten the characters.

The cavern at the northern end contains the entrance to Zuilp'ithuh's lair. A map can be found in Appendix II. Here, a group of kuo-toa keep guard. The large double bronze doors at the end cannot be seen unless one passes the coral barrier.

Mad Whispers

The rift is slowly affecting its surrounding area. Its influence is still minor, especially outside Zuilp'ithuh's lair. Still, odd patterns can be seen in the walls and the weed and creatures have a slimy look and an odd gleam in their eyes.

When the characters are near the entrance, they see movement in the corners in their eyes and hear soft whispering voices in their minds. While the greenish glow is not bright, it seems to irritate the eyes. The effects are only mildly debilitating at this point, but are still oddly draining. Each character must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion, which is only recovered through magic or by taking a long rest outside the area of effect.

Guardians at the Entrance

At first glance the cavern looks natural: wide at the entrance and narrowing at the end like some kind of funnel. The walls are covered with shellfish and patches of dangling seaweed wave in the current. An especially dense patch can be found at the end. Only harmless, albeit mutated fish seem to live in the cave.

Characters with a passive Perception of 15 or higher note that the weeds move in an unnatural way. They also spot the arrow slits of the two guard platforms. A DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to spot the kuo-toa guards on those platforms and behind the seaweed curtain at the end. These are the eight kuo-toa guardians: **four kuo-toa gladiators** below, and **four kuo-toa archers** above (two on each platform).

The locked bronze double doors at the end boast a beautiful relief of two large snakes biting each other's tails, surrounded by fish people offering prayer and human sacrifice. The doors are magical; besides the *arcane lock*, one (or two, for a strong party) of the snakes comes to life on its initiative if anyone attacks the kuo-toa or when somebody touches the door. The snake is a **guardian naga**.

The kuo-toa are aggressive and attack the characters on sight. Their attack awakens the naga, who comes to the aide of the kuo-toa. The naga is a true guardian naga, lawful good in alignment. Her name is Ezsieksi (her partner's name is Xielzaath). She is well-spoken but paranoid and bound to the door. She assumes the worst of adventurers, but can be reasoned with under the right circumstances.

All fight to the death otherwise, including the nagas, who know they will come back to life anyway. When reduced to 0 hit points or lower, the naga turns to bronze and shatters into several pieces.

Amphibious Naga. The guardian naga have a swim speed of 40 ft. and the amphibious trait.

Naga's Spell list. To make the fight a bit more challenging, you can replace *calm emotions* with *counterspell* and *clairvoyance* with *dispel magic*.

Adjusting this Encounter

The fight is intended to be moderately difficult, potentially easy if the characters opt to talk and manage to make a deal with the guardian naga. Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **kuo-toa gladiators** and two **kuo-toa archers**.
- **Weak:** Remove one **kuo-toa gladiator** and one **kuo-toa archer**.

- **Strong:** Add a **guardian naga**
- **Very Strong:** Add a **guardian naga**, replace all the kuo-toa gladiators with **three kuo-toa blackguards** and **three giant sharks** (the blackguard's magical steeds), the sharks come from the outside

Terrain

When a fight takes place in front of the gate, the characters have to contend with the following terrain features.

Light. A green glow emanates from below, covering the area in dim light.

Bronze Doors. See Locked Doors, below.

Ceiling. The ceiling behind the coral barricade is 20 feet high. The ceiling in front of the barricade is about 30 feet high.

Coral Barricade. The gate is hidden by a natural-looking coral barricade. The first time in a round a creature is pushed into it, breaking off pieces of coral, the creature takes 1d10 (5) piercing damage and it must succeed at a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.

Guard Platforms. These rooms about 20 feet up along the cavern wall can be reached by a small corridor and staircase behind the coral barrier. Arrow slits provide the archers a good view on the area in front of the gate while giving three-quarters cover (+5 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws) against attacks from the outside.

Seaweed Curtain/Seaweed Patches. The seaweed provides cover. Any non-amphibious creature that enters for the first time in the round or starts its turn in or next to a patch of seaweed must make a DC 17 Strength saving throw or become restrained. A creature restrained by the plants can use its action to make a DC 17 Strength saving throw to free itself. Alternately a creature with a slashing weapon can spend an action to destroy a 5 foot-square patch, freeing anybody captured by that patch of seaweed.

Underwater Combat. See the *Player's Handbook* page 198. Creatures without a swim speed have disadvantage on attack rolls unless they are using a crossbow, dagger, javelin, net, shortsword, spear or trident. Range is limited to normal for bows. Everybody has resistance to fire damage while underwater.

Treasure

The kuo-toa carry few items of value, but the characters can recover five pearls, each worth 100 gp. The plate mail of the kuo-toa blackguards can be sold to a collector for 200 gp per suit.

Development

While Zuilp'ithuh wants the rift closed, the aboleth is arrogant, evil and paranoid. At this point it never even considers the characters might have made the wrong assumptions, let alone that it could use the PCs' help. Its minions tend to reflect this attitude, fighting to the death.

The naga(s), Ezsiekschi, is slightly less paranoid and a bit more open for reason. When she spots characters who are obviously followers of lawful good, neutral good or lawful neutral deities, she calls out to them (note that she is oblivious to any factions and their nature). If no such characters are in the party, the characters can persuade her to talk with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The naga keeps fighting while talking, though she orders the kuo-toa to keep any compatible characters alive. She has no mercy for others.

The naga wants to know why the characters are fighting the guardians of the rift. Do they not know that their violence only hastens its opening? If told that the aboleth is the culprit, she just laughs and tells that the characters cannot trick her into abandoning her post. The aboleth is the rift's guardian and it wants to keep it closed just as much as she does.

Danatar (if present) does not like any talk between the aboleth's minions and the characters. He keeps attacking as long as he can get away with it (at least one round), rightfully concluding that a well-aimed cantrip can get the kuo-toa and naga to ignore any peaceful solution. He needs to get into the lair, and using the characters is still the most efficient method to do so. He will point out though that aboleths are vile aberrations, and this one has committed plenty of evil acts. They have no reason to trust this monster and all the reason not to. The naga is likely deluded, controlled, mad or all three.

Once the characters get the naga to talk, they need to convince her that they honestly want to close the rift. Doing so during the fight requires three DC 20 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) checks. The PCs have advantage on these checks if they have not dealt any damage to the kuo-toa or naga. On the other hand, if one of the members of their group keeps fighting during the talk, they have disadvantage. Until convinced of the adventurers' good intentions, the naga and kuo-toa keep fighting as normal.

Once the characters reach an accord with the naga, she allows them to enter Zuilp'ithuh's lair on the promise not to harm the aboleth and to close the rift. She will demand that the party leader accept a *geas*

to such effect. Only with great difficulty can they convince her not to demand a promise to keep the aboleth alive (DC 25), but a promise to close the rift is non-negotiable.

Otherwise, see Locked Doors below if they defeat the naga and kuo-toa. Remember, the naga turns to bronze and shatters if dropped to 0 hit points or lower; she will reform in 1-6 days.

Short Rest. Characters taking a short rest within the chasm, must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion due to the maddening effects of the Far Realm rift. The effect penetrates extra-dimensional spaces such as created a *rope trick* as long as the entrance is within the chasm. Of course, nothing prevents the characters from leaving the chasm and taking a rest outside.

Note that as long as the characters rest within 1 mile of the rift, Zuilp'ithuh projects its image into the camp to talk with the characters. See part 3 for details.

Locked Doors

When the characters have dealt with the guardians, they can investigate the large double bronze doors at the end of the cavern. Despite being underwater, they are not corroded and look brand new. They appear to be made of solid bronze, decorated with a beautiful relief with fish people worshipping and offering humans to some kind of pit. The pit is encircled by two snakes, although if one or both nagas have been destroyed, only an indentation remains where the naga animated and came out of the door.

The door is locked and protected by an *arcane lock*. It can be opened through brute force, requiring a DC 35 Dexterity (thieves' tools) or Strength check; reduce the DC by 10 if the *arcane lock* is dispelled (potentially with the aid of a *knock* spell). Given time, the adventurers can also destroy the door with the aid of weapons. The doors have AC 18, 40 HP, and a damage threshold of 10.

Alternatively, the characters can repair the naga and use it as a key. If the players like a minor puzzle, you can cut out the pieces of the tangram in Appendix III and give them together with Player's Handout 1. Otherwise you can simply allow them to repair the lock as long as they realize they need to put the naga together or require an easy Intelligence check (DC 10).

Once the door is open, the characters can enter Zuilp'ithuh's lair. Proceed with part 3.

Part 3. Zuilp'ithuh's Lair

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

When the characters open the bronze doors at the entrance, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Behind the huge bronze doors is a wide smooth stone corridor going up in a steep incline and emerging from the water into an open chamber. The corridor is well-lit with a sickening green glow coming from the walls. Non-Euclidean geometric patterns decorate the walls, which have a slimy look and feel about as warm as the temperature of a human.

The straight corridor is about 60 feet long, rising with a steep incline until enters the pool in Area 1. See Appendix II for a map of the lair. The rest of the maze is above water except for the pools depicted on the map.

Regional Effects. The cavern is within 1 mile of an aboleth and as such it has been warped.

- Surfaces are slimy and wet and are difficult terrain.
- Water sources are supernaturally fouled. Enemies of the aboleth that drink such water vomit it back up within minutes.
- As an action, Zuilp'ithuh can create an illusory image of itself within the area. The copy can appear at any location within the maze. Once created, the image lasts as long as the aboleth maintains concentration, as if concentrating on a spell. Although the image is intangible, it looks, sounds, and can move like the aboleth. The aboleth can sense, speak, and use telepathy from the image's position as if present at that position. If the image takes any damage, it disappears.

Mad Whispers

The rift's effects are much stronger in Zuilp'ithuh's lair. The adventurers see movement in the corners in their eyes and hear soft whispering voices in their minds. The greenish glow is bright, and irritates the eyes.

Compared to the entry hall, the effects of the madness are harder to ignore at this point, and oddly draining. Each character must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take one level of exhaustion. Characters who have already spent at least one hour exposed to this effect make the save at DC 20 instead.

The exhaustion is only recovered through magic or by taking a long rest outside the area of effect.

Area 1. Greeting Room

The large, roughly circular room is dominated on one side by a large pool and on the other a worn life-size statue of an aboleth looking straight at the pool with obsidian eyes. The area in front of the statue is covered with bones, mostly of fish, but including what appears to be human. Everything seems to be covered in a thin layer of mucus. Five ten-foot wide, natural-looking corridors lead out of the room, one you came from, two to the left and two to the right. One of the two on the right is flooded.

This is the first room any visitors enter. In past days, kuo-toa guards were posted here, but with all the losses Zuilp'ithuh suffered, it is now empty except for a single frail looking kuo-toa. There is nothing of interest amongst the bones. The three pieces of obsidian could be sold for 25 gp per eye.

When the characters enter the room, Zuilp'ithuh is well aware of their arrival and strength. The old kuo-toa serves as its eyes, and as soon as the creature sees the PCs or is disabled, the aboleth projects its illusionary image within the room. It hopes the characters are willing to talk, if not, it waits for them at the rift, having very few minions left to pose a threat to the characters (see part 4).

Zuilp'ithuh wants to know who the characters are and why they are here. It expresses surprise if the PCs mention they want to reseal the rift and does not believe them at first. Once convinced of their intent, though, the aboleth replies that it is the guardian of the rift and keeping it closed is its task. It demands to know why the humans opened the rift and now want to close it again. It then asks a few questions to learn if they can actually close the rift before inviting them in (not telling it has no minions left to actually stop them). It does warn the characters that a few "critters" entered its home through the rift. Those things seemed to ignore the aboleth and kuo-toa, but might react differently to the characters.

Note that the aboleth is incapable of understanding what it did wrong, and certainly admits to attacking Hulburg now and in the distant past. It needed sacrifices to keep the rift closed. There might be alternatives, but sacrificing sapient creatures is more effective and who cares about a few humanoids that die within a blink of the eye?

Roleplaying Zuilp'ithuh

Zuilp'ithuh is an imposing albino aboleth with three red eyes. Its voice is a soft whisper in the listener's mind, one moment

sounding like that of their mother, the next like that of a hated enemy, lover, rival, or childhood friend. It makes a gurgling sound that it seems to be unaware of.

Zuilp'ithuh is an arrogant creature, convinced of its own superiority, especially over humans and their ilk. It disdains creatures that lack a racial memory and die so quickly. The characters have earned its respect, though: they have proven to be strong, especially if they had a central role in the earlier two parts of the trilogy.

The aboleth is also incredibly old, and it has lost touch with current times and with time in general. It sometimes appears to lose its train of thought or says seemingly nonsensical things.

Area 2. Kuo-toa Dens

There are two living areas for the aboleth's kuo-toa servants. Both areas look roughly the same.

You have wandered into a string of large, smooth, roughly circular caverns filled with greenish ponds. The walls are covered with algae and strings of slimy sea weed and water constantly drips from the ceiling. Dozens of fish-like yellow eyes glare toward you from behind curtains of green weeds and dark pools.

Many kuo-toa live in both areas, but most are young and weak, ill-prepared to deal with adventurers. At most they hiss and curse in Undercommon.

If the characters are guided by the image of Zuilp'ithuh, most of the kuo-toa keep their distance. The archpriest **Alpool** approaches the group while also groveling. He is curious why the aboleth has befriended the soft-skins (who are no more than food and sacrifices), and he also accuses the characters of being mass murderers. Shouldn't they be in the prison like the other human? The priest is insane, and Zuilp'ithuh enjoys seeing him make a fool of himself, so it allows Alpool to question the characters. (Note that Zuilp'ithuh has forgotten about the human prisoner. If asked about him, Zuilp'ithuh remembers, and it is willing to let the human go, although the human would make a good sacrifice for the coming ritual.)

If the characters are hostile toward Zuilp'ithuh, the kuo-toa decide to make a final stance against the characters. Regardless of the path the PCs took, they face the **archpriest Alpool, two kuo-toa whips, two aquatic trolls** and **ten kuo-toas**.

The goal of the fight is to showcase how desperate the aboleth and its forces are. It is supposed to be easy, and if you are pressed for time, don't run it.

Adjusting this Encounter

The fight is intended to be easy. Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove both **aquatic trolls**
- **Weak:** Remove **one aquatic troll**.
- **Strong:** Add an **aquatic troll**
- **Very Strong:** Add an **aquatic troll** and a **kuo-toa archpriest**

Treasure

Searching the caverns reveals a couple of small pearls and beautiful-looking shells worth a total of 250 gp in each area (if both are searched, the adventurers gain 500 gp).

Area 3. Stasis Room

This difficult-to-reach room is completely bare except for an odd 10-by-10-foot glass tank filled with opaque fluid of some kind. The walls, floor, and ceiling are very smooth and extremely slippery due to mucus covering it. An oddly sweet smell clings to the room. Both the hidden and open corridor are protected by *glyphs of warding* (dealing sonic damage). The hidden entrance can be found with a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. There is nothing of value here.

Area 4. Meditation Room

This is one of the central rooms of the lair and also one of the largest. Whether by magic or not, sounds are oddly dampened within the room.

The floor rises up with a whirlpool pattern to a ten feet high circular platform in the middle. The platform takes on a smooth, bowl-like form at the height, big enough for an aboleth to lay in. The platform gives a nice view of a dark, motionless pool below. The occasional drip of water creates various circular patterns on the pool's surface.

There is nothing of value here.

Note. If you have at least 90 minutes left and the players are itching for a fight, the "critters" described in part 4 confront the characters here (or in area 8 depending on what route they took).

Area 5. Prison

The only entrance into the room is a flooded corridor that comes from the kuo-toa's living area. Rusty chains dangle from the walls, but most prisoners do not need chains here.

There is only one prisoner, an elderly human male known as Sly Lester. He has forgotten whether that is his real name or how long he has been imprisoned here. He vaguely recalls being a sailor, maybe a pirate or mariner, but definitely not a dog owner or breeder though. He is mad, obsessed with that idea that dogs are taking over the world, but cats are in their way. The dogs have humanity completely fooled with their tricks of loyalty and bravery.

Once Zuilp'ithuh remembers Lester's presence, it recommends him as a sacrifice in part 5. The aboleth does not have the faintest clue why it kept Lester alive, but speculates that perhaps it was because he resisted being changed into the aboleth's servitor.

Note that Lester has survived the mad whispers to long, because the effect does not kill. Instead when a creature reaches exhaustion level 6, the creature becomes permanently insane.

Roleplaying Sly Lester

Sly Lester is an old decrepit man with only a few tufts of grey hair and a few yellow teeth remaining. He stinks of fish, and nothing gets him angrier than complaining about his smell (except perhaps suggesting he is a dog lover). As he puts it, "You try to keep smelling like roses while imprisoned by fish people and being fed nothing but fish for years."

Thoroughly mad, Lester is unable to stay quiet for more than a few seconds, even in his sleep. He has a hair-trigger temper, and he would kill somebody with his bare hands and forget he did it a few minutes later. (He might even have a conversation with the corpse). He wants to hire the characters to deal with the monster that keeps eating part of his socks.

Area 6. Kitchen

A sushi cook would feel right at home in this kitchen. Fish dangle from the ceiling, some very sharp knives can be found in various drawers, and the stone counters are perfect for cutting fish. Neither kuo-toa nor Zuilp'ithuh stick to just raw fish though, and there might be pieces of humans, merfolk and other humanoids. The slime and dirty surfaces tend to cost most people their appetite as well.

There is nothing of value here.

Area 7. Larder

This relatively small and very cool room contains mostly fish of all kinds of sizes. There is also a merfolk and a human dangling from hooks in the ceiling, both dead and slightly rotting. Several barrels contain a stinking, oozing stew-like substance complete with fish heads, tails, and

unidentifiable pieces of meat and plants. There are two barrels of once expensive whiskey, both open and spoiled with bits and pieces of fish floating in it. There are also various supplies clearly looted from ships, but most surface dwellers would not consider them fit for consumption now.

There is nothing of value here.

Area 8. Rift's Entrance

This room is best ignored. It keeps changing, and none of the shapes appear remotely possible. One moment, it becomes the innards of a gargantuan creature, then it resembles a room-sized amoeba, then it looks like some kind of twisting stairwell without end. None make sense. The three entrances remain stable though, with the one in the north opening and closing like a chewing predator leading to the rift cavern beyond.

Characters can stabilize the area through force of will; doing so requires a DC 10 Wisdom check, and the effect lasts as long as they concentrate (as on a spell). Unless combat takes place here, it is unlikely the characters stick around long enough to care though.

Note. If you have more than 90 minutes left, and the players are itching for a fight, the "critters" described in part 4 confront the characters here (or in area 4, depending on what route the characters took).

Development

Eventually the characters should reach area 8 and enter the rift cavern beyond, either after some exploration of their own or guided by Zuilp'ithuh. Proceed with part 5 when they do.

Keep in mind that part 5 takes about 60 minutes. Run part 4 as an intermezzo sometime during the exploration or after having seen the rift and beginning preparations for the ritual when you still have 90 minutes or more left, or when the characters have had only one fight up till this point.

Part 4. Unwanted Guests

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

The rift into Far Realm has been slowly opening over the last few months. Not too long ago, the opening become wide enough for a few aberrations to slip through. These monsters leave the aboleth and its minions alone, but they are uncontrolled by Zuilp'ithuh.

Since none of the creatures is amphibious, they have been unable to leave the area. They have set up camp in Area 8, and when they sense the approach of the characters, they decide to have a bit of fun and fill their stomachs with fresh meat. Unless all characters have hidden themselves from the neothelid's Creature Sense ability, they are well aware when approached even by invisible creatures.

Two blue slaad and **one green slaad** act as if they have not seen the characters. They sit around a campfire discussing the lack of food in the area and debating how to get out without being able to swim. They are willing to have a chat with the characters, but eventually grow bored and attack. They especially decide to attack if a character mention they have potions or scrolls that allow the monsters to breathe water.

One neothelid is underground. It attacks in the 2nd round.

Adjusting this Encounter

The fight is intended to be moderate. Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** The slaad flee at the first sign of trouble, they do not attack the characters.
- **Weak:** Remove the **green slaad**
- **Strong:** Add a **blue slaad**
- **Very Strong:** Add a **blue slaad** and a **green slaad**

Terrain

Assuming the fight takes place in area 8, you have to keep two effects into mind.

Dimensional Vortex. The nearby rift creates a powerful dimensional vortex that affects magic used in its vicinity. Any form of dimensional travel from the cavern is affected; *teleport*, *dimension door*, *plane shift* or similar effects cannot be used to move out of the cavern, though summoning creatures from other dimensions works as normal. Any effect that would remove a creature from the cavern, like *banishment*, has its effect duration limited to one round. No

extradimensional spaces, like *Leomund's tiny hut*, *rope trick* or similar can be created in the cavern.

Flexible Terrain. The area seems more like the innards of some kind of big creature than an actual cave. The exact effects are up to you, but could include dripping acid (4d10 acid damage to a random character), an unexpected pit opening below one or more characters, or the sudden widening or closing of distance between characters and monsters. Only one effect takes place each round.

Development

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the characters are expected to survive the fight and proceed into the Rift Cavern in part 5.

The slaad fight to the death, being stuck here, while the neothelid is simply too hungry to flee. If Danatar is present, they sense his corruption and leave him alone. Danatar also keeps his distance from any fight, citing the need to preserve his magic for later. He does cast the occasional cantrip, especially if the characters appear to be in trouble. If the slaad are somehow captured alive, they know nothing of what is going on. They just want to escape into the wider world.

Part 5. Closing the Rift

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

As the characters move into the rift cavern, read or paraphrase the following:

Timing your entrance, you slip through the constantly opening and closing doorway and into a large cavern. Patches of seaweed hang from its ceiling in random clusters, glowing purple in the green light emanating from a jagged crack in reality embedded in the center of the cavern's floor. Surrounding the rift are runes set into the floor: pulsing with a dim white light, they seem to display words in an incomprehensible language. Just above the small rift is a large stone bowl, suspended in midair. Floating next to it is a large albino aboleth, one slimy tentacle resting in the bowl.

Characters entering the cavern for the first time are affected by Mad Whispers.

Mad Whispers

The rift's effects very strong here. Each character must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion. Characters who already spend one hour within the area make the save at DC 25 instead.

The exhaustion can be recovered through magic or by taking a Long Rest outside the area of effect. Use your judgement to determine what magic might work.

General Features

The ritual cavern has the following general features:

Terrain. The entire area is filled with air. The floor of the cave is natural stone and is more or less level. The walls are rough and contain several nooks and corners to hide in.

Light. The rift at the center of the cave provides a bright green light throughout the cave, reaching everywhere but the very edges of the room.

Rift: The cave contains a Small rift in the center of the floor. It is currently about 2-ft. by 3-ft.

Bowl: There is a stone bowl hovering over the rift in the floor. The bowl is empty, but shows a few telltale rust colored stains.

Runes: A number of dimly-glowing runes set into the floor in a circle around the rift.

Seaweeds. In several spots, seaweed strands of varying length are hanging down from the ceiling, lighting up in a bright pulsating purple under the green glow of the portal. These can provide both concealment and cover.

Final Words

Zuilp'ithuh is projecting its image while hiding in the back of the cavern. It has run out of minions to

pressure the characters with, and sees the PCs as its last chance to fulfill its purpose and close the rift. If the characters are not yet convinced that the aboleth indeed wants to close the rift, it attempts to convince them now. Insight shows it sincere in this desire as it truly is what it wants.

If it manages (or has already managed) to convince the characters, the aboleth drops his projection and moves toward the characters to be present in the flesh as a show of trust.

Meanwhile Danatar, if present, attempts to convince the characters to attack Zuilp'ithuh in order to do away with the threat to his plans. He grudgingly allows the characters to talk if they wish, and pretend to be convinced if they believe the aboleth. This is not yet his moment to betray them.

If Zuilp'ithuh is attacked, it flees though the network of seaweed per its "In the weeds" power. It keeps an eye on what is happening in the cavern and shows back up after Danatar's betrayal.

If the characters agree to work with Zuilp'ithuh on closing the rift, it first offers to help them with their exhaustion levels (see Removing Mental Fatigue sidebar). Then, because it doesn't at first remember the characters prepared a ritual, it starts to explain how to close the rift. When it notices the orb in their possession, read or paraphrase the following:

Zuilp'ithuh's voice itches its way into your head. "You brought the orb? Good. It will help make efficient use of what few souls I have left. We must feed their energy to the runes and let the Orb bolster their life force so we get more out of them. Now... Oh. Wait."

If Danatar is present, he interrupts Zuilp'ithuh to point out that he prepared a ritual to close the rift. If Danatar is absent Zuilp'ithuh stops himself and remarks that the characters supposedly brought a ritual?

Danatar's Ritual

The ritual, as explained by Danatar or read from the scroll, requires the following:

- The **Key without lock**, **Pure chaos contained** and **Essence of law** must be placed in a container near the rift. The bowl hovering over it will do fine.
- Once the ingredients are in the bowl, they must be combined into a sealant. Combining the ingredients can be done with a successful combination of an Intelligence (Arcana), and

Wisdom (Religion) check (both DC 20) or by channeling magical power into it (6 spell levels total).

- Once the sealant is created, it must be poured over the edges of the rift.
- After applying the sealant, someone needs to use the *orb* to activate it and the rift will be closed.

Zuilp'ithuh concedes that this would work and is easier than its planned ritual. The aboleth is certainly willing to give it a try. Zuilp'ithuh takes up a position near the entrance and allows Danatar and the characters to do their ritual.

If the characters decide to perform Danatar's ritual, they can move through each of the steps up to the creation of the sealant. If the characters still need help with their exhaustion levels, this is when Danatar (if he is present) applies the "healing" dabs of sealant (see the Removing Mental Fatigue sidebar). At this point, either Danatar betrays them, or he (or his clone) teleports in to disrupt the ritual if he was found out earlier.

Zuilp'ithuh's Ritual

Unless the characters stop it, Zuilp'ithuh further explains the steps of its ritual, which simply consists of activating several of the runes. Or rather having them activated by its "vessels," with the aid of the *orb*. Eight of the runes need to be fed and active at the same time at which point the rift will be dispelled and closed for another eon.

The characters may decide to skip Danatar's ritual completely and go with Zuilp'ithuh's version. If this happens, adjust the read aloud texts accordingly and have Danatar's betrayal start just before the first rune is triggered. Danatar throws the tainted ingredients in the rift to open it.

Removing Mental Fatigue

Depending on the adventurers' choices, they might be allied with Zuilp'ithuh at the start of the ritual and/or Danatar. Each has a solution to the mental fatigue as a result of the Mad Whispers.

Zuilp'ithuh. If the players have no way to remove the exhaustion on their own, Zuilp'ithuh will offer to help them (if they come to an understanding on the ritual, of course). Zuilp'ithuh offers to apply a small patch of its slime on everyone's temples. Zuilp'ithuh explains that there may be some negative side effect.

Anyone that allows this eliminates up to 3 levels of exhaustion and becomes vulnerable to fire damage for the next 24 hours.

Danatar. If Danatar is present and has not yet been found out, he will not be outdone. He assures the characters he has

an alternative fix. Once the ingredients are mixed, everyone should apply a small dab of sealant on their temples. Danatar makes no mention of side effects.

Anyone that does so eliminates up to 3 levels of exhaustion and becomes vulnerable to psychic damage for the next 24 hours.

Danatar knows that the resulting vulnerability will seriously hamper attempts to thwart him, so he is all too happy to "help" the adventurers in this way.

DM Guidance

There are quite a few moving parts to this encounter, which is intended to be a climactic, deadly encounter. The characters should, hopefully, come out on top, but it should not be easy. Please adjust accordingly.

Below, see key events listed in chronological order:

Exhaustion. The characters may have significant levels of exhaustion by the time they reach this encounter. If they cannot remove these effects, either Zuilp'ithuh or Danatar has a way to remove some or all of it, at a price. See the Removing Mental Fatigue sidebar.

Deal with the Aboleth. Characters may already be allied with Zuilp'ithuh. If they are not, they will have to decide now whether to make a deal. Attacking the aboleth is certainly an option, but will make things harder.

Choose a Ritual. The adventurers must choose whether to use Danatar's ritual or trust Zuilp'ithuh.

Interrupting Danatar's Betrayal. Regardless of what ritual is chosen, Danatar will attempt to open the rift. This kicks off a cinematic scene that players may want to interrupt. If they do so, i.e. acting during your narration, let them do so: it makes it harder to acquire much-needed information.

Using the Runes. Zuilp'ithuh's spawn and/or the players need to get 8 (depending on party strength) runes activated simultaneously. Berach, the spawns he controls, and Danatar attempts to deactivate runes to keep the ritual from completing. Activating a rune is painful (see The Runes, below); using the *orb* makes it slightly less so.

The Rift. The Rift and the area above it function as an anti-magic zone for area spells. The rift has additional effects on several other spells or magical effects (see **The Rift** sidebar).

Combatants. All the combatants in this encounter are significantly altered in comparison to their standard stat blocks – they are legendary examples of their species, corrupted by the Far Realm. See

appendix III for stat blocks that have all the changes incorporated.

Ritual Commences

In case of betrayal, read or paraphrase the following

Danatar leans in toward the bowl to aid in the creation of the sealant. Reaching out, he grabs the edge of the bowl and begins to chuckle. Then, with a swift movement, he tips over the bowl, letting the mixed ingredients drop down into the rift.

Danatar leaves his chuckle to hang in the air as he fades from view, only to reappear at the other end of the cavern.

If Danatar is not present, he or his clone appears at this moment. Read or paraphrase the following

Three bolts of force steak out the darkness at the other end of the cavern, hitting the bowl with the sealant. Each bolt cracks the stone a little more, until the final impact causes the bowl to shatter, sending the mixed ingredients tumbling into the rift below. Out of the shadows steps Danatar, arms raised and face showing a mask of disdain.

Zuilp'ithuh reacts with anguish. If the characters had declined to work with the aboleth, or even attacked him, he still returns at this point, traveling in through one of his seaweed patches.

The light from the rift flares brightly and a cacophony of whispers charges into your brain. The edges of the rift begin to slowly expand. Inside the rift is a swirling of green and black energy that starts spinning and picking up speed.

"No! This must not be!" Zuilp'ithuh's voice rings in your mind. "Quickly, we must feed the runes! Hand the orb to the vessel!" At an unspoken command from Zuilp'ithuh, a fishy creature comes slithering out of one of the seaweed patches and makes its way to the nearest rune. "Give it the orb so we may start!"

From across the cavern, Danatar addresses you:

"No need to be worried friends, I have this! I am not about to let some interdimensional upstart threaten MY dominance of this realm. But all this power must not go to waste. I will take it and use it in my best interest. To rid myself of ALL those against me. To rule, to have my fun, to..."

Out of the shadows behind him steps a gaunt figure resembling a mind flayer who, with a sharp wave of a tentacle interrupts Danatar. "You may have your speech later! First my revenge."

The alhoon seems to focus for a moment as another sea spawn emerges from one of the sets of seaweed tendrils.

The rift immediately expands to a 5-foot radius. Any characters in possession of extradimensional storage items like a *bag of holding* can feel the rift pulling at them.

Allow each character one movement action in response to the sudden but inevitable betrayal.

If the characters hand the orb to Zuilp'ithuh's spawn, it survives the activation of the rune, albeit just barely. If they refuse, Zuilp'ithuh still has the spawn activate the rune, but the minion disintegrates instantly. Adjust the text as needed. Initiative starts as soon as the first rune is triggered.

A beam of light shoots up from the rune to envelop the spawn and all that remains visible is the black outline of it holding the orb aloft. A sound of ripping parchment booms through the cavern and a milky white forcefield covers the swirling black and green vortex that is the expanding rift. The bright beam fades as quickly as it appeared and the spawn collapses to its knees, the orb siding from its seemingly powerless grip and a stream of black blood trickling from its gills.

The characters now have to deal with **Danatar**, **Belrach**, and/or **Zuilp'ithah** while trying to close the rift through interaction with the runes.

The characters have the task of getting 8 (see adjusting this encounter) runes activated at the same time. Alternatively, they can ask Zuilp'ithuh to use its minion, which dies unless it has the orb in its passion.

Note Zuilp'ithuh has one **sea spawn** minion before the ritual starts and the alhoon has another **sea spawn** minion. The aboleth's minion likely dies by activating the rune. Afterwards, the two aberrations can summon one such minion at the start of their turns from the weeds when their created minion is dead, having only one minion active at a time, so there are likely **two sea spawn** minions active at any one time during the fight. They do not attack the characters.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Only 5 runes need be activated.
- **Weak:** Only 6 runes need be activated
- **Strong:** 9 runes need to be activated
- **Very Strong:** 10 runes need be activated.

Alhoon Changes (Berach)

- **Very Weak, Weak, & Average:** add 7th level spell (one slot), 2 Legendary Resistances
- **Strong & Very Strong:** HP 150 add 7th level spell (one slot), 3 Legendary Resistances

Archmage Changes (Danatar)

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, per your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Danatar **loses 1 legendary action**, his **Danatar says YES** and his **larger than life** powers.
- **Weak:** Danatar **loses 1 legendary action** and **Danatar says YES** power.

The Runes

The runes.

Activate: To activate a rune, a living creature must spend an action while standing on it. An activated rune glows bright white. Make a note if a player activates a rune while holding the *orb*, as this is linked to the story award **A Far Realm Connection**.

Deactivate: To deactivate a rune, a living creature must stand on it and use an action. A deactivated rune glows a dim white. If a rune is deactivated and no runes remain active, there is an effect from the rift (see below).

Effect on Creatures. The creature activating or deactivating a rune suffers intense mental anguish as it hears, what seems like, a million voices screaming in anger, pain and disappointment all at once. The creature takes 2/3 of its max hitpoints in psychic damage. If the creature is holding the *Orb of Creation*, they instead take only 1/2 of their max hitpoints in psychic damage. (Note that creatures vulnerable to psychic damage take half again as much damage, so unprotected creatures will likely be reduced to 0 hit points by the runes.)

Effect on the Rift: Once the first rune is activated, a forcefield covers the entire rift. This allows creatures to stand on and move across the rift. Make sure to describe this to the players. If a rune is deactivated and no runes remain active, the forcefield stays in place, but a backlash is triggered. All creatures standing on or flying/floating above the rift take 10d6 (35) psychic damage (DC 18 Intelligence saving throw for half) as their mind is assailed by a scouring probe from beyond.

If the characters did not replace the ingredients Danatar brought with untainted variants, then the DC of this save becomes 22. This is a magical effect.

The Rift.

Expansion: At the end of each turn, the rift expands; its radius increases by 5 feet (5 feet after Danatar's betrayal, then 10 feet, 15 feet, etc)

Area of Effect Drain: The area of the rift on the floor and the entire area above it is immune to area effects. Any area effect that overlaps with the area of the portal just has no effects in the overlapping area. (i.e. a fireball whose area of effect intrudes on the rift's space has no effect in that area). This effect extends to the ceiling of the cavern. Make sure to describe this visually if it happens.

Dimensional Vortex. The rift creates a powerful dimensional vortex that affects magic used in its vicinity. Any form of dimensional travel from the cavern is affected; *teleport*, *dimension door*, *plane shift* or similar effects cannot be used to move out of the cavern, though summoning creatures from other dimensions works as normal. Any effect that would remove a creature from the cavern, like *banishment*, has its effect duration limited to one round. No extradimensional spaces, like *Leomund's tiny hut*, *rope trick* or similar can be created in the cavern.

Start of Character Turn: Any character that starts their turn standing on or flying/floating above the rift takes 10d6 (35) psychic damage (save INT DC 18 for half) as their mind is assailed by a scouring probe from beyond. If the characters did not replace the ingredients Danatar brought with untainted variants, then the DC of this save becomes 22. This is a magical effect.

Tactics

Berach uses a legendary action each round to take control of one of the **sea spawn** that belongs to Zuilp'ithuh. He takes control of a new one every time he loses one. Whenever a new servitor appears, add it at a new initiative. The spawn is instructed to deactivate runes whenever they can.

Berach hides in the shadows at the edge of the cave or in the seaweed clusters as he controls the spawn, using his legendary saves to help maintain concentration on his control. If the characters get close to success, Berach is willing to deactivate a rune himself.

Berach does not use his legendary action *An Unstable Mind* unless the portal is already closed. Berach blames Zuilp'ithuh for the downfall of his hive and focuses any attacks he makes on the aboleth, unless otherwise threatened.

Danatar attempts to stay out of reach while raining down destruction on the characters. He focusses on anyone carrying the *orb*, including

spawns. Remember Danatar has *foresight* and *mindblank* active and a *contingency* in place. Danatar realizes the rift cancels area effects and tries to use the effect to his advantage.

Zuilp'ithuh activates a new spawn once it has none active. When it appears, add it at a new initiative. The aboleth summons it from the most beneficial seaweed location and has it try to activate a rune, provided the characters are willing to let the spawn have the *orb*.

The adventurers can activate each rune themselves, which might be essential to keeping the rift sealed, but this will incur considerable damage (particularly if any of them has been made vulnerable to psychic damage).

Development

As soon as 8 runes are active simultaneously, the portal immediately closes:

Without warning the green glow that was permeating the cave is gone, and with it the portal that was dominating the floor. Zuilp'ithuh's triumph fills your mind.

If Berach is still alive, he lets out a cry of anguish and attempts to slay Zuilp'ithuh at all costs, fighting to the death. Danatar aids him, not caring if he dies, as there is always another clone available...

If the characters do not succeed in closing the rift, it eventually expands to cover the entire cavern. The Dimensional Vortex is no longer active, as the forbidding magic is broken. At this point, Zuilp'ithuh flees by means of teleportation, but not before psychically offering to take the characters with him. Any who agree arrive in a different part of his lair and can eventually make their way back to Hulburg.

Conclusion

If the rift is closed, the adventurers can return to Hulburg, and life returns to normal, or as normal as life ever is in Hulburg. Lord Hulmaster thanks the adventurers, buys them a drink, and pays whatever he promised them, then gets back to the busy task of making money.

If the rift remains open, there is a general unease in Hulburg—or at least more unease than usual. People keep to themselves, paranoid that the person they are talking to might secretly be a creature from another realm. The city grows darker and more forbidding, and creatures from the Far Realm infest

first the Hulburg region, then the Moonsea in general.

Rewards

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

Experience

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Berach	5,900
Blue slaad	2,900
Danatar	8,400
Far-spawn guard	5,000
Far-spawn yochlol	5,900
Giant Shark	1,800
Green slaad	3,900
Guardian naga	5,900
Kuo-toa	50
Kuo-toa archer	700
Kuo-toa archpriest	2,300
Kuo-toa blackguard	3,900
Kuo-toa gladiator	1,800
Kuo-toa whip	200
Neothelid	10,000
Troll	1,800
Zuilp'ithuh	5,900

Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Sealing the Rift	2,000

The adventures' minimum and maximum XP awards are located on the Adventure Rewards document. Note that DDAL adventures award a maximum of the "target XP" award. Only epics may grant the "maximum" amount.

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 11,250 **experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 15,000 **experience points**.

Treasure

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Five pearls	100 gp/pearl
Kuo-toa plate mail	200 gp/plate mail
Kuo-toa treasure	up to 500 gp
Obsidian eyes (3)	25 gp/eye
Reward for sealing the rift	1,000 gp/PC

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system detailed in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Robe of Eyes

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement)

This strange robe seems to move around to some unseen wind and feels oddly warm to the touch. When worn, you hear distant soft whispers easily lost against regular background sounds. There are no individual words, but sometimes you think you actually do understand its words of advice and wisdom. It otherwise functions as a regular *robe of the eyes*. This item can be found in **Handout 2**.

Potion of Water Breathing

Potion, uncommon

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Scroll of Water Breathing

Scroll, uncommon

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Story Awards

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award:

A Far Realm Connection. Your use of the *orb of creation* has given you a connection to the Far Realm, which is generally not a good thing for one's sanity. You gain the flaw "I have visions of monstrosities within my friends." This manifests itself in various ways, but the most insidious is this: at random times when you are at peace and associating with friends, they suddenly turn into hideous monsters in your eyes. More information can be found in **Handout 2**.

Renown

Each character receives **one renown** at the conclusion of this adventure.

DM Reward

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide* (ALDMG).

Appendix I. Monster/NPC Statistics

Aboleth

Large aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d10 + 36)

Speed 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +6, Int +8, Wis +6

Skills History +12, Perception +10

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Amphibious. The aboleth can breathe air and water.

Mucous Cloud. While underwater, the aboleth is surrounded by transformative mucus. A creature that touches the aboleth or that hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature is diseased for 1d4 hours. The diseased creature can breathe only underwater.

Probing Telepathy. If a creature communicates telepathically with the aboleth, the aboleth learns the creature's greatest desires if the aboleth can see the creature.

Actions

Multiattack. The aboleth makes three tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. The disease has no effect for 1 minute and can be removed by any magic that cures disease. After 1 minute, the diseased creature's skin becomes translucent and slimy, the creature can't regain hit points unless it is underwater, and the disease can be removed only be *heal* or another disease-curing spell of 6th level or higher. When the creature is outside a body of water, it takes 6 (1d12) acid damage every 10 minutes unless moisture is applied to the skin before 10 minutes have passed.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Enslave (3/Day). The aboleth targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the aboleth until the aboleth dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the aboleth's control and can't take reactions, and the aboleth and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance,

Whenever the charmed target takes damage, it can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the aboleth.

Legendary Actions

The aboleth can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The aboleth regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The aboleth makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Swipe. The aboleth makes one tail attack.

Psychic Drain (Costs 2 Actions). One creature charmed by the aboleth takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage, and the aboleth regains hit points equal to the damage the creature takes.

Alhoon

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +7, Int +8, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +8, Deception +7, History +8, Insight +7, Perception +7, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The alhoon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The alhoon's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts, levitate*

1/day each: *dominate monster, plane shift* (self only)

Spellcasting. The alhoon is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The alhoon has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, dancing lights, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, disguise self, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, mirror image, scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, Evard's black tentacles, phantasmal killer*

5th level (2 slots): *modify memory, wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate, globe of invulnerability*

Turn Resistance. The alhoon has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Actions

Chilling Grasp. *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit., reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6). The alhoon magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 +4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Archmage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 +18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills History +13, Arcana +13

Damage Resistance damage from spells; nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (from stonewood)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Any six languages

Challenge 12 (8400 XP)

Magic Resistance. The archmage has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The archmage can cast disguise self and invisibility at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *mage armor**, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *fire shield*, *stonewood**

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *screaming*, *wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank**

9th level (1 slot): *time stop*

*The archmage casts these spells on itself before combat.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage

Far-Spawn Guards*

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (full plate, shield)

Hit Points 127 (15d8 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +5

Skills Intimidate +5, Perception +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Deep Speech

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Aura of Bloodthirst. If the far-spawn guard isn't incapacitated, any far-spawn guard can make a single melee weapon attack as a bonus action while within 10 feet of the far-spawn guard.

Actions

Multiattack. The far-spawn guard makes three attacks: one with each of its different flail attacks.

Flail of Madness. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target must make a melee attack against a random target within its reach on its next turn. If it has no targets within its reach even after moving, it loses its action that turn.

Flail of Pain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 22 (4d10) psychic damage.

Flail of Paralysis. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

***Reflavored flind.** Exchanged chain and bow for full plate and shield and modified *aura of blood thirst* to only affect far-spawn.

Far-Spawn Yochlol*

Medium fiend (demon, shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +5, Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Deception +10, Insight +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Abyssal, Common, Deep Speech

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Shapechanger. The far-spawn yochlol can use its action to polymorph into a form that resembles a mind flayer or giant octopus, or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Magic Resistance. The far-spawn yochlol has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spider Climb. The far-spawn yochlol can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Innate Spellcasting. The far-spawn yochlol's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The far-spawn yochlol can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *detect thoughts*, *web*
1/day: *dominate person*

Actions

Multiattack. The far-spawn yochlol makes two melee attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. (10 ft. in demon form), one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) psychic damage.

Mist Form. The far-spawn yochlol transforms into a mind rending mist or reverts to its true form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is also transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

While in mist form, the far-spawn yochlol is incapacitated and can't speak. It has a flying speed of 30 feet, can hover, and can pass through any space that isn't airtight. It has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and it is immune to nonmagical damage.

While in mist form, the far-spawn yochlol can enter a creature's space and stop there. Each time that creature starts its turn with the far-spawn yochlol in its space, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be charmed. While charmed this way, the target is incapacitated.

* **Reflavored yochlol.** Poison effects have been replaced with psychic effects and the form of its shapes has been changed. Web walker is removed.

Giant Shark

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 126 (11d12 + 55)

Speed 0 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	11 (+0)	21 (+5)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages –

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Blood Frenzy. The shark has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Water Breathing. The shark can breathe only underwater.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Guardian Naga

Large monstrosity, lawful good

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 45)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +7, Int +7, Wis +8, Cha +8

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Celestial, Undercommon

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Rejuvenation. If it dies, the naga returns to life in 1d6 days and regains all its hit points. Only a *wish* spell can prevent this trait from functioning.

Spellcasting. The blackguard is an 11th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks), and it needs only verbal components to cast its spells. It has the following paladin spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, cure wounds, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *calm emotions, hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, clairvoyance*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, freedom of movement*

5th level (2 slots): *flame strike, geas*

6th level (1 slot): *true seeing*

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spit Poison. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 15/30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Kuo-Toa

Medium humanoid (kuo-toa), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor, shield)

Hit Points 18 (4d8)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Spears. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Net. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check to free itself or another creature in a net, ending the effect on a success. Dealing 4 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) frees the target without harming it and destroys the net.

Reactions

Sticky Shield. When a creature misses the kuo-toa with a melee weapon attack, the kuo-toa uses its sticky shield to catch the weapon. The attacker must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw, or the weapon becomes stuck to the kuo-toa's shield. If the weapon's wielder can't or won't let go of the weapon, the wielder is grappled while the weapon is stuck. While stuck, the weapon can't be used. A creature can pull the weapon free by taking an action to make a DC 11 Strength check and succeeding.

Kuo-Toa Archer*

Medium humanoid (kuo-toa), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor, studded leather)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +5

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Archer's Eye (3/day). As a bonus action, the archer can add 1d10 to its next attack or damage roll with a crossbow.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The archer makes two attacks with its crossbow.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Net. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check to free itself or another creature in a net, ending the effect on a success. Dealing 4 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) frees the target without harming it and destroys the net.

* Archer modified with kuo-toa racial traits.

Replaced longbow with crossbow for underwater use. Assume archer has the Crossbow Expert feat in regards to the loading quality. Added net attack.

Kuo-Toa Archpriest

Medium humanoid (kuo-toa), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Skills Perception +9, Religion +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Spellcasting. The kuo-toa is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrip (at will): *guidance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, sanctuary, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *spirit guardians, tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *control water, divination*

5th level (2 slots): *mass cure wounds, scrying*

Actions

Multiattack. The kuo-toa makes two melee attacks.

Scaptor. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (4d6) lightning damage.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Kuo-Toa Blackguard*

Medium humanoid (kuo-toa), neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor, plate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Spellcasting. The blackguard is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, protection from evil and good, thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite, find steed*

3rd level (2 slots): *binding smite, dispel magic*

Actions

Multiattack. The blackguard makes three attacks with its glaive or its hand crossbow.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The blackguard exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the blackguard must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from the blackguard, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

* **Blackguard modified with kuo-toa racial traits.** Replaced shortbow with hand crossbow for

underwater use. Assume they have the Crossbow Expert feat in regards to the loading quality.

Kuo-Toa Gladiator*

Medium humanoid (kuo-toa), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor, studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Brave. The gladiator has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the gladiator hits with it (included in the attack).

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The gladiator makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

Parry. The gladiator adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the gladiator must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Sticky Shield. When a creature misses the kuo-toa with a melee weapon attack, the kuo-toa uses its sticky shield to catch the weapon. The attacker must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw, or the weapon becomes stuck to the kuo-toa's shield. If the weapon's wielder can't or won't let go of the weapon, the wielder is grappled while the weapon is stuck. While stuck, the weapon can't be used. A creature can pull the weapon free by taking an action to make a DC 15 Strength check and succeeding.

* **Gladiator modified with kuo-toa racial traits.** Added the Sticky Shield reaction from the kuo-toa.

Kuo-Toa Whip

Medium humanoid (kuo-toa), neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +6, Religion +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Spellcasting. The blackguard is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The kuo-toa has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bane, shield of faith*

Actions

Multiattack. The blackguard makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its pincer staff.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Pincer Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the kuo-toa can't use its pincer staff on another target.

Neothelid*

Gargantuan aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 325 (21d20 + 105)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	7 (-2)	21 (+5)	3 (-4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +1, Wis +8, Cha +6

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages –

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Creature Sense. The neothelid is aware of the presence of creatures within 1 mile of it that have an Intelligence score of 4 or higher. It knows the distance and direction to each creature, as well as each creature's Intelligence score, but can't sense anything else about it. A creature protected by a *mind blank* spell, a *nondetection* spell, or similar magic can't be perceived in this manner.

Innate Spellcastin (Psionics). The neothelid's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *levitate*

1/day each: *confusion*, *feeblemind*, *telekinesis*

Magic Resistance. The neothelid has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage plus 13 (3d8) psychic damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be swallowed by the neothelid. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has

total cover against attacks and other effects outside the neothelid, and it takes 35 (10d6) acid damage at the start of each of the neothelid's turns.

If the neothelid takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the neothelid must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the neothelid. If the neothelid dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5-6). The neothelid exhales acid in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

* Added burrow speed due to the effects of the nearby rift into the Far Realm.

Sea Spawn

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Aquan and Common but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Limited Amphibious. The sea spawn can breathe air and water, but needs to be submerged in the sea at least once a day for 1 minute to avoid suffocating.

Actions

Multiattack. The sea spawn makes three attacks: two unarmed strikes and one with its Piscine Anatomy.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Piscine Anatomy. The sea spawn has one or both of the following attack options, based on its anatomy. You can decide or roll a d6 for each spawn.

1–4 Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

5–6 Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the sea spawn can't use this tentacle on another target.

Slaad, Blue

Large aberration, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 123 (13d10 + 52)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +1

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Slaad, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The slaad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Regeneration. The slaad regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. The slaad makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be infected with a disease called chaos phage. While infected, the target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 10 (3d6) every 24 hours. If the disease reduces the target's hit points to 0, the target instantly transforms into a red slaad, or, if it has the ability to cast spells of a 3rd level or higher, a green slaad. Only a *wish* spell can reverse the transformation.

Slaad, Green

Large aberration (shapechanger), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +1, Perception +2

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive

Perception 12

Languages Slaad, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Shapechange. The slaad can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Innate Spellcasting. The slaad's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). The slaad can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *detect magic, detect thoughts, mage hand*

2/day each: *fear, invisibility* (self only)

1/day: *fireball*

Magic Resistance. The slaad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Regeneration. The slaad regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. The slaad makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws or staff. Alternately, it uses its Hurl Flame twice.

Bite (Slaad Form Only). Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw (Slaad Form Only). Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Staff. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Hurl Flame. Ranged Spell Attack: +4 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage. The fire ignites flammable objects that aren't being worn or carried.

Troll*

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +1

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration. The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack. The troll makes three: one with its bit and two with its claws.

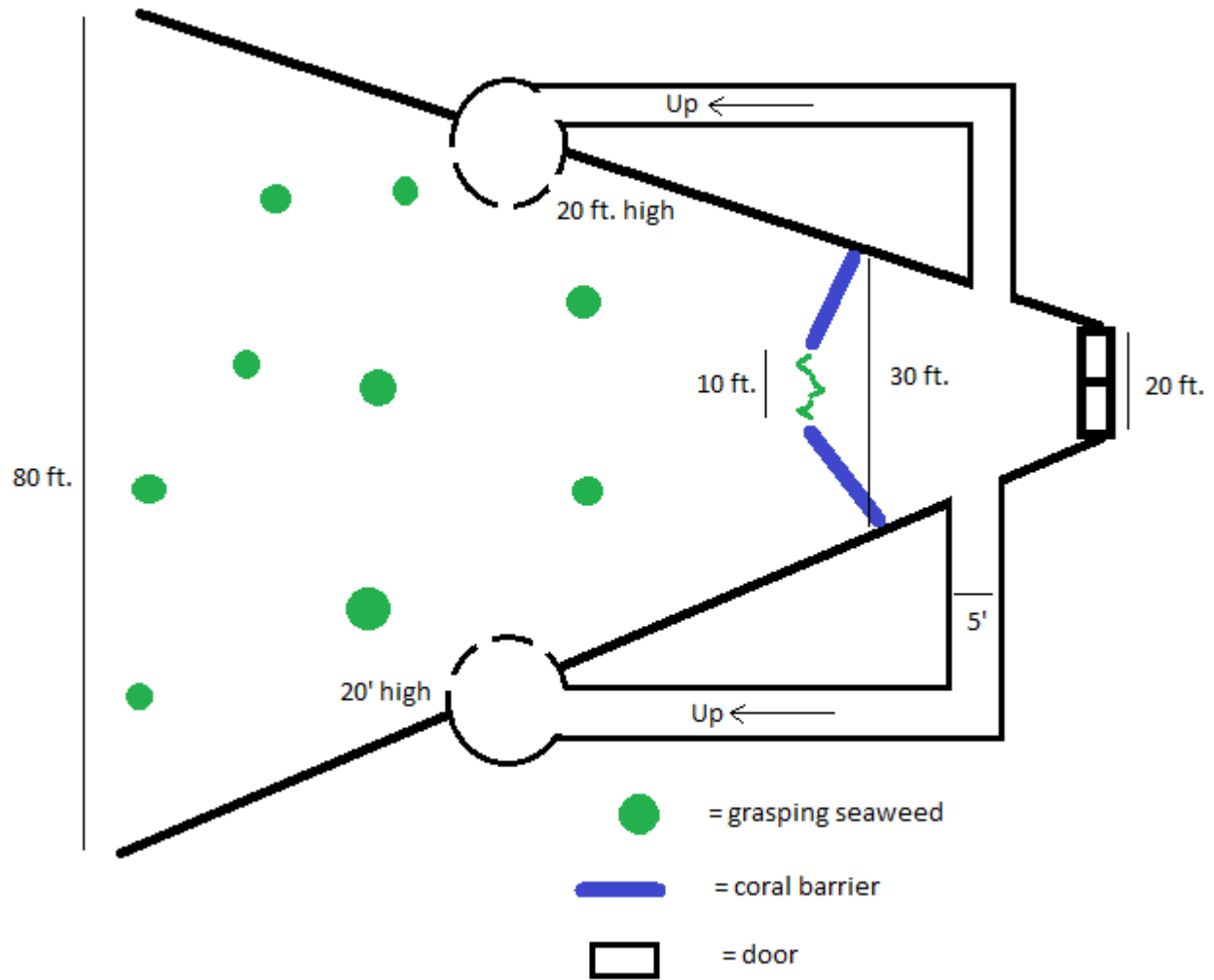
Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

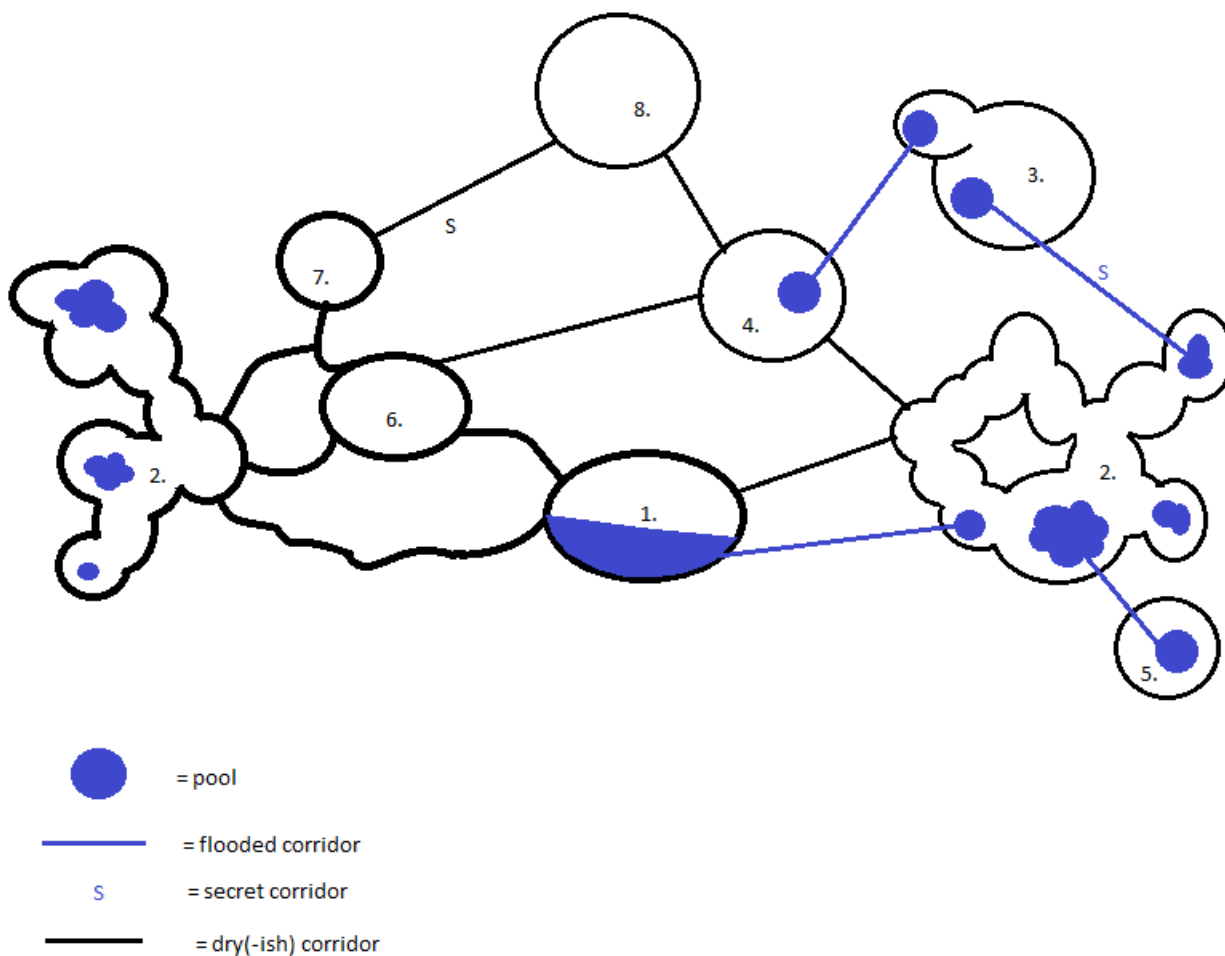
* The trolls in this adventure are aquatic versions. They have a swim speed and the amphibious trait, but are otherwise normal trolls. Having been raised by kuo-toa, they speak Undercommon instead of Giant.

Appendix II. Maps

Knock, Knock

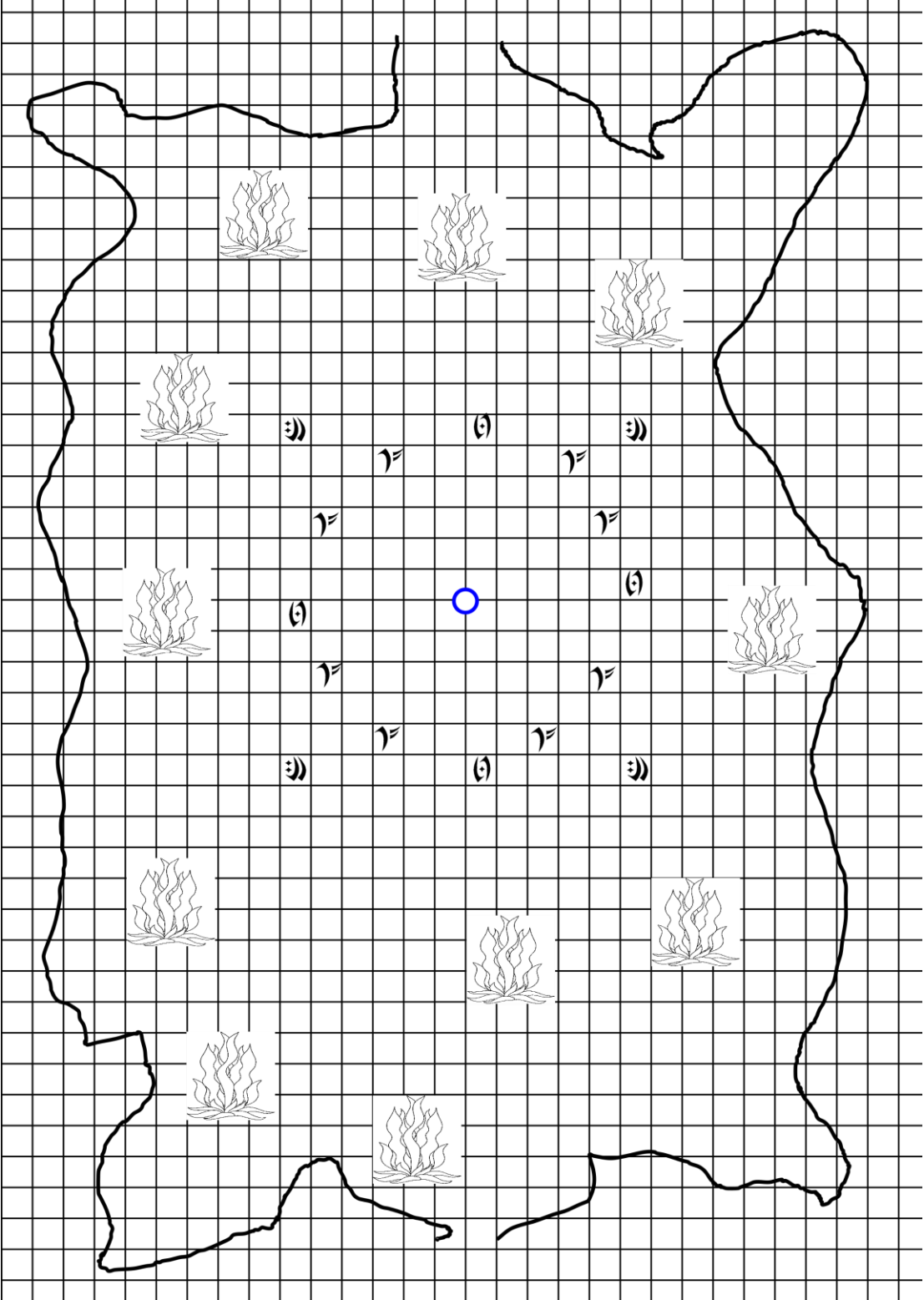


Zuilp'ithuh's Lair



Natural smooth caverns, all the corridors are 10 feet wide. The exact scale of the rooms does not matter. Room 1 contains one life-sized statue of the aboleth. Room 3 is a 10-foot by 10-foot glass tank filled with brackish water. The floor of room 4 is decorated with a large whirlpool pattern leading up to a 10 feet platform in the middle.

Rift Cavern



Appendix III. Altered Monster/NPC Statistics

Zuilp'ithuh (Aboleth)

Large aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 193 (22d10 + 72)

Speed 10 ft. Swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+5)	9 (-1)	19 (+4)	22 (+5)	18 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +12, Wis +6

Skills History +16, Perception +13

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Amphibious. The aboleth can breathe air and water.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). While in its lair, Zuilp'ithuh's can use legendary resistance three times a day. If Zuilp'ithuh's fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Mucous Cloud. While underwater, the aboleth is surrounded by transformative mucus. A creature that touches the aboleth or that hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature is diseased for 1d4 hours. The diseased creature can breathe only underwater.

Probing Telepathy. If a creature communicates telepathically with the aboleth, the aboleth learns the creature's greatest desires if the aboleth can see the creature.

Actions

Multiattack. The aboleth makes three tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. The disease has no effect for 1 minute and can be removed by any magic that cures disease. After 1 minute, the diseased creature's skin becomes translucent and slimy, the creature can't regain hit points unless it is underwater, and the disease can be removed only by *heal* or another disease-curing spell of 6th level or higher. When the creature is outside a body of water, it takes 6 (1d12) acid damage every 10 minutes unless moisture is applied to the skin before 10 minutes have passed.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 10 ft. one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Enslave (3/Day). The aboleth targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the aboleth until the aboleth dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the aboleth's control and can't take reactions, and the aboleth and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance. Whenever the charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the aboleth.

Legendary actions

The aboleth can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The aboleth regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Control spawn. Zuilp'ithuh takes control of one of its sea spawn or if already controlling one, grants it an additional movement action.

Tail Swipe. The aboleth makes one tail attack.

Psychic Drain (Costs 2 Actions). One creature charmed by the aboleth takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage, and the aboleth regains hit points equal to the damage the creature takes.

Lair Actions

While fighting inside its lair, an aboleth can invoke the ambient magic to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the aboleth takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

Astral Projection. As an action, Zuilp'ithuh can create an illusory image of itself within the area. The copy can appear at any location within the maze. Once created the image lasts for as long as the aboleth maintains concentration, as if concentrating on a spell. Although the image is intangible, it looks, sounds, and can move like the aboleth. The aboleth can sense, speak, and use telepathy from the image's position as if present at that position. If the image takes any damage, it disappears.

Let's Not and Say You Did. While in its lair Zuilp'ithuh can use an action or legendary action to cast *dispel magic* at level 6.

In the Weeds. While in its lair Zuilp'ithuh can, as part of its movement, travel to any other place in its lair by simply touching a patch of seaweed.

Berach (Alhoon)

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 150 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	21 (+5)	19 (+4)	139 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +7, Int +9, Cha +8

Skills Arcana +9, Deception +8, History +9, Insight +8, Perception +8, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Berach fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The alhoon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The alhoon's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts*, *levitate*

1/day each: *dominate monster*, *plane shift* (self only)

Spellcasting. The alhoon is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The alhoon has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *ray of sickness*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *confusion*, *Evard's black*

tentacles, *phantasmal killer*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold*, *wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *reverse gravity*

Turn Resistance. The alhoon has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead

Actions

Chilling Grasp. *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit., reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6). The alhoon magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 +4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Mind Lash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+3) slashing damage and 5 (2d4) psychic damage. Any creature that takes psychic damage from the mind lash must also succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Legendary Actions

Berach can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Berach can take only one legendary action at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Berach regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

A Stern Lash. Berach attacks a creature within range with its mind lash.

Achieve Control. Take control of one of Zuilp'ithuh's sea spawn. Requires concentration to maintain control.

An Unstable Mind (Costs 3 Actions). The alhoon regains their mind blast ability and can use it during this legendary action.

Danatar (Archmage)

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 146 (18d8 +18) + false life (1d4 +44)

Speed 30 ft., teleport 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills History +13, Arcana +13

Damage Resistance damage from spells

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Any six languages

Challenge 12 (8400 XP)

Confessions of a fractured mind: Danatar's mind is fractured beyond repair and as such is permanently affected with a Mind blank like effect. Restoration magic can only suppress this effect. *Lesser restoration* or *Lay on hands* can suppress it for one minute. *Greater restoration* or *Heal* suppress the effect for an hour.

Magic Resistance. The archmage has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

All that and smart: Ego can add his intelligence bonus (+5) to any ability check (like concentration or grapple)

Contingency: An active contingency is running on Danatar. If Danatar ever gets hit by an attack or spell, a mislead spell comes into effect. Note that neither contingency nor mislead used through this ability cost a spell slot

Spellcasting. The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). As his archmage spells Danatar has: *crown of madness* and *shield*. Danatar can cast these spells without using a spell slot or components. Danatar has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *mage armor**, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *misty step*, *shatter*, *crown of madness*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): No spells, spell slots used to cast 3rd level damaging spells or *counterspell*

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *scrying*, *wall of force*, *dominate person*, *animate objects*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*

7th level (1 slot): *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *incendiary cloud*

9th level (1 slot): *foresight**

*The archmage casts these spells on itself before combat.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Danatar fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Legendary actions

Danatar can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Danatar regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Danatar says NO. Danatar can give up one of his legendary actions to cast a second spell as a reaction even if he has already used a reaction this round. For instance, a second *counterspell* or an extra *shield*.

Danatar says YES (costs 2 actions). Danatar can cast an additional spell of level 6 or lower.

Extra spell. Danatar can cast an additional spell of level 3 or lower.

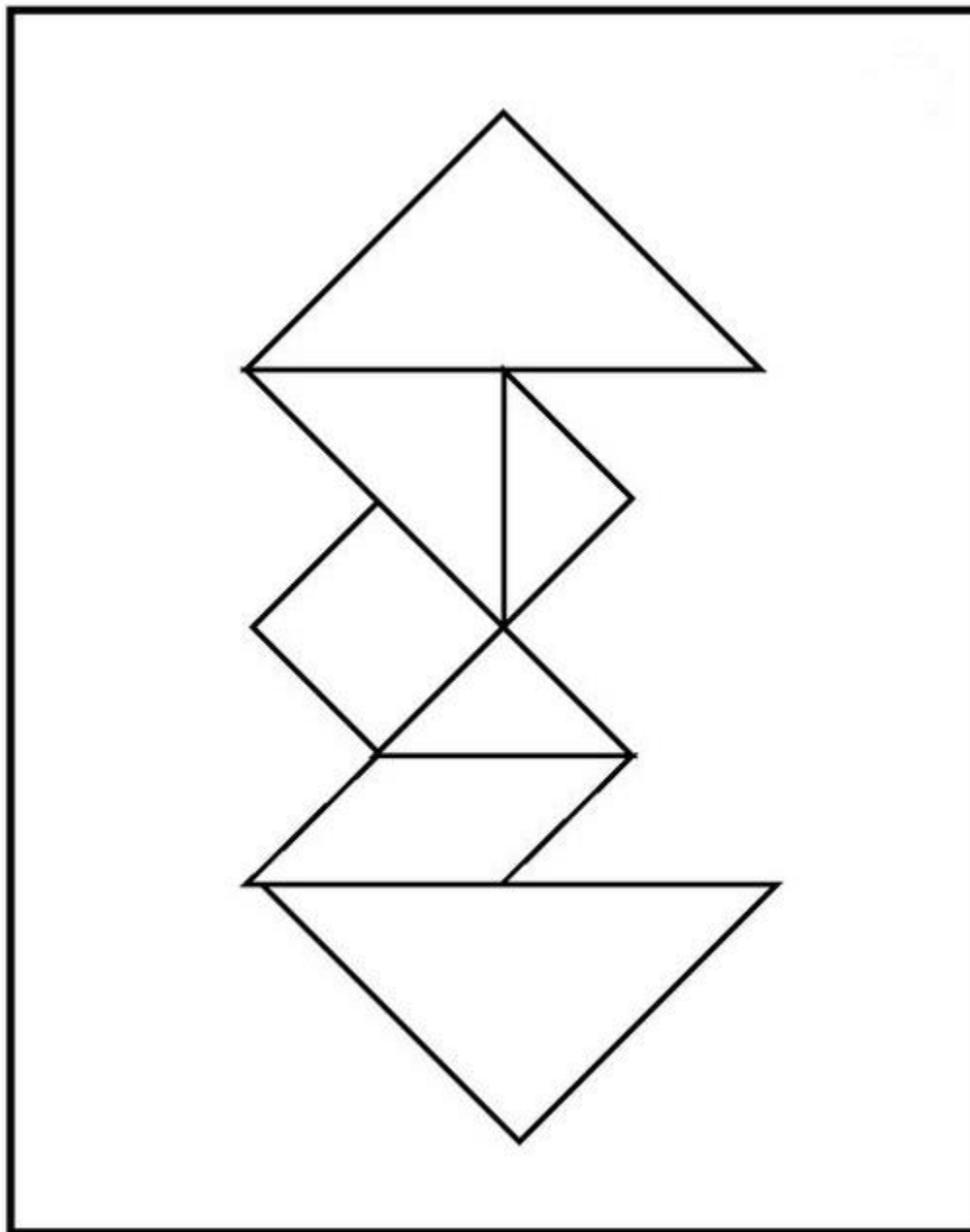
Equipment.

Danatar is wearing a *robe of eyes*. This grants him advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, darkvision out to a range of 120 feet, and the ability to see invisible creatures and objects, as well as see into the Ethereal Plane, out to a range of 120 feet.

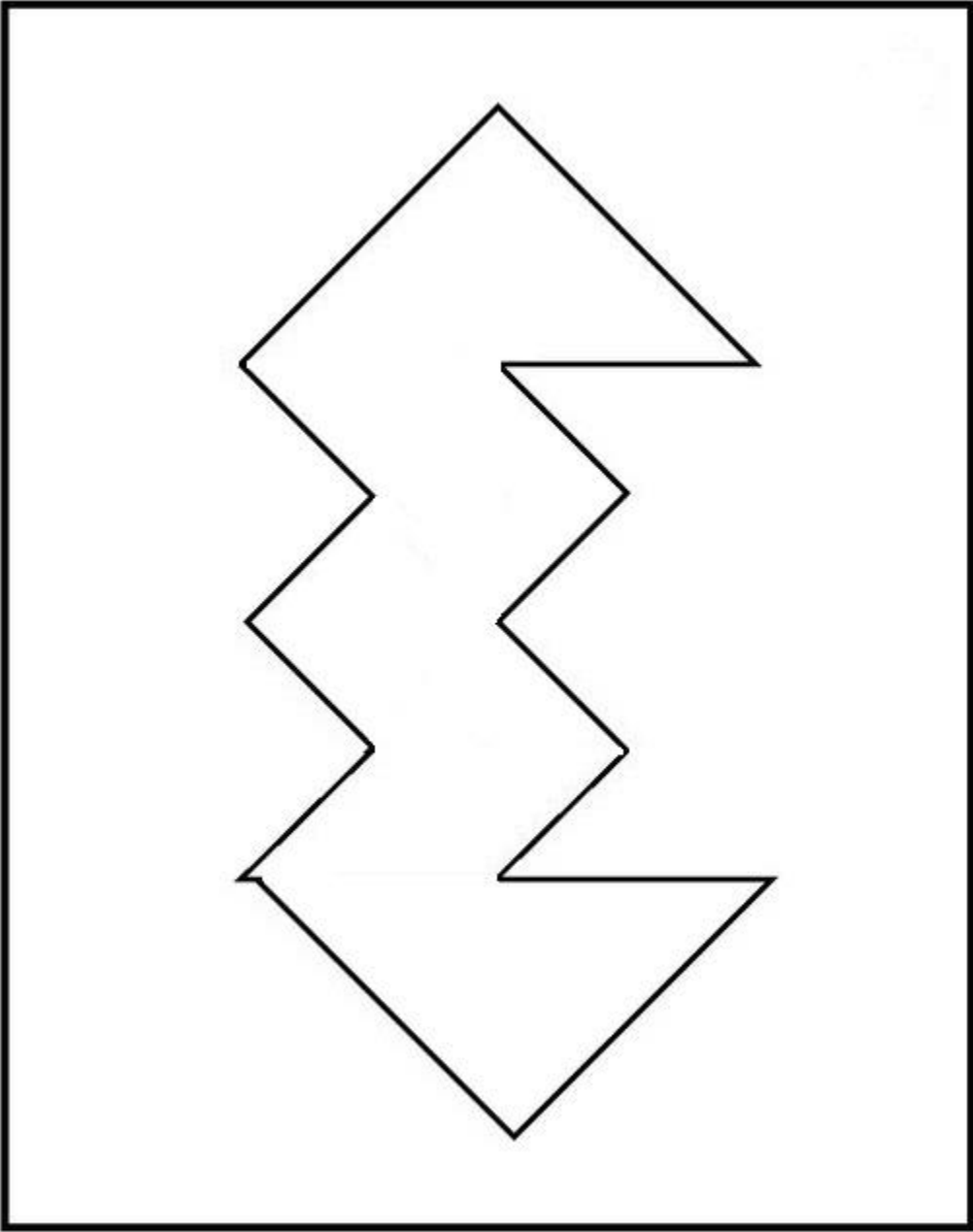
A *light* spell cast on the robe or a *daylight* spell cast within 5 feet of the robe causes you to be Blinded for 1 minute. At the end of each of your turns, you can make a Constitution saving throw (DC 11 for *light* or DC 15 for *daylight*), ending the blindness on a success.

Appendix IV. DM Handout Shattered Key Pieces and Solution

Cut out the individual pieces with scissors. Provide the players with Handout 1, which is the indentation of the missing naga. They need to place the individual pieces into the indentation to assemble the proper form, at which point the door opens.



Player Handout 1. Shattered Key



Player Handout 2. Story Award

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

Story Award: A Far Realms Connection

A Far Realms Connection. Your use of the *orb of creation* has given you a connection to the Far Realm, which is generally not a good thing for one's sanity. You gain the flaw "I have visions of monstrosities within my friends." This manifests itself in various ways, but the most insidious is this: at random times when you are at peace and associating with friends, they suddenly turn into hideous monsters in your eyes.

Player Handout 3. Magic Item

During the course of this adventure, the characters may find the following permanent magic item:

Robe of Eyes

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement)

This robe is adorned with eye-like patterns. While you wear this robe, you gain the following benefits:

- The robe lets you see in all directions, and you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.
- You have darkvision out to a range of 120 feet.
- You can see invisible creatures and objects, as well as see into the Ethereal Plane, out to a range of 120 feet.

The eyes on the robe can't be closed or averted. Although you can close or avert your own eyes, you are never considered to be doing so while wearing this robe.

A *light* spell cast on the robe or a *daylight* spell cast within 5 feet of the robe causes you to be blinded for 1 minute. At the end of each of your turns, you can make a Constitution saving throw (DC 11 for *light* or DC 15 for *daylight*), ending the blindness on a success.

The strange robe seems to move around to some unseen wind and it feels oddly warm to the touch. When worn you hear distant soft whispers easily lost against regular background sounds. There are no individual words, but sometimes you think you actually do understand its words of advice and wisdom.

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.