


**ADVENTURERS
LEAGUE**

WINDOW TO THE PAST

When a Thayan research expedition returns from the Glacier of the White Wyrms with only two survivors that are reduced to whispering about an ancient pyramid under the ice, perhaps it is time to discover just what scares the life out of a nation of necromancers.

A 4-Hour Adventure for 5th – 10th, 11th – 16th, or 17th – 20th Level Characters



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Introduction

Welcome to *Window to the Past*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League organized play system. This adventure takes place after the events of *DDEP2 Mulmaster Undone* and the entirety of the second season of D&D Adventurers League play, collectively referred to as Elemental Evil and denoted by the **DDEX02** codes.

This adventure is designed for characters of multiple tiers; specifically, characters of 5th–10th, 11th–16th, and 17th–20th level may participate in this adventures. All characters participating in the adventure must be in the same tier (tier 2: 5th – 10th level; tier 3: 11th – 16th level; tier 4: 17th – 20th level). The adventure is optimized for five characters, with target levels of 10 (tier 2), 15 (tier 3), and 20 (tier 4). Characters outside these level ranges or that are not in the same tier as their fellow adventurers cannot participate in this adventure.

Our story begins with the adventurers in Mulmaster after the Devastation, but quickly moves to the icy reaches of the Glacier of the White Wyrms, far to the east and north of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose.

The D&D Adventurers League

This adventure is official for D&D Adventurers League play. The D&D Adventurers League is the official organized play system for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®. Players can create characters and participate in any adventure allowed as a part of the D&D Adventurers League. As they adventure, players track their characters' experience, treasure, and other rewards, and can take those characters through other adventures that will continue their story.

If you're running this adventure as part of a store event or at certain conventions, you'll need a DCI number. This number is your official Wizards of the Coast organized play identifier. If you don't have a number, you can obtain one at a store event. Check with your organizer for details.

D&D Adventurers League play is broken up into storyline seasons. When players create characters, they attach those characters to a storyline season, which determines what rules they're allowed to use to create and advance their characters. Players can continue to play their characters after the storyline season has finished, possibly participating in a second or third storyline with those same characters. A character's level is the only limitation for adventure play. A player cannot use a character of a level higher or lower than the level range of a D&D Adventurers League adventure.

For more information on playing, running games as a Dungeon Master, and organizing games for the D&D Adventurers League, please visit the D&D Adventurers League home at:

www.dndadventurersleague.org

Preparing the Adventure

Before you show up to Dungeon Master this adventure for a group of players, you should do the following to prepare.

- » Make sure to have a copy of the most current version of the *D&D Basic Rules* or the *Player's Handbook*.
- » 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.
- » Get familiar with the monster statistics in the Appendix.
- » Gather together any resources you'd like to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- » If you know the composition of the group beforehand, you can make adjustments as noted throughout the adventure.

Before Play at the Table

Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information:

- » Character name and level
- » Character race and class
- » Passive Wisdom (Perception)—the most common passive ability check
- » Anything notable as specified by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players that have characters outside the adventure's level range cannot participate in the adventure with those characters. Players with ineligible characters can make a new 1st-level character or use a pregenerated character. Players can play an adventure they previously played or ran as a Dungeon Master, but not with the same character.

Ensure that each player has an official adventure logsheet for his or her character (if not, get one from the organizer). The player fills out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for experience, gold, downtime, renown, and number of permanent magic items. He or she can fill in the other values and write notes at the conclusion of the session. Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet.

If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array. Point players to the *D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide* for reference.

If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now. Alternatively, they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to

the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

Adjusting the Adventure

Throughout this adventure, sidebars provide information to assist you in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups and characters of higher or lower levels than the adventure is optimized for. This is typically used exclusively for combat encounters.

You may adjust the adventure beyond the guidelines given in the adventure, or for other reasons. For example, if you're playing with a group of inexperienced players, you might want to make the adventure a little easier; for very experienced players, you might want to make it a little harder. Therefore, five categories of party strength have been created for you to use as a guide. Use these as a guide, and feel free to use a different adjustment during the adventure if the recommended party strength feels off for the group.

This adventure is optimized for a party of five characters of specific levels based on their tier: level 10 (tier 2), level 15 (tier 3), and level 20 (tier 4). To figure out whether you need to adjust the adventure, do the following:

- » Add up the total levels of all the characters.
- » Divide the total by the number of characters.
- » Round fractions of .5 or greater up; round fractions of less than .5 down.

You've now determined the average party level (APL) for the adventure. To figure out the party strength for the adventure, consult the following table.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition		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

Average party strength indicates no recommended adjustments to the adventure. Each sidebar may or may not offer suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

Running the Adventure

As the Dungeon Master of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You help guide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- » You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure. Doing so is especially important and applicable outside of combat, but feel free to adjust the adventure for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time.
- » Don't make the adventure too easy or too

difficult for a group. Never being challenged makes for a boring game and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating one. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a chance to shine.

- » Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately. Watch for stalling, since 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. Try to be aware of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.
- » Read-aloud text is just a suggestion; feel free to modify the text as you see fit, especially when dialogue is present.
- » Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to proceed. Players should be given clues and hints when appropriate so they can tackle puzzles, combat, and interactions without getting frustrated over lack of information. Doing so encourages immersion in the adventure and gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues.

In short, being the DM isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about facilitating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. The *Dungeon Master's Guide*[™] has more information on the art of running a D&D game.

DOWNTIME AND LIFESTYLE

At the beginning of each play session, players must declare whether or not they are spending any days of downtime. The player records the downtime spent on the adventure logsheet. The following options are available to players during downtime (see the D&D basic rules or the *D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide* for more information):

- » Catching up

- » Crafting (exception: multiple characters cannot commit to crafting a single item)
- » Practicing a profession
- » Recuperating
- » Spellcasting services
- » Training

Other downtime options might be available during adventures or unlocked through play, including faction-specific activities. In addition, whenever a character spends downtime days, that character also spends the requisite expense for his or her lifestyle. Costs are per day, so a character that spends ten days of downtime also spends ten days of expenses maintaining his or her lifestyle. Some downtime activities help with lifestyle expenses or add lifestyle expenses.

SPELLCASTING SERVICES

Any settlement the size of a town or larger can provide some spellcasting services. Characters need to be able to travel to the settlement to obtain these services. Alternatively, if the party finishes an adventure, the characters can be assumed to return to the settlement closest to the adventure location.

Spell services generally available include healing and recovery spells, as well as information-gathering spells. Other spell services might be available as specified in the adventure. An organization providing spellcasting services can provide no more than three spells per day total, unless otherwise noted.

Spell	Cost
Cure wounds (1st level)	10 gp
Identify	20 gp
Lesser restoration	40 gp
Prayer of healing (2nd level)	40 gp
Remove curse	90 gp
Speak with dead	90 gp
Divination	210 gp
Greater restoration	450 gp
Raise dead	1,250 gp

Spell	Cost
Resurrection*	3,000 gp
True resurrection*	50,000 gp

*These spells require an additional expenditure of downtime days (150 for *resurrection* and 350 for *true resurrection*). This cost can be reduced by 50 days for each faction rank above 1 that the character possesses. This downtime is spent in community service for the church that provided the spell in question. The Acolyte Background feature does NOT reduce the gp or downtime cost for either of these spells.

Acolyte Background

A character possessing the acolyte background requesting spellcasting services at a temple of his or her faith may request one spell per day from the Spellcasting Services table for free. The only cost paid for the spell is the base price for the consumed material component, if any.

Acolytes can call upon spellcasting services in Mulmaster as follows:

Cyric, Loviatar, Tempus, Azuth, Tymora

CHARACTER DISEASE, DEATH, AND RECOVERY

Sometimes bad things happen, and characters get poisoned, diseased, or are killed. Since you might not have the same characters return from session to session, here are the rules when bad things happen to characters.

Disease, Poison, and Other Debilitating Effects

A character still affected by diseases, poisons, and other similar effects at the conclusion of an adventure can spend downtime days recuperating until such time as he or she resolves the effect to its conclusion

(see the recuperating activity in the D&D Basic Rules).

If a character doesn't resolve the effect between sessions, that character begins the next session still affected by the debilitating effect.

Death

A character who is killed during the course of the adventure has a few options at the end of the session (or whenever arriving back in civilization) if no one in the adventuring party has immediate access to a *raise dead* spell, *revivify* spell, or similar magic. A character subject to a *raise dead* spell is affected negatively until all long rests have been completed during an adventure. Alternatively, each downtime day spent after *raise dead* reduces the penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks by 1, in addition to any other benefits the downtime activity might provide.

Create a New 1st-Level Character. If the dead character is unwilling or unable to exercise any of the other options, the player creates a new character. The new character does not have any items or rewards possessed by the dead character.

Dead Character Pays for Raise Dead. If the character's body is recoverable (it's not missing any vital organs and is mostly whole) and the player would like the character to be returned to life, the party can take the body back to civilization and use the dead character's funds to pay for a *raise dead* spell. A *raise dead* spell cast in this manner costs the character 1,250 gp.

Character's Party Pays for Raise Dead. As above, except that some or all of the 1,250 gp for the *raise dead* spell is paid for by the party at the end of the session. Other characters are under no obligation to spend their funds to bring back a dead party member.

Faction Charity. Faction Charity is not available in this adventure, as the Faction Charity only affects characters of levels 1 to 4.

Thayan Charity. During this adventure, if the character is unable or unwilling to pay for a *raise dead* spell and the character's party is either unable or unwilling to pay for a *raise dead* spell, the Thayans may choose to recover the character's body and bestow upon them the effects of a *raise dead* spell. Should this happen, the character may still choose to return to life—though they may not know immediately what or whom is recalling them to life. If they accept the spell effect, they earn the **Ally of Thay** story award, though they may choose to retire their character instead at their discretion.

Background

Before the modern empires were established across Faerun, the gods were old. As powerful and often-capricious beings, these deities developed wild personalities and were unrestricted in the exercising of their powers. Some gods were wise and careful, and others were more carefree in their explorations, Worlds were bound by common faiths, and many deities found that they were worshipped by different names across many cultures and civilizations.

But these were not idyllic days by any means. Deep rifts had already begun to form in the familial structure of the gods, and resentments were growing to boiling point. Some deities, like Amaunator and Bahamut, sought to protect the mortal souls where other deities, like Shar and Tiamat, wished to control the mortals. And there were some outliers like Kyuss that felt that the worlds were all existing in a lie: that life and death represented change; that change was the ultimate nullifier; that only in undeath could true power and divinity be reached.

Using rituals that have since been lost (purportedly by intentional acts) to even the gods, Kyuss turned himself into an undead abomination. His most faithful followers soon followed suit but unlike the fledgling lichs that had begun to emerge across worlds like Faerun, their transformations had nothing to do

with magic – they were perverted divine beings, with only the smallest of divine sparks but powerful nonetheless. As such, the other gods instinctively knew that their privileged positions were imperiled and they had little time to form and execute a plan of action to control the meteoric rise of Kyuss amidst their various pantheons.

Only by setting aside their differences and confronting the Worm that Walks were the gods able to defeat Kyuss, but they were unable to destroy or kill him. They could only contain him, and to prevent his return to power they trapped his essence in a massive artifact known as the Dark Obelisks. This artifact was then shattered and its fragments were scattered across the many worlds the deities oversaw. For a time the gods could rest easy; they felt that their troubles were at an end as their erstwhile brother's power was safely torn asunder, never to be rejoined. Each fragment of the Dark Obelisk would hold but one aspect of Kyuss. Though each are powerful in their own right, it would be truly terrifying if multiple aspects joined together as one.

But in time, the mortal races began to explore and became inquisitive. They found several fragments of the Dark Obelisk. Kyuss' divine essence railed against the ancient prison, and these fragments became known as Writhing Batteries due to their rhythmic thumping and the intense arcane energies that it possessed. The mortals found ways to harness this energy and, as they say...

“Curiosity killed the cat.”

Long before the modern empires walked the land, the Empire of Netheril had reached the pinnacle of arcane and cultural perfection. But in their hubris, they were responsible for their own undoing: reckless research, careless warfare, and overextending their resources led to a series of catastrophic losses and ultimately led to the literal crashing of their empire.

Several hundred years before the Empire's tumble, though, fragments of the Dark Obelisk were discovered deep in a dwarven mine. One of those fragments was relocated to the area that would

in time come to be known as the Moonsea, and as the Netherese arcanists worked with the artifact they began to refer to it as the Writhing Battery. They crafted potent magical items but did not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions. Each time they drew power from the Battery, Kyuss was able to install a small portion of his own essence into the world. And when the gods tremble, no good can come of it.

In their haste to vacate the facility, the Netherese sought to use powerful enchantments that called upon the divine favor of Amaunator and combined them with the might of their mythal and the lost arcane school of chronomancy, but all things fade with time. These wards are failing, and Kyuss stirs once more.

Overview

The events of *DDEP2 Mulmaster Undone* resulted in terrible geographic upheaval all around the southeastern region of the Moonsea. Massive landslides, earthquakes, tidal waves, and gnashing tornados devastated the land and the city of Mulmaster was nearly scrubbed from the face of Faerun. Fortunately, these events also revealed previously-hidden artifacts—trinkets, mostly—from the ancient Netherese all around the city.

The Thayans have long held an interest in the port city and wasted no time in assisting in the rebuilding efforts. They simply asked that a blind eye be turned to their archaeological interests, and in return they would continue to spend their own resources (at no expense to the Mulmasterites or even the High Blade) to rebuild the city, bigger and better than before. It wasn't long before their interests paid off with the discovery of a research laboratory beneath the Glacier of the White Worm, far to the east of Mulmaster and nestled in the mountains.

The Thayans sent a sizable expeditionary force but only two acolytes returned. The visiting Zulkir has found this particularly troublesome, and with the assistance of Rastol Shan, the head of the Cloaks, has

arranged for a mercenary force to perform a more pointed investigation of the area. In return the Thayan noble has promised significant compensation. Upon arrival at the dig site, the characters are quick to discover that the laboratory hides ancient and palpable evil. The purpose of the facility can be discerned with careful investigation, and the effect of the still-active fragment of the Dark Obelisk has empowered (some may say attracted) servants of the Worm that Walks. Danger and death await, certainly, though the characters always have the option of running away and living to fight another day...

Mulmaster – especially as they know that the Thayans are leading these efforts. Their respective faction heads have deployed the characters to Mulmaster to investigate and report back.

All other characters: The region surrounding Mulmaster has seen devastation unlike that which can be seen anywhere else in Faerun. Opportunities abound, and the promise of ample coin and plentiful fame is too hard to turn down.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure can run quite long. As such, it is recommended that the characters receive one or more of the following hooks based on their character histories:

Members of the Cloaks: Any character that has accepted a role in the Mulmaster-specific faction the Cloaks receives a summons from Rastol Shan. The summons is irrefutable, as Rastol Shan is not a person that is declined – he is a vastly powerful mage, and purportedly bears powers far beyond those of a normal arcane caster.

Born in Thay: Any character born in Thay, whether they are Thayan nationals or escaped slaves, receives a series of troubling dreams in which they are drawn to Mulmaster. The dreams become more and more intrusive until the character is no longer able to receive the benefits of a rest—though visiting Mulmaster and seeking out the Thayan District will relieve them of this malady.

Divine sending: Powerful divine characters like high-level clerics and paladins are informed by their god that things are unfolding in the greater Moonsea region that will spell doom for the world at large. They are pointed at one of the many new temples of Ilmater in Mulmaster, though there is a feeling of dread in each missive.

Rank 3 or above in their factions: The factions are keenly interested in the ongoing rebuilding efforts in

Part I. Mulmaster in Ruins

“OH, MONSTERS ARE SCARED,” said Lettie. “That’s why they’re monsters.”

—Neil Gaiman, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*

Expected Duration: 30 minutes

DM’s NOTE: This adventure can run quite long for some tables—the more inquisitive they are, the more lore they can learn. However, many D&D Adventurers League games are limited to 4- or 5-hour segments. It is very important that you maintain a very close eye on your remaining time so that the characters receive the full depth and breadth of experience from this adventure, as there are critical events in the wrap-up as well as in the intro and combat encounters alike. Furthermore, creating an air of suspense and danger can heighten this adventure significantly. The use of audio cues (like knocking on the table in a heartbeat fashion) or using reminders (like the fact that the laboratory only holds Netherese writing) can keep the players off-balance.

Be warned that the combats in this adventure are quite deadly, and players should be encouraged to retreat and regroup as needed.

WIZARDLY INTRIGUE

The destruction that surrounds Mulmaster is legendary in scale. Many devastation orbs erupted and spewed their terrible fury across the land. The Moonsea’s ecology has been turned upside-down, and large swaths of the city lie in ruins. The nation of Thay has been quick to capitalize on this misfortune: they quickly assembled service drives full of basic rations, building materials, and raw labor in the form of tightly-controlled zombies and skeletons.

The characters are met by Rastol Shan in person at Southgate Keep, and are informed in no uncertain terms that failing to assist the Thayans will likely result in the death of the city and everyone left in it.

Roleplaying Rastol Shan

Rastol Shan has been masquerading for decades and is experienced at passing himself off as human. Putting him off his game is virtually impossible, given his magical preparations and gift for dissembling.

Rastol Shan has masked his undead nature using Nystul’s magic aura. Any spells or magical effects (such as the paladin’s divine sense class feature) that detect creature types or alignments reveal that he is a lawful neutral humanoid. This spell has been made permanent, but he also maintains a contingency that will re-apply the aura if it is ever dispelled. Despite his disguises, however, Shan is still subject to spells or abilities that affect undead, such as *turn undead*.

As the Blades and city guard are justifiably preoccupied with the reconstruction of the city, Rastol has found himself in the unenviable position of guiding the protection of Mulmaster. The Thayans, long content to sit back and work from the shadows in the city, presented the old Cloak with an opportunity he could not refuse: the Red Wizards would provide guard services as well as raw labor for the reconstruction and in return simply ask that their trade convoys be allowed through the gates unrestricted. Rastol had little option but to agree.

Rastol Shan keeps neither his spellbook nor his phylactery on his person. He has told no one of his current status as a lich, though at the DM’s discretion Zulkir Dar’lon Ma may have arrived at this conclusion already.

QUOTE: “This is the part where I speak and you listen.”

Rastol is not pleased to admit this, but is very open in the admission that his own resources are nearly exhausted and that the city is teetering on the edge of

total collapse. This exchange can be developed further at your discretion, and he will likely be more open with high-ranking members of the Cloaks. Ultimately, he directs the characters to one of the many temples dedicated to Ilmater around the city; specifically, he sends the characters to one such temple (these temples are large canvas tents that look like field hospitals) bordering the Thayan District.

It is late afternoon when the characters arrive at the temple.

The many temples to Ilmater bear a common theme: they are all full of the injured and invalid. Yet this one, near the Thayan District and matching the description as given by Rastol Shan seemingly has no patients.

A curtained-off section lies at the rear of the canvas tent, and muffled cries can be briefly heard behind it.

Should the adventures decide to investigate, they are greeted by a frazzled and nearly panicked priest of Ilmater as they get near the closed-off area. He greets them with rushed words and asks if they have been “appropriately prepared.” Before the characters can respond, he cuts them off and says that he will be back in five minutes and would love to coordinate notes with them. He then rushes off into the street, presumably to either get a breath of fresh air or perhaps simply to clear his head. In truth, he is leaving to fetch Zulkir Dar’lon Ma for this meeting.

Once the characters enter the curtained-off area, read or paraphrase the following:

The stark interior of this closed-off space is striking. Two male human patients are strapped to the top of tall metal surgical tables. One is catatonic, while the other thrashes around wildly while his voice rises and falls from hoarse scream to a whisper.

They are both covered by thin sheets, and have received grievous injuries.

Several wooden crates line the edge of this place. Their lids do not appear to be locked or even fully sealed.

The thrashing patient is speaking in a mix of both Thayan and Ancient Netherese. Any character that can speak both of these languages can understand the following points. Any character that can only speak one of these languages will struggle to piece together the meaning of the man’s ravings. For those characters that speak neither of these languages, they can pick up hints of ancient Elvish and Common, but know that the words he utters are another language entirely.

“It waits beneath the ice.”

“The Lord of Light is LIES! LIIEEEESSSS!”

“Hunger hunger, it eats... it waits and eats and waits and eats and...” then breaks off into a choked sob

“It is old and new; it holds secrets. So many secrets.”

“The infernal heart. Beating, cracking!”

Other gibberish, including references to the “walking dead” and the “ancient lore”.

Feel free to create your own elements.

If the characters look at the patients, they can easily see that they both have received terrible wounds. They have black pockmarks that range in size from the head of a pin up to about the width of a finger all over their upper torsos and to the bottom of their jawline, and then again over their forearms and hands. The catatonic patient is missing a leg, but the nub of thighbone can be seen. The raving patient has

an arm that looks like it has been equal parts burned and dipped in acid, and has a leg to match. If the characters get close (adjacent), they can attempt a DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check to learn more:

- » The wounds appear magical in nature.
- » There is a flaky appearance around the holes, similar to paper that has been burned but has not yet completely turned into ash.
- » The flesh of both patients is slowly turning a slight shade of green, but it does not appear to indicate gangrene.

Once the characters have used a Wisdom (Medicine) check (successful or otherwise), they may wish to attempt other investigative techniques. Allow them to be creative, but remind them that they only have 5 minutes – ritual casting of spells like *comprehend languages* will fail due to the time constraint.

If the characters succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check:

- » The wounds appear to have a touch of necromantic energy to them.
- » The wounds are not worsening, but the reason is uncertain.
- » This appears to be a mix of magical and natural causes.

If the characters succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check:

- » Some types of worms and burrowing insects can leave similar wounds in a creature.
- » If the characters succeed on this check by 5 or more, they can spot the tip of a worm deep inside one of the wider wounds.
- » The injuries do not appear to be worsening, nor do they appear to be healing. This would seemingly indicate some magical influence, likely necromantic.

If the characters succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check:

- » Inside one of the nearby boxes, a wax-sealed

jar can be spotted. Contained inside are the discarded husks of dozens of worms. Some characters may know that worms do not typically shed their skins.

- » There are some dirty, unkempt robes in the crates. These robes were red at one point but are now quite faded and sport many, many holes of various sizes. Some characters may realize that these holes match the patterns on the patient's flesh.
- » There are two vials of congealed, syrupy golden liquid. Characters that use *identify*, *detect magic*, or similar effects on the vials learn that these are healing potions but highly dehydrated. They have lost none of their potency, though. At tier 2, they are potions of greater healing; at tier 3, they are potions of superior healing; at tier 4, they are potions of supreme healing.

If the characters attempt to use healing or restorative spells of less than 6th level on the patients:

- » The character immediately realizes that something is preventing their efforts, as if there is a shield or cocoon of some form shrouding the patients.
- » The character casting the spell must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is adjusted by their tier: at tier 2, it is DC 14; at tier 3, it is DC 16; and at tier 4 it is DC 18.
- » Failing this saving throw results in the spell slot being expended and the spell failing outright.
- » If the spell would restore hit points and the caster succeeds on the saving throw, the patient regains $\frac{1}{2}$ of the original spell effect instead. They do not regain consciousness, however, as they have experienced severe trauma and they are not hardy adventurers.
- » If the spell would remove a disease or poison or functions in a similar manner and the caster is successful on their saving throw, a small number of the holes close and the flesh develops a purple scar. The caster should realize that it would take dozens and dozens of successful castings to cure the patients. If the caster wishes to do this, remind them that they have a 5-minute window. Should this not dissuade

them, they should be made aware that there are few other able-bodied clerics in the city and this is not a wise use of resources (those clerics can save more lives working elsewhere). Should they still wish to explore this option, a little Investigation or use of a Medicine check reveals that it would take approximately 200 castings of that spell to cure the patient.

If the characters to use *detect magic*, *identify*, or similar effects:

- » There is indeed a shell of energy surrounding the patients.
- » The shell appears to be anchored to the patients at each of the open wounds.
- » The shell is a mix of multiple schools of abjuration and conjuration, though necromancy is the strongest sign. A curious thread of magic weaves through them all, binding them together but is not identifiable at this time.

If the characters attempt to use *legend lore*:

- » They can experience several of the points that the Zulkir speaks about in the next section, and can even see the inverted pyramid—the Laboratory—and the holy symbols that cover it.
- » There is an intense sense of dread throughout the entire vision.

If the characters attempt to use *telepathy*, *Rary's Telepathic Bond*, or a similar effect or spell to communicate with the patient:

- » Any character who attempts to communicate with a patient (including just listening to their thoughts) must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw: at tier 2, it is DC 14; at tier 3, it is DC 16; and at tier 4 it is DC 18. The mind of each patient is racing with fear and imagery that is not sane or coherent. Any character that fails this saving throw grants advantage to attack rolls made by undead creatures for the duration of this adventure, or until they receive a remove curse spell cast by a 15th level or higher caster, whichever happens first. They are unlikely to be

aware of the ramification of this failure, though.

- » The patients are not capable of rational thoughts.
- » The character immediately receives all of the speech points from earlier in this section.
- » The character can feel cold, evil eyes upon them at all times.
- » The patients share some vile imagery: piles of writhing worms; Red Wizards being enveloped in swarms of insects and devoured in an instant; and a vision-shaking heartbeat that is more felt than heard.

If the characters attempt to use a spell that would summon a planar creature, or they wish to force a planar creature or familiar to touch the patients:

- » Familiars are terrified and do not wish to leave their masters. They can be forced to do so, but they make their displeasure very clear.
- » Summoned planar creatures must be forced to touch the patients.
- » A spell or effect like *augury* is likely to return a flat “no,” though you are free to embellish a bit—even the spirits are aware that whatever is infesting these two unfortunate souls is foul to the core.
- » A spell like *planar ally* is likely to gate in a creature that immediately admonishes the characters for interfering in the affairs of the gods. “What lies here should be burned and scattered into the ether, the astral, the eternal chambers of Carceri from whence it came.” Such summoned creatures are unwilling to cooperate and return to their home planes as quickly as possible. This is a significant opportunity for roleplay, though, and comes at great cost to the characters so be sure to give them a few moments to enjoy a sort-of victory!

Once the characters have discovered all that they can in the 5 minutes as allotted, move forward with the following:

The curtain is thrown open and a very muscular bald man boldly strides into the room. He is clad in ornate red robes and sports many bright blue tattoos on his scalp. Magical trinkets and spell pouches hang from his belt and strap, and he flashes a bright white smile full of large, square teeth at everyone in the room.

“MY FRIENDS!” he bellows, “My name is Zulkir Dar’lon Ma and I would like to welcome you all to the Jewel of the North, though I wish it were under better circumstances.

These poor gentlemen were simply doing their jobs when this... malady... befell them. Tell me, what have you learned?”

He is flanked by a half-dozen bodyguards and the priest of Ilmater that you already met.

Roleplaying Dar’lon Ma

Tall, dark-skinned, and broad shouldered, Dar’lon Ma is one of the elusive Zulkir of Thay – the rulers of that arcane nation. He sports a blindingly white smile and always seems to know exactly what to say when speaking to visitors, be they dignitaries, adventurers, or even the common person. He is friendly and boisterous and prone to speaking quite loudly. Though he speaks often of his desire to restore Mulmaster as “the Jewel of the North,” there is certainly something sinister beneath his honeyed words and casual tone.

Should the characters become aggressive, he has many high-level magics including permanent spells and contingencies cast and readied.

He focuses on enchantment and compulsion spells and would much rather command an opponent to “walk until your toes fall off” instead of lowering himself to basic fireballs and lightning

bolts. Characters should be encouraged to avoid combat with him, as his bodyguards are all tier 4 combatants and attacking a Zulkir would not only bring down the wrath of the nation of Thay, but would almost certainly cause the Thayans to remove their offer of aid from Mulmaster killing everyone here.

Sample phrases:

- » “MY FRIENDS!”
- » “Are we not all here for the greater good?”
- » This place has seen enough death and destruction for many lifetimes. I merely beg your assistance in these simple matters—to improve life for everyone in this region.”

Sample mannerisms:

- » Claps his hands together, wringing them slightly (to bring attention to his words).
- » Offer to shake hands with everyone, keeping his sleeves pushed well up and over his elbows (to show that he is hiding nothing).
- » Makes frequent and direct eye contact; this tactic directs his message but also serves as a measure of “alpha” or “leader” status.



Dar'lon Ma is a consummate politician and though he will choose his words carefully, he does not wish to hide the truth of these matters from the characters – though he will refrain from giving full disclosure about the matter at hand as the characters are unlikely to be Thayan, and thus have not yet earned his full trust:

- » He is the Zulkir of Enchantment, “but that is merely my job – and Mulmaster is my passion. Friends, I would not deign to use trickery in our discourse.” A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he is telling the truth.
- » These acolytes were part of an expedition that originally numbered 8 Red Wizards and 16 acolytes. They were heading out into the Glacier of the White Wyrms to investigate a new dig site.
- » They were discovered outside Southgate Gate two days ago, but have not gotten worse – or better.
- » His wizards and the few available clerics around Mulmaster have been unable to determine the cause of the injuries and are concerned. Because the patients have not gotten better nor worse, they need to identify the source of the condition before proceeding with further treatment. Killing the patients and raising them is a concept that causes the Zulkir to frown and say “I realize that my nation has a certain reputation across the world, but I am afraid that death would only exacerbate their condition.”
- » He can confirm that his wizards and clerics have been unable to cast most spells on the two men, and says that they have detected a shield or shell around the men. This is highly disconcerting.
- » The nation of Thay will reward the characters expediently and permanently, in measures far beyond mere coin – “for we are all here for the greater good, are we not?” He will not elaborate further until the contract is signed.

Should the characters ask about the expedition, the Zulkir smiles and commends them on their negotiating and business acumen.

The expeditions are typically small, resulting in minor items only. Bits of pottery, shards of stone, perhaps a dented coin or useless blade. The devastation wrought by the elemental cults is terrible indeed, but has served to reveal hints of the past that we have not seen in many, many years.

The records of Thay are complete, rivalling—nay, exceeding, I daresay!—those of vaunted Candlekeep. Word came to us of an intact building beneath the ice of the Glacier of the White Wyrms, a tenday to the east. We were unaware of such a facility existing. These expeditions and this building were certainly of Netherese origin. Should it truly be intact... the value of the knowledge we could glean from it would be immeasurable.

The Zulkir pauses to gauge your reactions before continuing:

The Netherese, as you well know, were not an honorable people. They broke what they could not control, and then broke all that they did control. This facility needs to be explored, but carefully. I sent 24 of my best – 8 wizards and 16 eager acolytes – and only these two returned.

I ask that you go there and discover the cause of what befell these two. Nothing is to be removed from the facility, for we know not what we are dealing with – though the knowledge of what lies within is to be brought back to me directly. These are auspicious days, my friends, and your legend will surely grow from this.

One of the Zulkir's bodyguards steps forward and unfurls an obscenely long copper scroll. This scroll is a very complex contract and contains the full text of not only what the Zulkir expects of the characters, but also what he will provide to them and what their rewards will be (which are simply “based upon performance”). The right side of the contract shows

the true name of each of the characters, their home city or region, and their faction affiliation; there is a lined marked “Signed” beneath their name. The characters may have some time to review the details, but reading the full text would likely take days as the print is exceedingly small and is constructed in such a way as to be nearly akin to jargon. The Zulkir will send a copy of the agreement with the characters once they sign it.

But I’m a Do-Gooder; a Hero!

This adventure makes some assumptions about the nature of the characters and their decision to do as the Zulkir has requested. However, canny players that know the lore of the Forgotten Realms will almost certainly know that the Thayans are most assuredly not a nation of good-aligned wizards – in fact, much the opposite. Be careful to not be too heavy-handed with Dar’lon Ma’s approach; if the characters do not want to work with him and they decide to decline his offer, it’s easy enough to simply have Rastol Shan approach them later.

Bear in mind that if the characters decline Zulkir Dar’lon Ma’s offer, they will not be privy to the details of the contract nor will they earn renown or gold at the end of the adventure, save for what Rastol provides them. Renown is typically awarded for the deeds of the characters, and should the characters proceed in a disorderly fashion (which is almost guaranteed to happen) they risk releasing a fragment of an ancient evil into the world.

Ultimately it is up to you, as the DM, to determine how to handle your table and if they earned the renown. Tread carefully, but the characters should own their actions here!

Should the characters ask about the details of the dig site:

- » The facility is located under the Glacier of the White Wyrms.

- » The Glacier is known to be home to a group of white dragons, though he is “fairly certain” that those creatures will not venture near the facility.
- » It is a tendar of hard travel to reach the site; he happily provides a map after the characters have signed off on the contract.
- » As far as he knows, the site is complete and almost entirely untouched.

“I present to you a binding offer, my friends. Should you perform this service for me—nay, for Mulmaster!—the nation of Thay would be greatly indebted to you. The details of this agreement are set forth in such a way as to protect our relationship and investments, but I give you my word:

The Thayans believe in rewarding their allies richly, justly, and permanently.”

DEVELOPMENT

The Zulkir has a sincere desire to “do business” with the characters. He is very much an evil being himself, though he understands the importance of working with powerful individuals towards common ends. He does not wish to tip his hand, though, and will not give the characters the full details of what they are potentially facing: he has a theory that the dig site under the Glacier is the refuge of one of the Writhing Batteries, shards of the prison of Kyuss.

If the characters insult him or the nation of Thay, he will, for a time, parlay and verbally spar with them on the nature of perception. He will point at their current efforts to rebuild Mulmaster as a sign of their desire to increase their social standing.

If the characters have severe reservations about working with such an “evil” organization, Dar’lon Ma smiles broadly and says that his “is an Art of Words, not the dead.” He then hands the characters two potions of healing (as appropriate for their tier).

Once the characters agree to the terms in the

contract, the Zulkir provides to them a spell scroll of comprehend languages in addition to everything they might need for their journey.

The core elements of the contract are: remove nothing, discover the source of the infection, and find a cure if possible.

Should the characters seek out Rastol Shan, he will confirm that the Red Wizards are acting curiously magnanimous. While he is clearly discomforted by the concept, he openly admits that without the assistance of the Thayans, Mulmaster would almost certainly cease to survive in a matter of days. He is not aware of other options at this time.

If he is sufficiently impressed with the characters and their demeanor, he will offer one of his own banners for their trip. Should they decide to fly it, he assures them that no harm will befall them between Mulmaster and the dig site.

Advance to Part 2: Trekking.

Goods for the Trip

Once the characters have agreed to the contract, the Zulkir is overjoyed and tells them that all the necessary gear and goods can be located outside Southgate Keep. Contained in the traveling provisions:

Essentially everything worth 25 gp or less from the “Adventuring Gear” table from the *Player’s Handbook*; however, this only includes mundane equipment (no acid vials, druidic focus items, and so on).

The rations are supremely high-quality and include fresh berries, goat milk, nuts, and artisanal breads. It should become obvious very quickly that the Thayans are not adventurers and may not realize that trail rations are needed.

Feel free to handwave basic gear for the characters; cold weather gear, climbing kits, and so on would all be included.

All items are clearly labeled in Common and Thayan.

The Thayans genuinely wish for the characters to help, and they endeavor to make that as easy a prospect as possible. This should not be a “gotcha” moment as the characters set out.

If the characters wish to purchase anything else in the city, they should be aware that due to the recent attacks the shops are out of potions of healing, healing kits, and antivenoms. There are no weapons or armor above 50 gp anymore, and all mundane items (that are not provided by the Thayans) are twice the normal cost.

Part 2. Trekking

Expected Duration: 10 minutes

The journey from Mulmaster to the Laboratory is an easy one. The Zulkir (or Rastol Shan) has provided a map, and the characters almost certainly have access to all the provisions they need. As such, there is no need for random encounters during the ten day trek.

Narrative and Resources

The events that take place between when the characters leave Mulmaster and when they enter the Laboratory are intended as a narrative guide. They can use resources at their discretion, but you should not introduce any “full stop” moments. Guide the characters through the setting and be sure to describe the environmental effects. Handling this information appropriately will certainly increase their apprehension but should not result in them being unable to proceed in the adventure.

The journey from Mulmaster to the Laboratory assumes that the characters travel on mounts provided by Mulmaster or the Zulkir. If they have their own, speedier transportation, feel free to accelerate appropriately.

At tier 4 and for high-powered tier 3 tables (such as those that bear *Hazirawn*) it may be far easier to simply have Dar’lon Ma teleport the characters to the Monastery of the Yellow Rose. This monastery lies at the southern end of the Glacier of the White Wyrms and possesses a teleportation circle. It was last seen and explored in [DDEX02-06 *Breath of the Yellow Rose* by Teos Abadia](#). In time-sensitive environments like conventions or retail stores you may wish to use the teleportation circle as well.

CROSSING THE FOOTHILLS AND MOUNTAINS

The land surrounding Mulmaster has been rocked and scarred by the recent elemental attacks. The trade roads are decimated, but once some space has been put between the remains of the city and the mountain range to the east, the surroundings begin to return to normal.

If the characters are flying the banner of Zulkir Dar’lon Ma, they may notice that far off in the distance they can see riders who approach but then turn tail and flee in the opposite direction. If the characters are not flying the banner or did not gain access to the banner, the journey can be described as “curiously quiet” with no traders or other travelers on the road for the entire duration of the trip.

It quickly becomes apparent that the Thayans who preceded the characters along this same path were not making wise decisions on their trek. Campsites were left after being established, with tents standing empty and fire pits barely covered. The tents all show the sigil of the Zulkir and appear to be made of very fine materials. The characters also quickly find that their rations aren’t trail rations at all: they are comprised of fresh fruits, sugared nuts and figs, lightly-smoked meats, and their skins are filled with excellent wines and fruit juices. Clearly, the Thayans are not hardy adventurers.

Furthermore, the “ten day trek” as described in Mulmaster is a farce. The characters can clear the three Thayan camps for every two of their own. By the time they hit the mountains to the east, their rations should be beginning to go a bit soft. A DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that this is a little bit too fast for them to be rotting—the rations should hold for at least another week.

CROSSING THE GLACIER OF THE WHITE WYRM

Whether the characters are coming from the route to

Mulmaster or from the Monastery of the Yellow Rose at the southern end of the glacier, they are greeted by the blinding white expanse. They may recall stories of a clutch of white dragons—the “White Wyrms” the name indicates—that hunt across the snow surface, but they can journey to the dig site unmolested. This does, however, provide a great opportunity to build into the fears and reservations of the characters. Listen to them carefully, and don’t be shy about verbally playing into their concerns!

The map that you received appears to be accurate. After trekking across the surface of the freezing chunk of ice known as the Glacier of the White Wurm, you arrive at what appears to be the remains of a research base station. Several mounds of snow and ice dot the landscape surrounding a twenty-foot-wide smooth chute that has been bored into the ice.

Brushing away the snow and ice, you can easily see that old tents lie beneath the surface. They appear to be incredibly weather-worn, as if they have been out in the elements for years. Dry-rotted wooden boxes are half-frozen in the ice, their goods long disposed of—or worse—by time and scavengers. The tattered end of a rope dangles over the edge, its strands frayed and sheared off.

The shaft is smooth-edged and reflective to a nearly mirror-like finish. It descends straight into the ice.

Should the characters comment on the age of the tents or boxes and how it does not add up to what the Zulkir told them, ask for an Intelligence (Nature) check. On a check of 8 or above, confirm that the tents and boxes do appear to be breaking down from natural causes. Alternately, characters may attempt a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check or use effects like *detect magic*; if they do, there is a faint signature of unfamiliar magic in the area but it is fleeting—though it pulses and feels entirely alien.

The edges of the shaft are smooth and unsuitable for climbing, but thankfully the Thayans sent the characters with plenty of rope and climbing kits. The shaft can be climbed easily (no skill checks needed so long as the characters are careful to describe their methods). Should they desire to gauge the depth of the shaft:

- » Torches dropped over the edge tumble for what appears to be about 250 feet before coming to a halt.
- » Familiars and summoned creatures express extreme fear and do not wish to leave the summoner’s or master’s side. They can be forced, but it should be clear that they have no interest in doing this.

BELOW THE ICE

Once the characters arrive at the base of the shaft, they find themselves standing in a large dome. The sand beneath their feet is loose and a shade of red that looks like old crumbled blood, but looks undisturbed. There is a spot of light off to the north but no ambient light down here. The cavern is sufficiently large so that it exceeds most instances of darkvision. The characters should feel as if they have dropped into a large dark space with no immediately obvious edges. Strangely, the temperature is mild. The characters can move around without using cold weather gear or similar protections.

The spot of light off to the north swirls a bit like firelight, and drawing close to it shows that it is an 8-foot-wide tunnel similar in scope to the shaft that brought them below the ice. Near the entrance is another pair of broken-down tents and a rickety wooden box. They all display the sigil of the Zulkir. Investigating the box causes it to collapse in a heap of scrap but reveals a wide metal tube inside. This tube holds a beaten metal scroll made of copper. If the characters can read Thayan, they can see that this scroll holds a contact nearly identical to their own but with a few key differences:

- » 24 names appear on the list of contractors: 8

Red Wizards and 16 acolytes.

- » Where the characters have been tasked with specific duties, the Red Wizards were tasked with the removal of “the Battery” and its return to the Thaymount by way of a teleportation circle beneath the Thayan Embassy in Mulmaster.
- » No sentient objects (weapons, armors, or otherwise) were allowed on the journey or inside the Laboratory.

The tents and box all appear to have decades of exposure to the elements. If the characters detected the seemingly expedited breakdown of the tents on the surface, this looks like much the same. The curious tendrils of alien magic weaves through this whole place and seems to be coming from the tunnel and whatever lies beyond.

The tunnel to the north weaves and twists a bit, with the ends always just a little bit out of sight. The reflected light is indeed firelight but it glitters crazily and feels a bit disorienting. After an hour or so of walking, the characters find that a flagstone path seems to rise directly out of the sand; the stones are cleanly cut and free of sand or debris. It appears to be newly-made.

Another hour after that, the tunnel opens into a much larger chamber. The path ahead is flanked by small stone obelisks with braziers atop them; the braziers have continual flame spells cast upon them so that they shed light but no heat. The chamber is immense; easily a half-mile across and just as wide. A massive structure dominates the landscape in the middle of the chamber: an inverted pyramid piercing a stone dome, made of black stone and seemingly carved from a single piece. The walkway leads directly from the tunnel towards the structure, then splits into two paths leading to large double doors in each direction at the base of the dome.

Should the characters choose to leave the path, they find that the air grows warmer and warmer with each step. For more details, see the **Mythals** sidebar.

The ceiling of the dome is covered in clouds, wispy

and grey at the edges, but dark and rippling in the center, hovering over the top of the pyramid.

Mythals

In ancient times, the elves and the Netherese used powerful enchantments called “mythals” to protect their homes and lands. These mythals often had many specific effects, and the combination of those effects would be engineered to benefit the location where it was anchored. These were great feats of magic and required regular maintenance and upkeep lest their protections begin to unravel as they lost potency.

The mythal here is but a shadow of its former glory. While there is no visual cue that it exists, arcane casters often feel empowered (or dampened) in such areas. The characters likely have a similar sense; feel free to describe it. They can make a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check to recall some lore about what mythals are and how they work. Some mythals:

- » ... were keyed to only allow specific races to perform certain types of magic.
- » ... completely prevented entire schools of magic from working.
- » ... heightened, extended, or otherwise modified entire schools and their effects.
- » Required *identify* to be cast many times (sometimes dozens) to discover their full range of powers.
- » And so on. Feel free to insert your own examples!

The mythal here has been unraveling for some time, but due to the presence of chronomancy (the alien tendrils of magic that the characters have likely already detected) it has been slow to collapse. The powers of this mythal should not be disclosed to the characters.

This mythal:

- » Prevents teleport effects from working normally (including spells like *dimension door*, *teleport*, *misty step*, and so on). Anyone casting a spell with a teleport effect or receiving a teleport must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take force damage and the spell has no effect. A success on this saving throw cuts the damage by half, but the spell functions normally.
 - Tier 2:** DC 14, 25 (5d10) force damage
 - Tier 3:** DC 16, 50 (10d10) force damage
 - Tier 4:** DC 18, 90 (18d10) force damage
- » Interferes with magical healing and recovery. Casting a healing or restorative spell below 6th level requires the caster to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw, or else the spell only functions at 50% effectiveness. Sample spells include: *cure wounds*, *greater restoration*, and so on. In the case of *restoration* spells, if the caster fails their saving throw, a condition will not be cured—merely put into ‘stasis’ for 1 hour per caster level.
 - Tier 2:** DC 14
 - Tier 3:** DC 16
 - Tier 4:** DC 18
- » Potions and scrolls that contain healing or restorative effects work at 50% effectiveness but do not have an associated saving throw.
- » Due to a malfunctioning *Nystul’s magical aura*, all creatures (including the characters) detect as neutral fiends while beneath the Glacier. This does not change the characters or their normal states, but may impact how some spells operate.
- » Biodegradable materials break down at an accelerated pace here. Water skins empty in minutes, potions of healing begin to evaporate and become jellies or pastes in mere hours. Potions do not lose their effectiveness, though they may take extra effort to consume (at your discretion). Even items in extradimensional space are

affected, though at a slower rate. This explains the rapid breakdown of the tents and boxes, and the characters should realize that their rations are rotten and their skins emptied once they enter the dome.

- » Leaving the flagstone path or entering the open air (like from jumping off the top of the pyramid) triggers one of the mythal’s wards. For every five feet that a living creature travels away from the stone they make a Constitution saving throw. Succeeding on this saving throw results in half damage and no exhaustion. The DC of this saving throw increases by +2 and the damage increases for every 5 additional feet that the creature travels off the stone.
 - Tier 2:** DC 14, 10 (2d10) fire and necrotic damage; damage increases by 5 (1d10) every 5 ft.
 - Tier 3:** DC 16, 25 (5d10) fire and necrotic damage; damage increases by 10 (2d10) every 5 ft.
 - Tier 4:** DC 18, 45 (9d10) fire and necrotic damage; damage increases by 20 (4d10) every 5 ft.
- » Using spells like *antimagic aura* or *dispel magic* will work normally against creatures, summoned effects, and the like but the mythal itself (and the “black masses” that separate the rooms) is immune to such spells.

Mythals do not interfere with racial abilities or class abilities unless that ability is specifically noted as being magical. For instance, characters can use hit dice, a lay on hands ability, or similar effects without penalty.

The exterior of the dome and even the surface of the pyramid show massive holy symbols of Lathander and Amanauator. These deities typically represent sun, dawn, and protection. With a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check, the characters can identify the holy symbols as being from many different ages: from the time of the Netherese through the post-Spellplague years. Furthermore, they know

that only one of those deities ever exists at one time. It is a common belief that they are merely different faces of the same god, though this is unconfirmed. Upon close inspection, it is plain to see that all the available surfaces here are covered in repeated holy symbols of these deities throughout the ages, some large and some small, all nested together. The carvings all look brand new, as if the smith only finished in the last few days.

The doors to the dome are nearly ten feet tall and stone, but easy enough to open. They are not locked, and the right-hand set of doors is slightly ajar.

At the junction in the path, there is a crudely-carved arrow pointing to the right and a parcel that is identical to the packs of rations that the characters have brought with them. The rations inside the wrapper, though, have long since dried away and become inedible (see the *Mythals* sidebar).

ENTERING THE QUEUE

The interior of the dome is hollow, but there are some interesting visual elements inside. Between the doors are two seemingly ancient canvas and leather tents that long ago decomposed opposite a large metal box. The tip of the pyramid has pierced the dome and immediately below the tip is a stone dais measuring 12 feet across and 3 feet tall. All of the surfaces here—the floor, the walls of the dome, the tip of the pyramid—are decorated in the same series of repeating holy symbols of Lathander and Amaunator.

Should the characters decide to investigate the metal box and the tents, they find that the box once held leather cushions inside, as if intended to safely transport small delicate objects, but those cushions have all turned to dust and brittle scrap. The tents match the design of all the tents previously found as well as the tents that the characters were likely provided by the Zulkir.

The dais has a number of metal channels carved into the top. There are twice as many channels as characters present. These channels all feed into a

central silver bowl. If the characters can read Ancient Netherese, they can read an inscription around the dais, carved three times in succession:

“From the gift of life, knowledge.”

This puzzle can be resolved several different ways, but ultimately the channels must be filled with a life-giving fluid. Water is the intended choice, but the waterskins the characters brought with them are all empty at this point. Reward a creative use of resources like a *create water* spell, the use of a decanter of endless water, or even an alchemy jug with a success. Filling the channels in this manner does not alert the Writhing Battery that new visitors have arrived and will weaken the creatures in the first encounter.

Alternately (and more commonly), the characters may choose to make a blood sacrifice. This will work with a few specific elements:

- » Once cut, a beam of blood tears free from the damaged limb, causing 1 point of necrotic damage (bypassing resistances and immunities). This beam locks the character in place; the damaged limb cannot get any farther from the metal channel, though there is no residual damage. A beam can be interrupted (thus allowing a character to move away from the dais) by holding a shield, the flat of a blade, or something similar between the limb and the dais.
- » Summoned creatures, familiars, and the like do not qualify for the dais' unlocking requirements. Only natural creatures that are native to Faerun will satisfy the requirements.
- » A creature may use one limb per channel.

Once all channels have blood or another liquid in them, the contents all rush into the bowl in the center and it immediately hits a rolling boil. Any characters that had been rooted in place using blood sacrifice are released. The tip of the pyramid rumbles and shudders as it splays open and an ornate metal staircase descends from the structure above and comes to rest on the top of the dais. A booming voice echoes out in Ancient Netherese:

“The portal to the Laboratory will close in 5... 4...”

The stairs are wide enough to allow a medium-sized creature to ascend but will hamper the movements of a mount or large creature. After two rounds, the stairs are unusable if the characters did not ascend in time. Be careful to not split the party here!

DEVELOPMENT

Furthermore, when the last character enters the Queue, send this message to them as a private note (or walk with them away from the table):

The tip of the pyramid hangs open, with a broken and bent metal staircase hanging loosely from it. An oozing mass is pushing through from the chambers above, and as you attempt to puzzle out its origins, it unceremoniously plops onto the dais – a huge ball of green worms, covered in slime and unknowable detritus.

You blink, and your vision clears. Nothing appears to be out of place, save for the heavy silence and the disturbing array of holy symbols.

This vision only occurs once per game, and the other characters do not share this vision. There is no evidence of worms ever dropping into this space, and the other characters do not see a staircase (at least, until they solve the puzzle with the dais).

Level I. Specimens of All Types

Expected Duration: 75 minutes

The Laboratory is of ancient Netherese design, but it quickly becomes apparent that the characters are not the first visitors here. It is strongly suggested that you review the mythal sidebar from the previous section and play up the strange arcane energies of the place!

General Features

The features listed here are present for the entire facility.

Terrain. The stone is expertly cut and exquisitely styled.

Light. Thanks to the mythal, there is plenty of ambient light.

Temperature. The Laboratory is cool and comfortable, though the air is exceedingly dry. There is effectively no humidity here.

ENTRANCE CHAMBER

The staircase that brought the characters here has collapsed upon itself, forming the symbol on the floor. Faint channels—the same number as below in the dome—can be seen in the stone. Should the characters decide to leave, they will need to use the same tactic that they used to enter (though they can substitute in water instead of blood if they have it, and vice versa).

There is some graffiti here:

- » Six portraits have been drawn in chalk in the northwest corner. They are labeled in Common as “Zan-ki,” “Luth,” “Thurston,” “Chorizo,” “Nimgit,” and “Zahp.” Characters that are members of the Cloaks recognize Zan-ki, Luth, Thurston, and Nimgit as members of

their organization. With a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check, players can recall that Zahp Tersely was an arrogant (though capable) gnome wizard that participated in the recent defense of Mulmaster against the elemental cults (*DDEP2 Mulmaster Undone*).

- » The southern archway sports a chalk symbol in Orcish (the letter “B”), an arrow indicating travel to the south, and a quick sketch of the constellation known as the Tears of Selune.

The archways in each direction have a curious light-drinking substance that gently wriggles or flutters when viewed in the character’s peripheral vision. Flat black; even effects like *devil’s sight* and *darkvision* fail to penetrate it. If the characters throw something through it, it will hang in the air just out of view until the mass moves. To get the mass to move, a living character simply needs to be adjacent to it—at which point it shudders violently and zooms away from them, revealing the chamber beyond.

The black mass stops moving at the end of the retention cells, and only rushes up to seal off the entrance chamber when there are no more characters in that room. The same is true for the retention cells—when there are no characters in or adjacent to those spaces, the black mass rushes up to seal off that area. If the characters re-enter a space that has previously been sealed off, they will find that it has been entirely reset—any dropped items are missing, creatures that may have been defeated are placed back in their original positions, and so on.

Should the characters decide to use effects like *divine sense*, *detect magic*, and so on:

- » If the Writhing Battery is aware of the characters, then everything detects as evil undead – the walls, the archways, *everything*.
- » There is a mix of magical auras permeating everything in the Laboratory, with heavy signs of conjuration, abjuration, and enchantment. Faint signs of necromancy and evocation can also be detected, but another energy signature can just barely be made out—it has a faint red tinge to it (if the characters can see magical

effects) but is unfamiliar.

- » The black mass detects heavily as illusion, enchantment, and conjuration. Should the characters attempt to dispel it (as it is a magical effect) they can feel something pushing back against their efforts—the mythal, actually—as their spell is negated.
- » So long as a living creature is present in an area, the black mass will not enter that area.

SOUTHERN RETENTION CELLS

Each cell contains a skeleton. This skeleton looks as if it simply sat down, but its back to the wall, and waited to die. There is no debris in the cell and no sign of decayed or rotting flesh. Upon close inspection—a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation), Wisdom (Medicine), or Intelligence (Nature) check—the characters can see that the bones all have tiny bite marks on them, like many small creatures stripped this body of its flesh. The skeleton, while creepy, is not undead, though if the Writhing Battery is aware of the characters they may detect it as undead anyhow.

One of the furthest-south cells has a red-robed figure instead of a skeleton. This figure has its hood drawn over its face and its arms are neatly tucked up into its sleeves. If the characters touch the body at all (even with effects like *mage hand*), the arms tumble out and the body slumps over, revealing that the flesh on the face has been removed as well as all the muscle and tissue on the arms up to the elbows. The ragged ends of visible skin show a series of black dots identical to those on the patients in Mulmaster. The robes are frayed and tattered and look quite old, but if the characters search the body for one minute they can find a spell tile. This spell tile functions like a potion, but a character needs only break it for its embedded spell to be cast:

- » Tier 2: *mage armor*
- » Tier 3: *invisibility*
- » Tier 4: *stone skin*
This spell tile loses all its magic if it leaves the Laboratory, and can only be used a single time.

The bars on the cells are only three inches apart, but there are control boxes outside each cell that can be easily manipulated by expending an action. Heavy weapons are unable to effectively swing between the bars. Any creature on the opposite side has total cover and its attackers suffer disadvantage on their attack rolls.

Once the characters spend two rounds in this hallway, eight black shapes begin to press through the walls and take shape as wraiths. However, the combination of the mythal, the Writhing Battery, and the Netherese magic that still lingers here has caused them to be more powerful than normal. If the Writhing Battery is aware of the characters, the **wraiths** gain the multiattack action, allowing them to make two life drain attacks. As incorporeal creatures, they can flit through the walls and bars without issue but are intelligent enough to use the bars to their advantage.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative. Note that for each sentient weapon that the party bears the difficulty needs to be scaled up as the Writhing Battery is drawn to those items.

- » **Very weak or weak party:** only six wraiths are present, and at tier 2 only three of them are eligible to gain the **multiattack** feature.
- » **Strong party or very strong party:** the bars do not break line of sight but weapon attacks cannot bypass them unless the character is using a piercing melee weapon or is in a straight line to the target (thus negating some effects and feats like *sharpshooter*).

If the Writhing Battery is not already aware of the characters, the wraiths have disadvantage on their attack rolls during the first round of combat.

DEVELOPMENT

This encounter has the potential to be very deadly. The **wraiths** are quite powerful, especially if they can use their multiattack feature. Characters should quickly realize this and you are certainly empowered to stress that the wraiths are hesitant to come out of the cells and that they do not pursue the characters that leave the hallway of retention cells. You could also encourage characters to use effects like *turn undead (channel divinity)*—the goal here is to show the characters that powerful enemies lurk here, not to kill them off.

Furthermore, when the last character enters the hallway, send this message to them as a private note (or walk with them away from the table):

Just as the black mass swirls up to block off your view of the entrance chamber, you catch a brief vision: a group of adventurers in modern armor and bearing the banner of the Zulkir are holding down a young woman—a druid, you think—while a burly half-orc stabs her in the neck three times. She catches your eyes as the black mass washes over her, and though her mouth was open as if to say something nothing can be heard.

When next you blink, you cannot see the entrance chamber—only the black, gently waving mass.

If the characters return to the entrance chamber there is no sign of the party of adventures, nor of the dead druid.

As soon as combat begins, the Writhing Battery becomes aware of the adventurers.

To the south can be seen a chalk arrow pointing further south. The Orcish symbol for “B” and the drawing of the constellation of the Tears of Selune can be spied as well.

Treasure

The spell tile hidden inside the robes of the red wizard is the only treasure in this area.

WESTERN RETENTION CELLS

This area uses the same description as the Southern Retention Cells, though the robed figure does not have a spell tile and the vision does not occur unless the characters enter this space from the Entrance Chamber. This vision only occurs once per game, though the combat can be repeated.

It is important to note that repeating the combat here does not increase the overall experience gain at the end of the adventure.

NORTHERN RETENTION CELLS

This area uses the same description as the Southern Retention Cells, though the robed figure does not have a spell tile and the vision does not occur unless the characters enter this space from the Entrance Chamber. This vision only occurs once per game, though the combat can be repeated.

There is a slight change to the description, though:

Large arrows drawn in chalk line the floor here, all pointing to the south.

It is important to note that repeating the combat here does not increase the overall experience gain at the end of the adventure.

EASTERN RETENTION CELLS

This area uses the same description as the Southern Retention Cells, though the robed figure does not have a spell tile and the vision does not occur unless the characters enter this space from the Entrance Chamber. This vision only occurs once per game, though the combat can be repeated.

It is important to note that repeating the combat here does not increase the overall experience gain at the end of the adventure.

SOUTHERN CATALOGUE

The bookcases in this room are stuffed with large tomes. These books are made of metal and stone, with no sign of leather, paper, or traditional book-making materials. Each book is quite heavy (25 pounds each, and measuring 18 inches by 30 inches and 10 inches thick).

Each tome on the western section sports two icons: one is the symbol for a piece of equipment (such as 'helmet,' 'shield,' 'mace,' etc) and the other a sigil for one of the schools of magic below. Each shelf holds all of the books for a certain item's icon, so a shelf can be expected to have the following tomes: shield/enchantment, shield/conjuration, shield/evocation, and so on. If the characters can read Ancient Netherese they can see that these tomes hold the records of the researchers in this laboratory as they struggled to create magic items, and later sentient items. Unfortunately all of their efforts to create sentient items failed. There are no books here that bear the sigil for necromancy.

The tomes on the eastern side of the room are far more interesting. Each shelf is dedicated to a school of magic, and the last tome on each shelf includes a lightly stamped or carved symbol that looks like a diamond or crystal. If the characters can read Ancient Netherese, they can see that these tomes contain details on the incredibly complex arcane rituals that would be used to create sentient items. Regardless of any Arcana check, the characters will not be able to learn these rituals—though a decently high History check may reveal that the Netherese had formerly used 10th-level magic and these rituals are likely related to that. They are incredibly dangerous should they be released to the outside world. There are no books on necromancy here.

The books on the eastern wall that also have

the symbol for the crystal are titled as follows: *Adjustments for This School Pre-Battery, Incorporating the Battery*, and *Post-Battery Findings*. Each school (aside from necromancy) has all three tomes, and the results inside the *Post-Battery Findings* tome by the researchers indicate that every experiment was a massive success.

Additionally, there are three tomes with a magic sigil that is unfamiliar. With an Intelligence (Arcana) check of 20, a character may recognize the sigil as belonging to the "lost" school of chronomancy.

Each tome is emanating a faint web of reddish energy (if the characters can see magic, that is) that weaves throughout the entire facility. The books are incredibly advanced and aren't spellbooks but instead bear notes, proof-of-concept experiment reports, and personal observations. The third tome bears the crystal icon just as the other schools of magic do, and the findings inside the tome are incredibly exciting—each object was successfully imbued with the desired properties and many more, but the fourth page in simply says "Experiments terminated by order of the Council."

Last, there is a massive tome on the massive southern pedestal. It is titled *Principae Antiquus* and is made of thinly hammered brass and silver and sports covers made of magically-reinforced stone, each page measures roughly 1/8" thick by 36" by 60". The tome is massive, and when closed is nearly 48" thick, weighing close to 550 pounds. The tome is currently open and shows the following (all writing is in Ancient Netherese):

- » Left page: a detailed portrait of a middle-aged man in full military dress and wearing ornate mithril armor. Below this are several sections including "History," "Performance," "Criteria," and "Findings." The page is titled "Lord-General Hazirawn."
- » Right page: a highly detailed schematic of a wickedly barbed greatsword, including necromancy, enchantment, and abjuration sigils. A curious sigil has been scratched off (this matches the "lost school" notes above but

cannot be identified solely from these markings due to the damage). A crystal icon has been pressed into the corner of the page.

- » All subsequent pages include a portrait on the left and a schematic on the right; some pairings include a priest of Amaunator and a mace, a wizard and a ring, and so on. Some later pages appear to have been in-progress before this place was abandoned; the final pages indicate a spellbook with a scratched-out sigil, a sloop, and a set of lockpicks.

Should the characters be able to read these pages, they will learn that a person named Lord-General Hazirawn was once a successful military commander for the Netherese Empire. He led numerous skirmishes and rarely suffered a loss. Over a long military career spanning several centuries (thanks to the spells of the Council), he was responsible for many significant protective actions. He was summarily selected for “the process,” and upon reporting to the Laboratory he was pressed into the greatsword as seen on the facing page. The “Findings” section indicates that Hazirawn felt a great sense of betrayal but his value needed to be preserved, and it is only due to the incorporation of the Battery that he can be an eternal instrument of the Empire.

If any of the characters possess *Hazirawn* (a sentient greatsword from *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*), that blade becomes very upset. Deploy this interaction as you see fit, but the sword desires to leave this place—but it will return later, once the wielder is not in the Laboratory any more. It tells the bearer that this place is vile and “will be their end.” If not appeased, it teleports away immediately—as an object of Netherese origin, it is unaffected by the mythal.

The characters can take these books if they like, though the Principae Antiquus is too large for a bag of holding. Due to their contents they do not have a value that can be counted in mere gold pieces. A successful Appraise check may indicate—at your discretion—that these books would be worth a significant favor at Candlekeep or some other similar institution.

NORTHERN CATALOGUE

As with the Southern Catalogue, all the tomes in this space are stone and metal. But, there is no oversized table, nor is there is a massive tome of items here. All the smaller tomes are still quite heavy (25 pounds each, and measuring 18 inches by 30 inches and 10 inches thick).

The shelves are dominated by necromantic tomes. They are not spellbooks but are written in Ancient Netherese. If they are examined (remember that *comprehend languages* only allows a character to read one page per minute) they all indicate that these experiments took place after the introduction of the Writhing Battery. The results were staggering and the items that were created remained potent for an extended time. There are easily 300 such tomes here and would be worth a significant amount to archmages, Candlekeep, Netherese archwizards, and possibly even some Thayan zulkirs and liches. One shelf includes titles such as *Life Energy and How to Control It, Sweet and Salty: Vitae from the Young and Old*, and so on. These titles, if read, discuss the manipulation of life energy by using necromancy, abjuration, enchantment, and certain magical items to greatly prolong the life (and in some cases, the unlife) of a creature.

A blue chalk arrow points at the southern archway and black mass, along with the Orcish symbol for “B” and the constellation of the Tears of Selune.

WESTERN STAIRS

A large set of stairs climbs up the western wall, switching back upon itself and disappearing into the ceiling. Should the characters wish to climb up the stairs, proceed to **Level 3: The Writhing Battery**.

From the floor here the characters can spy a foot on the landing of the stairs just before the staircase disappears into the ceiling. If the characters climb up, they discover that it is only a leg and nothing more, but the little flesh that remains is covered in blue tattoos as commonly found on the skin of a Red

Wizard of Thay. The landing has a dozen discarded worm husks, and the thumping grows much louder here – there is a palpable dread that comes from higher up in the facility.

Chalk arrows, the Orcish symbol for “B,” and the constellation of the Tears of Selune all point toward the northern hallway.

EASTERN STAIRS

A large set of stairs climbs up the eastern wall, switching back upon itself and disappearing into the ceiling. Should the characters wish to climb up the stairs, proceed to **Level 2: The Lab Proper**.

In the northwest corner of this space is scrawled “Zahp was here!” in Common. This is a reference to Zahp Tersely (the portrait seen in the Entrance Chamber). Characters that are members of the Cloaks that have not already discovered his identity can make another Intelligence (History) check with advantage at this time. Refer to the **Entrance Chamber** section for more information about Zahp.

A red-robed figure is also here, splayed out face-down on the floor. Upon investigation, it can be determined that this figure is a Thayan wizard but has had his flesh removed like the robed figures as-found in the Retention Cell hallways. Underneath this corpse are several discarded worm husks, identical to those seen in Mulmaster in the temple of Ilmater.

TIME TO REST?

The characters can take a short rest on this floor if they retreat to the Entrance Chamber. Once the Writhing Battery is aware of the characters, the rhythmic thumping of that infernal artifact prevents long rests from taking place.

Be sure to check the **Mythal** sidebar if the characters wish to use healing or restorative items and effects.

ADVANCING THE ADVENTURE

The characters can proceed to **Level 2: The Lab Proper** by climbing the eastern stairs or **Level 3: The Writhing Battery** by climbing the western stairs. Alternately, they can perform the sacrifice ritual and escape the Laboratory entirely through the Entrance Chamber.

Level 2: The Lab Proper

Expected Duration: 60 minutes

Many centuries ago, this floor served as both laboratory and warehouse. The Netherese wizards and alchemists stationed here would run their experiments and then house the results on the various shelves in this space. A massive contraption dominates the center of the room and is surrounded by numerous operating tables. This contraption is directly linked to the Writhing Battery and the thumping sound it makes.

Is the Writhing Battery Aware?

The text of this section assumes that the characters explore this area before they go to level 3. It also assumes that the characters have triggered the awareness of the Writhing Battery.

If the Battery is so far unaware of the characters, it will become aware of them as soon as they get within 40 feet of the Harness at the center of this floor.

If the characters have already completed **Floor 3: The Writhing Battery**, you may need to modify the text here as the Battery is likely destroyed (and thus no longer making the rhythmic thumping noises). In this case, you may also wish to remove this combat if the characters have been sufficiently challenged in previous encounters.

General Features

Light and Visibility. The mythal provides ambient light with no obvious source. While not bright light, it is bright enough to ensure that penalties are not accrued when reading (or in combat) but not quite dim enough to assist with stealth attempts.

Smells and Sounds. This floor smells heavily of

parchment and incense. As these things do not exist within the Laboratory, it is likely that this is an effect of the mythal.

Tall Ceilings. The entire floor sports 25-foot-tall ceilings. The storage racks also extend to the ceiling where indicated.

The stairs rise for what seems to be hundreds of feet. Once you emerge from the narrow, stone-enclosed path, you can easily hear that the thumping noise has gained in intensity. Peering around, this place looks like a cross between a warehouse and a library. Huge display cases and shelving units rise from floor to ceiling and measure nearly 25 feet tall. Peering down the ten foot walkways, you can see tables and small cabinets nearby. The shelves are stuffed full of deliberately placed pieces of gear and equipment, each sporting a namecard in Netherese.

The center of the chamber is dominated by a massive contraption of glass and metal tubes.

The contents of these racks are all carefully sorted but are now rusted beyond use and no longer magical. The placards in front of each item indicate the type of item and the spells used in the attempt to make them magical. The room is sorted into deliberate areas, with all the daggers in one space, helms in another, canteens in another, and so on. Get creative with the characters if they wish to explore!

THE HARNESS

The metal and glass contraption at the center of the room is referred to as “the harness” in the books from the lower floor. It is a delicate assembly of arcane components, and while the other items on this floor have long since degraded to uselessness, this artifact still radiates magic. Any amount of interaction with the artifact will cause it to collapse; the Netherese spent many years learning specific, complex rituals simply to begin working with its individual pieces. Several glass pipes and wire filaments bridge the

gap between the ancient machine and the circle of metal tables that surrounds it. These blocks all have humanoid-shaped indentations on their upper surface.

A successful Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Arcana) check will confirm what the characters may already suspect: subjects would be strapped here while vile experiments were performed upon them. If the characters investigate this space, allow them to make an Intelligence (Investigation) check at DC 10; on a success, they can spot a loose panel on one of the metal boxes. Inside, a series of adjustable platforms and some additional wiring is found, along with an impressive-looking suit of **mithril armor** (refer to the certificate and treasure section for more information on this magical item; the characters are free to determine what type of metal armor that it is, including plate mail).

As the characters are examining the metal armor (and before they have a chance to don it), the rhythmic thumping increases in tempo, signaling the arrival of three **Spawn of Kyuss**.

Threat and Lair Actions

The **Spawn of Kyuss** here have access to the lair actions as detailed in the monster entry for Kyuss. Be careful that these actions do not result in the characters feeling inconsequential. The intention here is to prompt the characters to either escape or destroy these creatures quickly, but also to inflict some wounds upon their bodies and their pride in the process. If the characters have not already seen the contents of **Level 3: The Writhing Battery**, play up the grotesque nature of the worms and how they burrow into the flesh of the characters, then wriggle around. Highly narrative descriptions will go a long way towards ensuring that the characters have an appropriate encounter!

DEVELOPMENT

The **Spawn of Kyuss** seek to devour any character that is not undead. Each **Spawn** will shed a **swarm of rot grubs** during the first round on initiative count 20 (losing ties). The monsters fight to the death, but do not desire to leave this floor if the characters flee.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- » **Very weak party:** remove one Spawn of Kyuss
- » **Strong party:** add one Spawn of Kyuss
- » **Very strong party:** as strong party, and treat the monsters as if they were sneaking up on the characters (Passive Perception DC 16/ 18/ 20 to detect).

Make a note of any character that becomes infested with worms, as they earn the **Favored of the Worm** story award at the end of the adventure.

TIME TO REST?

The characters may use a short rest here if they like, but there is a 10% chance every ten minutes of encountering two Spawn of Kyuss (using the Development notes above). If the characters attempt to use a long rest, they are guaranteed to have this combat encounter every two hours.

ADVANCING THE ADVENTURE

The characters must return to the main floor before they can move up to **Level 3: The Writhing Battery** as there is no direct passage between these floors.

Level 3. The Writhing Battery

Expected Duration: 45 minutes

The staircase from the main floor to the top of the pyramid rises hundreds of feet and takes the better part of forty minutes of climbing before the characters reach the summit. Once there, they see a chilling vision and must decide if they will give in to their curiosity or if they will decide that caution is the better part of valor.

What lies beyond the door is quite literally the stuff that legends are made of...

General Features

This floor works best if you work to describe the floor as undulating, gross, or use other highly-descriptive words. The space beyond the doors has been corrupted by the power of Kyuss and is overwhelmingly fouled.

Terrain. The stairs and platform are standard stonework, but the space beyond the door is difficult terrain. It is made of worms and dead, decomposing bodies; any character standing on that section of floor must succeed on a DC 14 (tier 2)/ 16 (tier 3)/ 18 (tier 4) Strength saving throw or become restrained as they begin to sink into the pile of worms.

Light. Everything here is dim light thanks to the clouds overhead.

Clouds. The clouds overhead are not rainclouds—they are in fact clouds of congealed necrotic energy, held together thanks to the power of the mythal and a hint of chronomancy. Any character that touches the cloud must succeed on a DC 14 (tier 2)/ 16 (tier 3)/ 18 (tier 4) Constitution saving throw or take necrotic damage as if they had been hit by a **wraith** of the appropriate tier (see the wraith's stat block and **Scaling the Wraith** in the Appendix). If a character dies due to this damage, they are not raised as an

undead creature – instead, they are transported to Carceri (a plane of reality that is commonly used as a prison for powerful divine and blasphemous creatures) and are considered dead unless the Red Wizards (or another suitably powerful character or NPC) uses a *wish* spell, though for the purposes of this adventure the Red Wizards will rescue the character at the end of the game session.

Worms. The worms on the platform do not pose a threat, and the worms beyond the door merely affect the characters as noted above.

THE PLATFORM

The stairs from the main floor to this upper platform are narrow, and as the characters get closer to the exit they find that more and more worms are smashed into the nooks and crannies of the stone. Many of the worms are dead, and a few are dying and do not post a challenge (though a character may wish to retain one, it dies within a few minutes of leaving the mythal).

The platform, once reached, is fairly large. It measures 30 feet by 30 feet and is surrounded by three walls and an open vista to the ice cavern outside. Scrawled at the open edge is a message written in Elven using blue chalk: "Don't jump." The walls rise fifteen feet before disappearing into the thick, dark cloud that is now immediately above the heads of the characters. The eastern wall is dominated by a set of double doors held shut by a black iron rod.

The doors to the east are bulging outward towards you, but held shut by a thick black iron rod that has been inserted into the stonework handles. Worms are being crushed around the edges of the door and below it, essentially being turned into a foul-smelling slurry. The entire visage pulses in time with the horrible rhythmic thumping noise. The left door has been inset with a flaring holy symbol of Lathander, and the right door has been inset with a flaring holy symbol of Amaunator.

The black iron rod, though, provides a small spark of sanity and safety when you lay your eyes upon it. For perhaps the first time since you set foot in this facility, you may have finally found a sign of safety.

The characters are under no compulsion to touch the black iron bar, but if they do they immediately know that it is a **Rod of Security** (see the certificate and treasure section at the end of the adventure for more details). They are keenly aware of how to use it and that it does not require attunement. Characters that are hesitant may choose to use an Intelligence (Arcana) check; a successful check tells them that it is a powerful magic item and represents safety, but does not bear any mind-affecting enchantment. The mythal has obscured the rod's properties from detection. Short of touching it, characters would have to use an *identify* spell to determine what it is. Unfortunately, using *identify* also requires the character to touch it.

When the characters touch the rod, it shudders free of its tenuous position holding the doors closed and they fly open revealing the foul chamber beyond:

The scene beyond the doors is the stuff of nightmares.

Dozens of humanoid figures are arrayed in a loose circle around a massive crystalline pillar, and inside can be seen a thick fleshy mass that flails against the side. Each impact causes a tremendous shuddering “thump” to tear through this place, vibrating your eyes and catching your breath. The figures are deep in a chant and appear to be focused on their task.

The ground between the newly-opened doors and this crystalline pillar is a living undulating carpet of worms. Green, brown, black, and altogether slimy and slick with gore, these creatures seem to pulse and undulate in time with the thumping of the creature trapped in the crystal.

And at once, a group of those humanoids turns to face you, their hoods pulled up and over their faces. The angry pinpricks of red light where their eyes should be indicates that they are not pleased to see you here.

The crystalline pillar is the Writhing Battery and it is the physical representation of a portion of the prison that holds an aspect of Kyuss. The Spawn of Kyuss that surround it are intent on releasing their god and do not hesitate to attack the characters.

Maps, Challenges, and Stories

Author's Note

It is strongly recommended that you use a printed or drawn tactical map for this encounter. This encounter is designed to feel like a significant challenge, and giving the players something to see will help them frame the decisions that their characters are going to make in an appropriate manner.

The included map is merely a suggestion. If you choose to use a unique map or modify it for your party, be sure to give it a sense of age as well as an indication of the dangers that the characters are going to face. I found that the “Ancient Blue Dragon Lair” map from the classic D&D Miniatures line worked very well for this, though at times I also used some of the special tiles from the Wrath of Ashardalon board game. Really, anything that is fairly large, has a bit of a “ruins” or “ancient Egypt” theme, and is more than a simple marker sketch will go a long way towards making the players—and their characters!—truly remember this experience!

Tactics

The **Spawn of Kyuss** are focused on releasing their god—Kyuss—from the Writhing Battery. At tier 2 they will continue to chant until the characters get

within 50 feet, cast a spell, or attack them; at tier 3 and 4 they react and enter combat as soon as the doors are opened.

The Spawn of Kyuss are intelligent undead and will seek to gang up on the most obvious threats as they emerge. They fight to the death. For standard parties, there are **six Spawn of Kyuss** here at the beginning of combat—the remaining six will stay arrayed around the crystal pillar (the Writhing Battery) as they attempt to release their god unless they are attacked directly or the crystal is broken.

Should Kyuss be released, he is a fierce combatant. He is aware that this is only a fragment of his power and should he be defeated here his divine essence will merely retreat to another fragment of the Writhing Battery elsewhere in the world. He is not affected by the clouds of congealed energy, and is large enough that the characters will almost certainly only see him from the waist down—save for the massive claws that come raking out to attack them!

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative. This is a very deadly encounter.

- » Very weak or weak party: no changes.
- » Strong party: add 2 Spawn of Kyuss.
- » Very strong party (tiers 3 & 4 only): as Strong party, and Kyuss breaks free of the Writhing Battery at the beginning of the third round of combat.

This combat has a second round of adjustments based upon the tier of play:

- » Tier 2: the Writhing Battery has 100 points, not 50 as per the description below.
- » Tier 3: no changes.
- » Tier 4: Kyuss uses his full array of divine abilities, targeting characters with low armor classes first. He will not hesitate to throw unconscious bodies off the top of the

the top of the pyramid or into the cloud above, as he is fully aware of the effects of the mythal (this causes the death of the thrown character, similar to the effect of a *disintegrate* spell).

Kyuss does not provide combat experience to Tier 2 characters. At all tiers, Kyuss seeks to kill: if there is a chance to hit a character that has been reduced to 0 hit points, he will.

Make a note of any character that becomes infested with worms, as they earn the **Favored of the Worm** story award at the end of the adventure.

DEVELOPMENT

The **Spawn of Kyuss** will gang up on individual combatants where possible, and will make liberal use of the Aid action if they are having a difficult time getting through a character's armor or defenses. They are vicious combatants and seek to destroy the characters.

Starting at the beginning of combat, make sure that the characters know that a number of the Spawn have stayed out of combat and are continuing their chant. These Spawn only enter combat if directly attacked or if the crystal is broken, but if the characters are clever they may be able to silence that area and thus negate the chant's effect—reward their ingenuity should they discover this or another similar effect!

For each Spawn that continues to chant, mark off 1 point from the Writhing Battery at initiative count 1 (losing ties); for every 2 points of magical damage dealt to the Writhing Battery, it loses 1 point. The Battery begins this encounter with 50 points; for every five points that it loses, describe or relay the following:

- » **45 points remaining:** "The cracks spiderweb outward and small holes have appeared along the face of the crystal."
- » **40 points remaining:** "A hand crashes through

the crystal, seemingly larger than the hole itself. Something tremendously large is attempting to free itself!”

- » **30 points remaining:** “An entire arm, grotesquely long and robed in dead flesh, bursts forth and slams into the ground. Its bony fingers dig into the carpet of worms as it attempts to pull its body from the crystal.” Kyuss can now make melee attacks at any creature within 15 feet of the Writhing Battery if it desires.
- » **20 points remaining:** “A cacophonous roar echoes across the floor—the arm pulls back inside the crystal and a massive face pushes through the crystal. It oozes worms from its hollow eye sockets and it glares malevolently at you.” Kyuss may now use his **innate spellcasting ability** if he desires.
- » **10 points remaining:** “The massive form of the trapped creature struggles to pull itself free of the crystalline prison. Much of its body is revealed, though it appears to be anchored in place for the time being.” Kyuss can now be attacked and he can move around the map, but must remain adjacent to the crystal.
- » **0 points remaining:** Kyuss is freed, and will attack the party. As soon as the crystal is broken, his anger grants him a full round of actions in addition to his normal place in the initiative order.

The characters may choose to flee this place; if they do, allow them to do so. The Spawn of Kyuss find more value in releasing their god than they do in chasing down a few meddling mortals. Once the characters descend down to the first floor of the complex, they can feel the stones shudder as a tremendous roar echoes through the halls. The exact details of what they see are shown in the **Advancing the Adventure** section.

If the characters use the Rod of Security to escape combat, they will return here in time (likely after 24 hours have passed). The top of the pyramid is now free of worms and the ominous clouds, though the shattered base of the crystal is still present. At the center of the broken base is a pool of terrible, coagulated matter; touching it causes the character

to be sent to Carceri immediately unless they succeed on a DC 30 Constitution saving throw. This pool is the foul essence of Kyuss and is permanently linked to his prison on that plane of existence. The character can be retrieved with a *wish* spell, though the Red Wizards will negotiate for their release in due time—feel free to elaborate on this in your own fashion. As the characters leave the top of the pyramid after using the Rod of Security, they see all the visual elements as detailed in the **Advancing the Adventure** section.

TIME TO REST?

The characters cannot rest here, even after combat. The presence of the crystal is too vile to allow recuperation.

ADVANCING THE ADVENTURE

Once the combat has been concluded the characters can proceed. If they avoided combat (perhaps by using the Rod of Security) that’s fine, they can attempt to leave the Laboratory or may wish to explore the eastern staircase that leads to **Level 2: The Lab Proper**. Alternately, if they defeated Kyuss they may need to recuperate – and the only safe place to do that will be outside the Laboratory entirely.

As the characters re-enter the pyramid they find that things have decidedly changed. The mythal has unraveled quite a bit, and the effects of the chromomantic spells have significantly unraveled. The bars of the retention cells are bent and broken, blast marks from explosive spells and bombs can be seen across the walls, and evidence of heavy weapon blows upon the stone can be seen. At the end of the halls the characters can see robed figures—**Spawn of Kyuss**—advancing in their direction. The black mass that formerly acted as a gate is now gone, and the Entrance Chamber has been greatly damaged: the floor has been broken out and the metal staircase hangs loosely into the chamber below. The skeletons are missing from the cells in the Retention Hall. If the characters see all of this, they can also easily see that the arrayed holy symbols of Amaunator and Lathander are flaring wildly but weakly, as if their

enchancements and protections have been taxed and their power exhausted.

The characters can escape, stand and fight another flood of Spawn of Kyuss (it is the DM's discretion as to how many Spawn remain, but if the characters choose to remain do not be shy about using a group of six or more), or they can run for the eastern stairs and continue their investigation of the facility. Be sure to allow the characters time to experience the changes and to roleplay through this dramatically different environment. If the characters stay and fight, it is likely that they will all earn the **Favored of the Worm** story award, as the Spawn of Kyuss is an unrelenting wave of terror and undeath.

Conclusion

There are several ways that this adventure can end. If all the characters have died or have been sent to Carceri, the Thayans will eventually mount another expedition or rescue—any character who was not worm-infested is eventually rescued and brought back to life (see “Death” on page 5). Any character returned to life in this manner earns experience for each encounter and adversary they successfully overcame and receive Rastol Shan’s gold reward—but the Zulkir is disappointed in their progress and provides no additional reward.

OTHER POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

If the characters successfully destroyed the Writhing Battery and the Aspect of Kyuss

The return to Mulmaster and debriefing with Zulkir Dar’lon Ma and Rastol Shan was procedural; almost boring. Riches were showered upon you and the adoration and respect of other experienced adventures is certainly yours, but now... you feel something stir. Something deep in your own mind.

When you sleep, you have the same dream every night. In it, flying citadels hover atop major cities: Waterdeep, Athkatka, Neverwinter, and more. These citadels appear to crumble and go crashing into those metropole; the death and destruction is nearly incalculable.

But you don’t feel shame or rage or even alarm. Instead, a sinister sense of dread realization washes over you—as if Kyuss itself knows that you are watching and is merely biding its time until these visions can come to pass.

The Zulkir is of course overjoyed, proclaiming the characters as “great heroes of His Greatness, Szass Tam.” All characters in the party gain the **Ally of Thay** story award (if a player declines such an honor,

the Zulkir comments that their legend has already spread). Furthermore, he offers the characters gold and an additional reward; refer to the “Power to the People” portion of this section.

If the characters witnessed the Writhing Battery and did not destroy it

“You... you saw what, now? Be exact.”

The Zulkir seems enraptured by your description. Rastol Shan, expressionless as always, lurks nearby in silence. When you finish your tale, the broad Thayan turns to his companion and exclaims:

“I believe that this is most fortuitous, Master Shan! We must away at once; preparations must be made in short order. For the glory of Szass Tam, indeed!”

The Zulkir busies himself with his journal and Rastol Shan steps forward. Quietly, he adds “What has begun cannot be stopped. Not now. Not here. And definitely not by you. Take great care with the knowledge of what has unfolded here, and know that your hands are just as bloody as ours.” His voice contains a hint of sadness, but the Zulkir appears too ecstatic to have noticed.

The Zulkir is overjoyed by what the characters can describe. All characters in the party gain the **Ally of Thay** story award (if a player declines such an honor, the Zulkir comments that their legend has already spread). He also offers gold and an additional reward; refer to the “Power to the People” portion of this section.

If the characters did not witness the Writhing Battery but can describe the laboratory and its contents

The Zulkir is wrapped up in your details as you relay them. After your tale, he asks:

“And what of the Battery itself? The Dark Obelisk? Did you see it?” His eyes are wide with excitement.

He is ultimately disappointed in the result, but knows that the characters have done a great service for Szass Tam and the other Zulkir of Thay. After some small talk, he leaves the room and Rastol Shan approaches:

As the Cloak approaches, a wave of powerful cologne washes over you. Rastol’s voice is raspy but has an edge of desperation:

“Events are unfolding that will no doubt end in death and destruction. While we cannot afford to sever our agreement with the Thayans here in Mulmaster—my people would certainly perish, to a man—I must strongly urge you to move on to Candlekeep. Tell the Great Readers what you now know, and find out what is on the horizon. Great and terrible events are all about us. Do this for Mulmaster. Do this for yourselves.”

The elder Cloak turns to leave the room and just before exiting, adds:

“Don’t make the same mistakes that I did.”

The Zulkir does not offer any additional reward beyond the gold listed in the Rewards section.

Power to the People

“My friends,” the hulking Zulkir begins, his teeth blindingly white in the dim light of Southgate Keep. “You have done a great service for this city. Mulmaster will one day return to its glory days as the Jewel of the North.

But to get there, this fine folk will need capable leaders. My own efforts have significant pushback, and people cannot be truly led if they are forced, yes? To that end, we must admit—you and I, of course—that we are both here for the same reason: the greater good.

I can install you in a position of power. A position of leadership. These good people, these suffering and strong people, need great leaders. I can see you into this position, to lead them and guide them, and to rebuild this city. What say you?”

The Zulkir’s offer is sincere: he wishes to place any that accept this offer into a position of minor power as a low-ranking noble of Mulmaster. Those that accept may enjoy the benefits of a Wealthy lifestyle for 2 gp per day while in Mulmaster, and once per rest receives advantage on a Charisma-based interaction with another character or NPC in Mulmaster. This does not confer any specific title or other privileges.

Any character that declines the Zulkir’s offer earns the **Enmity of Thay** story award. This may result in a character earning both the **Ally of** and **Enmity of Thay** story awards at the same time; this is normal when dealing with Thay.

If the characters removed nothing from the facility but saw the Rod or magic armor

Dar’lon’s smile grows wide, full of teeth and promises. He tells you of another group of adventures (“ne’er-do-wells,” he calls them) that happened to have similar equipment.

“Should you like those items, I can accommodate that request. They certainly will not be using them anymore.”

He declines to elaborate on the situation further, but the characters should still gain access to the items (the Rod, the armor, or both at your discretion) as if

they kept them when they were first discovered.

Exceptional roleplaying, members of the Cloaks, or characters that have had positive interactions with the Red Wizards of Thay in the past may be able to discover that Dar'lon's party of "ne'er-do-wells" came into Mulmaster only a day or so after their party left. The Zulkir says that group was also a party of contractors for the very same task and seemed very confused; out of sorts, and listless. It can be safely assumed that they were held for additional questioning, though for how long is entirely up to you.

Rewards

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. Give all characters in the party non-combat experience awards unless otherwise noted.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP per Foe
Spawn of Kyuss (tier 2)	1,800
Spawn of Kyuss (tier 3)	5,900
Spawn of Kyuss (tier 4)	13,000
Swarm of Rot Grubs (all tiers)	100
Wraith (tier 2)	1,800
Wraith (tier 3)	5,900
Wraith (tier 4)	13,000
Aspect of Kyuss	75,000

Non-Combat Awards

Task or Accomplishment	XP per Character
Took nothing from lab (tier 2)	500
Took nothing from lab (tier 3)	1,000
Took nothing from lab (tier 4)	1,500
Turned Principae Antiquus over to Candlekeep or another organization (tier 2)	1,000
Turned Principae Antiquus over to Candlekeep or another organization (tier 2)	2,000
Turned Principae Antiquus over to Candlekeep or another organization (tier 2)	3,000

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is listed here by their tier. Please note that Kyuss does not grant experience in

tier 2.

- » **Tier 2:** 6,750
- » **Tier 3:** 14,250
- » **Tier 4:** 28,500

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is listed here by their tier. Please note that Kyuss does not grant experience in **tier 2**.

- » **Tier 2:** 9,000
- » **Tier 3:** 18,000
- » **Tier 4:** 40,000

TREASURE

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Characters should attempt to divide treasure evenly whenever possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

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. See the sidebar if the adventure awards permanent magic items.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Zulkir's reward (tier 2)	2,500
Zulkir's reward (tier 3)	5,000
Zulkir's reward (tier 4)	15,000
Rastol Shan's reward (tier 2)	500
Rastol Shan's reward (tier 3)	1,000
Rastol Shan's reward (tier 4)	2,500

Note that no gp is awarded if the characters fail in their mission, though the Zulkir may choose to pay for

their resurrections.

Permanent Magic Item Distribution

D&D Adventurers League has a system in place to determine who is awarded permanent magic items at the end of a session. Each character's logsheet contains a column to record permanent magic items for ease of reference.

- » If all the players at the table agree on one character taking possession of a permanent magic item, that character gets the item.
- » In the event that one or more characters indicate an interest in possessing a permanent magic item, the character that possesses the fewest permanent magic items gets the item. If there is a tie in the total number of permanent magic items owned by contesting characters, the item's owner is determined randomly by the DM.

Spell Scroll of Comprehend Languages

Spell scroll, common

A description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Adamantine Armor

Armor (any metal), uncommon

Appearing almost decorative, this suit of highly-polished adamantine armor hails from ancient Netheril and is adorned in minute runes of protection. A description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Rod of Security

Rod, very rare

This wrought iron rod is covered in tiny padlocks and always cold to the touch. The rod will transport you and up to six willing companions to a comfortable cabin with no exit save for the rod. The windows display a dark and foreboding forest, and a tall-spired castle can be seen through the gloom. After 24 hours, you and your allies return to the exact location you left though you may choose to leave earlier. A

description of this item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

RENOWN

All faction members gain **one renown point** for completing this adventure.

STORY AWARDS

All characters with one or more levels in an arcane spellcasting class (sorcerer, wizard, warlock, or other class as appropriate) that is also a member of the Cloaks is granted **two additional ranks** in that organization. Any such character that is not already a member of the Cloaks is instead offered membership by Senior Cloak Rastol Shan and his associate, Zulkir Dar'lon Ma. these characters begin their next adventure at rank 1 in the Cloaks.

Favored of the Worm. Any character that became worm-infected during this adventure earns this story award. Their flesh is covered in small black pock marks; even illusion magic does not disguise their presence. These characters feel a bond with insects and bugs (worms specifically) and feels a kinship with undead creatures even though they may not be friendly.

Ally of Thay. You are known to be an ally of the Thayan Plateau, whether you want to or not. You have advantage on Charisma-based checks with Red Wizards and other non-slaves from Thay, and at the DM's discretion may have disadvantage when dealing with Harpers and other enemies of Thay.

Enmity of Thay. You have wronged Zulkir Dar'lon Ma and he has made his displeasure known. Every time you complete an adventure and for each day of downtime you spend, roll a d20. On a roll of 20, you are accosted by agents of the Thay – typically three Red Wizards and two Assassins. Once you die to these agents you may cross this story award off; alternately, you can sacrifice one rare or better permanent magic item and 10,000 gp to pay off your debt of dishonor to the Zulkir. Your DM may choose to have you check for

the Thayan attack whenever you begin to take a long rest, if they wish.

DOWNTIME

Each character receives **ten downtime days** at the conclusion of this adventure.

DM REWARDS

You receive 10 downtime days and other rewards based on the tier at which you ran this adventure:

- » **Tier 2:** 2,250 experience, and 1,175 gp.
- » **Tier 3:** 4,500 experience, and 2,250 gp.
- » **Tier 4:** 10,000 experience, and 5,000 gp.

DM Appendix I: NPC Summary

Senior Cloak Rastol Shan (RASS-stole SHANN). Male human lich. The senior Cloak in Mulmaster. Formerly Thurand Tallwand, the senior Cloak during the reign of Selfaril (and later, Rassendyll) Uoumdolphin. Participated in the imprisonment of Selfaril. Uses magic and a mask to conceal his true identity. Appears to be subservient to Zulkir Dar'lon Ma.

Zulkir Dar'lon Ma (zul-KEER DAHR-lahn MAY). Male human. One of the 12 Zulkir of Thay. Broad-shouldered and oozing charisma, Zulkir Dar'lon Ma is a consummate politician; he uses his command of enchantment magic to ensure that he remains in power and to keep his enemies at bay. While his bright smile serves to mark him as approachable, his sizable frame and passive body language clearly indicates that he is a formidable combatant. Currently enjoying a position of considerable influence (political, economic, and social) in Mulmaster.

Kyuss (KY-uss). Deity, presumed male. Sometimes known as The Worm That Walks, Kyuss seeks to turn the world into a state of being that is neither dead nor living for only in undeath can true divinity be found. Was imprisoned by the other deities in eons past and had his essence trapped in dozens of prisons that would become known as Dark Obelisks (or in the case of this adventure, Writhing Batteries). The other deities fear his power for reasons outside the context of this adventure. For the purposes of this adventure, only one of his many aspects is interacted with.

DM Appendix 2: The Dark Obelisk

THE DARK OBELISK

Kyuss has long been entombed within the Dark Obelisk, but this prison has moved several times over the eons. Only one portion of the Dark Obelisk is present in the world at any one time; the bulk of it remains deep within Carceri. It is certain that agents of the Worm—not to mention the Worm himself—are granted phenomenal and dire powers when in proximity to it. The environs surrounding any portion of the Dark Obelisk are festooned with dead bodies, squirming insects, foul green worms, and groups of Spawn of Kyuss.



Art: Ian Wallace

Every world has its own version of the legend of Worm that Walks. If scholars look deep enough into the history of their lands, they may find references to great periods of arcane study or even a purported “enlightened time” in which society and culture hit heights before an inevitable collapse. Many of these stories include references to newly discovered power sources and powerful fonts of arcane might. In truth, these events are often due to the Worm’s promises of might and lore. While the Worm cannot enter the world directly, his agents work tirelessly to bring

aspects of his prison—the Dark Obelisk, sometimes known as the Writhing Battery—to powerful mages and sorcerers in the hope of finding a way to release him once more.

Lair Actions

While within 1,000 feet of the Dark Obelisk and on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Kyuss and his Spawn take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the same effect cannot be used two rounds in a row and only a single lair action may be used in any turn regardless of the number of Spawn of Kyuss present (including Kyuss himself):

- » Each unoccupied space adjacent to Kyuss or a single Spawn of Kyuss is filled with a rot grub swarm (maximum 6 new rot grub swarms).
- » Any number of swarms explode. Any creature sharing a space with or adjacent to the Swarm must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) necrotic and acid damage (half damage on a success).
- » (Kyuss only) Kyuss raises a corpse that he can detect as a Spawn of Kyuss. The new Spawn retains all its former memories, but loses all abilities it once knew and instead gains the abilities listed in the “Spawn of Kyuss” entry. Nothing short of a wish spell will restore the Spawn its former life. The Spawn is loyal only to Kyuss and will follow his commands without hesitation.

Regional Effects

The presence of Kyuss and the Dark Obelisk is often a portent of terrible things to come. Insects are more aggressive and plentiful, undead are drawn to the area, and Kyuss’ horrific Spawn can often be found in great quantities in these areas. Additionally, necrotic effects become more and more potent as the Dark Obelisk brings in more faithful followers.

- » While within 500 feet of the Dark Obelisk, healing magic is only half as effective while necrotic magic is twice as potent (double

duration or twice the number of dice for a spell's effect). This does not stack with the effects of the mythal.

- » Intelligent, living creatures must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw when they first see the Dark Obelisk. On a success, the creature is frightened for one minute. On a failure, they are paralyzed for one minute and frightened for one minute after the paralyzed effect ends. Creatures may attempt this save at the end of each of their turns.
- » Intelligent undead creatures within 1 mile of the Dark Obelisk have advantage on saving throws versus spells and effects.

DM Appendix 3: Adventure Guidance

STORYTELLING TACTICS

This adventure lives and dies by the story-telling ability of the Dungeon Master. Without adequate descriptive terms, this can quickly devolve into an oppressive “slug fest” for the characters. Don’t be shy about playing into the desires of the characters should they wish to roleplay more with Dar’lon Ma or investigate the libraries and storerooms within the Laboratory.

Before compiling this adventure into the printed form that you now hold, I ran it nearly 100 times between November 2015 and October 2016. Here are some of the tactics that I used when running those games:

- » Dar’lon is a politician and a skilled wizard. I typically roleplayed him using a mixture of modern politicians and entertainers; one of my favorite versions used bits of a “used car salesman,” United States Vice President Joe Biden, and a touch of Bruce Campbell. Physically, I would often simply compare his build to that of a professional wrestler.
- » Rastol Shan is sulking. The Zulkir holds power over him, and he knows that if the Thayans discover that he plans to work against them in the future that their retribution will be swift—first against the people of Mulmaster, then the Cloaks, and at last Rastol Shan himself. He cannot abide by this and must work in secret over many years to bring his plans to fruition.
- » The Laboratory was built by the Ancient Netherese, and as such all writing in the facility is in that language. This may put parties without a way to use the *comprehend languages* spell at a disadvantage. Don’t be afraid to include a portion of that spell if needed! The characters should not feel like they missed significant story or thematic moments because of a strange party composition.
- » If the characters give a blood sacrifice to gain

entrance to the Laboratory, the Writhing Battery is immediately aware of them. Faintly, and *very* lightly, I would knock my knuckles on the underside of the table in a rhythm like that of a heartbeat. During combat I would increase the tempo and volume, but unless the characters noticed it I would not call attention to it. Once they climb the stairs (either set) from the main floor I would then call it out, saying that it “jars their vision but does not impede their hearing” (like standing in front of a high-powered bass speaker that is broadcasting low-frequency beats and notes).

- » The “black mass” is designed to put the characters on edge, but poses no mechanical adjustments aside from preventing line of site to unoccupied rooms.
- » Do not suggest that the characters release Kyuss from the Writhing Battery. This needs to be their decision.
- » If anyone is wielding *Hazirawn*, it makes it very clear that this place is horrifying. If the bearer attempts to enter the facility, the blade will leave and return to Mulmaster and await their return. As a sentient weapon, this is acceptable per the rules but may make the adventure difficult for the characters – be sure to make this a story point in-game and not a case of “because the text says so”.

Don’t forget about the mythal effects!

CHRONOMANCY

This adventure gives reference to the lost arcane school of chronomancy. This is intense and powerful magic, and was largely abandoned after the hubris of the Netherese empire resulted in the near-destruction of the world (on one confirmed occasion, and almost a second time after the Spellplague). Tread carefully with this concept, as the players—and certainly their characters!—are likely to become excited by this prospect.

At this time there are no plans to include chronomancy as a valid D&D Adventurers League

option, but this adventure does provide some interesting roleplay opportunities in regards to this magic. As the characters explore the facility they may discover that they are not the first party to have come this way; in fact, all of the chalk marks, the drawings, and even the warning “Don’t jump!” on the top of the pyramid were created and left by previous parties that I ran through this adventure.

I urge you, the DM, to create a log of what your players do and change. As you run this adventure more and more often, include some of those references for future parties to discover. Things in the pyramid are weird due to the mythal, and including these elements will only deepen your story and involvement in this adventure!

HAZIRAWN

In the first hardcover adventure for D&D 5th Edition, a sentient weapon named *Hazirawn* could be obtained. This powerful item was not given much context in that adventure and it was with the blessing of Chris Lindsay at Wizards of the Coast that I began the construction of this adventure with it in mind. The blade was becoming more and more common in public play events and my players were eager to learn more about it...

Lord-General Hazirawn, Greatsword of the Empire

Through Lord-General Hazirawn’s (b. -3495 DR, reportedly d. -2097 DR) many skirmishes he learned time and again that despite the hugely destructive power that magic users wield, they “lose their charge” fairly quickly—and when this happens, they are often left defenseless. As such, he refused to employ wizards in his strike forces and would instead seek the clergy of Amaunator for blessings and potions. He believed that the Lord of Law and Order would see the truth and might of his mission and reward him appropriately. This belief would pay off immensely during the Excursion into Extinction, which began in -3145 and resulted in the deaths of over 140,000 orcs. As with many arcane, community, and military leaders of the Empire of Netheril, General Hazirawn was gifted with a magically-enhanced lifespan.

When the elves stole one of the Nether Scrolls in -3095 DR, Lord-General Hazirawn was nominated by the Council to lead the investigation. Though the thieves were never identified, Hazirawn made significant progress (or so the Netherese believed) and even managed to assert non-magical control over a trio of arcanaloths that had been summoned and deployed to aid in the efforts. In recognition for his prowess on the battlefield as a keen commander of men and resources, he was granted command and control of the Mines of Dekanter in -2758 DR.

Lord-General Hazirawn was long stationed in the demesnes of Dekanter, and oversaw the substantial ores and gemstones that were mined from that location. He was known to spend time with both Ioun and the Chronomancer, and despite his disdain for arcane magic he formed close bonds with both of those men; Ioun would provide many magical items for Hazirawn’s troops and the Chronomancer would provide

them with riddles and mental training exercises designed to keep their minds sharp during the lonely watch under the mountains.

Lord-General Hazirawn was joined by the Chronomancer on an expedition far to the east, to a research facility near the Moonsea, in -2097 DR. The Chronomancer died two years later of a war wound thought to have been gained during the Battle of Ilusk in -2103 against the orc hordes, but the Lord-General was not seen again and is assumed to have perished during the easterly expedition.

The information above was drawn from numerous resources, including *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, *Netheril: Empire of Magic*, *Chronomancer*, several versions of the Forgotten Realms boxed sets, and more. The Netherese provide a lot of menace even in their absence; essentially, they are a font of inspiration for cruelly-intentioned Dungeon Masters!

My thanks and sincere apologies to Wolfgang Bauer and Steve Winter of Kobold Press for their work on *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and their decision to include *Hazirawn* in that adventure.

COMBAT TACTICS

Every combat in this adventure is simple to deploy but can easily be considered quite deadly. The characters will not have much opportunity to use a rest period, so be sure to give the players contextual clues about “fleeing and living” as opposed to “smash everything.” Conversely, some parties are simply going to be built in such a way that they prove the combats to be far too easy. In those cases, feel free to upgrade some of the monsters to the next tier or add an extra creature—the wraiths and Spawn can travel through most of the facility without much trouble.

Here are some of the tactics that I used while running combats for my players in this adventure:

- » For very high powered tables, I would manage

their hit points as well as attack roll success/failure for the monsters. This removes the mechanical responsibility for that character and allows them to focus on the story, but can make the game more complex for other DMs.

- » If a character died during this adventure to the wraiths or Spawn, I would give them a copy of the stat block and keep them at their same initiative.
- » If Kyuss is released, do not pull punches.

Don't forget about the mythal effects!

Appendix: NPC/Monster Statistics

SPAWN OF KYUSS

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class: 10

Hit Points: 76 (9d8 + 36)

Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	18 (+5)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws: Wis +1

Damage Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

Senses: blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages: understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge: 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. The spawn of Kyuss regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or a body of running water. If the spawn takes acid, fire, or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the spawn's next turn. The spawn is destroyed only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Worms. If the spawn of Kyuss is targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away, and it loses its Burrowing Worm action.

Actions

Multiattack. The spawn of Kyuss makes two attacks with its claws and uses Burrowing Worm.

Burrowing Worm. A worm launches from the spawn of Kyuss at one humanoid that the spawn can see within 10 feet of it. The worm latches onto the

target's skin unless the target succeeds on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. The worm is a Tiny undead with AC 6, 1 hit point, a 2 (-4) in every ability score, and a speed of 1 foot. While on the target's skin, the worm can be killed by normal means or scraped off using an action (the spawn can use this action to launch a scraped-off worm at a humanoid it can see within 10 feet of the worm). Otherwise, the worm burrows under the target's skin at the end of the target's next turn, dealing 1 piercing damage to it. At the end of each of its turns thereafter, the target takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage per worm infesting it (maximum 10d6). A worm-infested target dies if it drops to 0 hit points, then rises 10 minutes later as a spawn of Kyuss. If a worm-infested creature targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Scaling the Spawn of Kyuss

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgment when applying these changes.

- » **Tier 2 (levels 5 - 10):** no changes.
- » **Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16):** hit points 121 (14d8 + 61), Strength is 18 (+4), resistant to non-magical weapons, once per day may choose to succeed on a failed saving throw, Burrowing Worm's Dexterity DC is 12, a worm-infested target takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage per worm (maximum 15d6), and the claw attack becomes +8 and deals 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

- » **Tier 4 (levels 11 - 16):** hit points 166 (19d8 + 86), Strength is 20 (+5), immune to non-magical weapons and fear, resistant to fire, cold, acid, lightning, thunder; once per day may choose to succeed on a failed saving throw, has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Burrowing Worm's Dexterity DC is 13, a worm-infected target takes 13 (4d6) necrotic damage per worm (maximum 20d6), and the claw attack becomes +10 and deals 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 13 (4d6) necrotic damage.

For the purposes of this adventure, the effects of a Spawn of Kyuss' **Burrowing Worms** action stacks with the effect of a Swarm of Rot Grubs **Bite** action and vice versa.

SWARM OF ROT GRUBS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class: 8

Hit Points: 22 (5d8)

Speed: 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	7 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	2 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances: piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities: charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses: blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 6

Languages: —

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. Hit: the target is infested by 1d4 rot grubs. At the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage per rot grub infesting it. Applying fire to the bite wound before the end of the target's next turn deals 1 fire damage to the target and kills these rot grubs. After this time, these rot grubs are too far under the skin to be burned.

If a target infested by rot grubs ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies as the rot grubs burrow into its heart and kill it. Any effect that cures disease kills all rot grubs infesting the target.

Scaling the Swarm of Rot Grubs

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgement when applying these changes.

- » **Tier 2 (levels 5 - 10):** no changes.
- » **Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16):** speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft., resistant to slashing and piercing weapon damage.
- » **Tier 4 (levels 11 - 16):** speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft., immune to slashing and piercing weapon damage.

For the purposes of this adventure, the effect of a Swarm of Rot Grubs' **Bites** action stacks with the effects of a Spawn of Kyuss' **Burrowing Worms** action and vice versa.

WRAITH

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class: 13

Hit Points: 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed: 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances: acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities: necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages: the languages it knew in life

Challenge: 5 (1800 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

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

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's

control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

Scaling the Wraith

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgement when applying these changes.

- » **Tier 2 (levels 5 - 10):** no changes.
- » **Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16):** hit points 113 (14d8 + 53), Dexterity is 18 (+4), immune to non-magical weapons, once per day has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Life Drain's Constitution DC is 16, and Life Drain becomes +8 and deals 26 (5d8 + 4) necrotic damage.
- » **Tier 4 (levels 11 - 16):** hit points 158 (19d8 + 78), Dexterity is 20 (+5), immune to non-magical weapons and fear, resistant to fire, cold, acid, lightning, thunder; has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Life Drain's Constitution DC is 18, and Life Drain becomes +10 and deals 31 (6d8 + 5) necrotic damage.

ASPECT OF KYUSS

Gargantuan fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class: 25

Hit Points: 548 (25d20 + 260)

Speed: 60 ft., burrow 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	16 (+3)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws: Str +17, Dex +15, Wis +17

Skills: Arcana +17, Perception +25, Religion +17

Damage Immunities: acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities: blinded, deafened, frightened, poisoned, prone, stunned

Senses: darkvision 240 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 35

Languages: Common, Ancient Netherese, Dwarvish, Elvish, Abyssal, Infernal

Challenge: 25 (75,000 XP)

Discorporation. When Kyuss drops to 0 hit points or dies, his body is destroyed but his essence travels back to his prison inside the Dark Obelisk, and it is unable to take physical form for a time.

Innate Spellcasting (3/day). Kyuss can innately cast divine word (spell save 25). His spellcasting ability is Charisma, and he does not require any verbal, material, or somatic components when using this ability.

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

Limited Magic Immunity. Unless he wishes to be affected, Kyuss is immune to spells of 6th level or lower. He has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Kyuss' melee and ranged attacks are magical.

Regeneration. At the start of his turn, every living creature within 100 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or they lose 5 hit points and Kyuss regains 5 hit points.

Spawning. Kyuss may generate a rot grub swarm any time he is hit by a melee attack or other physical effect.

Actions

Multiattack. Kyuss can use Frightful Presence and make two melee attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 42 (12d6) necrotic damage. When Kyuss hits with this attack, the target must succeed on a DC 18 Con save or become infected with rot grubs (use the Burrowing Worm action effect of a Spawn of Kyuss, but the damage +3d6 higher). This damage ignores any of the target's resistances; if the target is immune to necrotic damage, they are instead merely resistant to necrotic damage for this effect.

Frightful Presence. Each creature and sentient magical item of Kyuss' choice that is within 240 feet of Kyuss and aware of it must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Kyuss' Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours. If a sentient item is frightened in this manner, its additional abilities fail to function until it is no longer frightened.

Consume Material. Kyuss can consume non-living, biodegradable matter in an adjacent square. Small objects or corpses restore 3d6 hit points; medium objects or corpses restore 6d6 hit points and advantage on its next attack roll; large or larger objects or corpses restore 10d6 hit points and Kyuss gains 1 additional legendary action.

Legendary Actions

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

Claw. As per the action above.

Agitate Rot Grubs (Costs 2 Actions). Kyuss agitates his rot grubs. Any character infected with a rot grub must immediately succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or else become infected with another worm, as per the Burrowing Worm action of a Spawn of Kyuss.

Scaling the Aspect of Kyuss

Kyuss is a god, and therefore cannot be scaled up or down.

Appendix: Creating a Deity

The creation of Kyuss is not something that I want to take credit for—in fact, far from it! The Worm that Walks has long been an influence in the worlds of Dungeons & Dragons, and has been sighted in several different published campaigns over the years. This vile being got his start in Greyhawk, and exists largely as a footnote in Forgotten Realms lore... but like the worms beneath the soil, he's there.

Lurking.

Waiting.

There are a lot of story opportunities that D&D games set up, and largely it is up to the Dungeon Master to weave them all into a coherent series of events—for no plan survives contact with the players! The molding of a stat block for Kyuss using the 5th edition rules is no different: while 3rd edition and its successor had a very complex (but appropriate) stat block for this deity, 5th edition offered very little by way of god-guidance during the development of this adventure.

To remedy this, I used the one resource that was available at the time: the Tiamat stat block from the *Rise of Tiamat* adventure. Much like the presence of Tiamat during that adventure, the characters here only encounter one of the many aspects of Kyuss—each shard of the Dark Obelisk (also known as the Writhing Battery) contains but a portion of his divine presence. As Kyuss is not quite as powerful a deity as the many-headed dragonqueen, I had to make some adjustments.

Creating and Modifying Kyuss

As a minor (though powerful) deity, Kyuss uses the Tiamat stat block as a foundation but with the following adjustments:

- » **Hit Points.** 548 (25d20 + 260)
- » **Strength.** 26 (saving throw +17)
- » **Dexterity.** 16 (saving throw +15)
- » **Constitution.** 26
- » **Charisma.** 28
- » **Perception.** +25
- » **Senses.** Passive Perception 35
- » **Languages.** add Ancient Netherese, Dwarvish, Elvish, Abyssal; remove Draconic
- » **Challenge.** 25 (75,000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Adjust saving throw DC to 25.

Regeneration. Replace with: “At the start of his turn, every living creature within 100 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or they lose 5 hit points and Kyuss regains 5 hit points.”

Spawning. Add as follows: Kyuss may generate a rot grub swarm any time he is hit by a melee attack or other physical effect.”

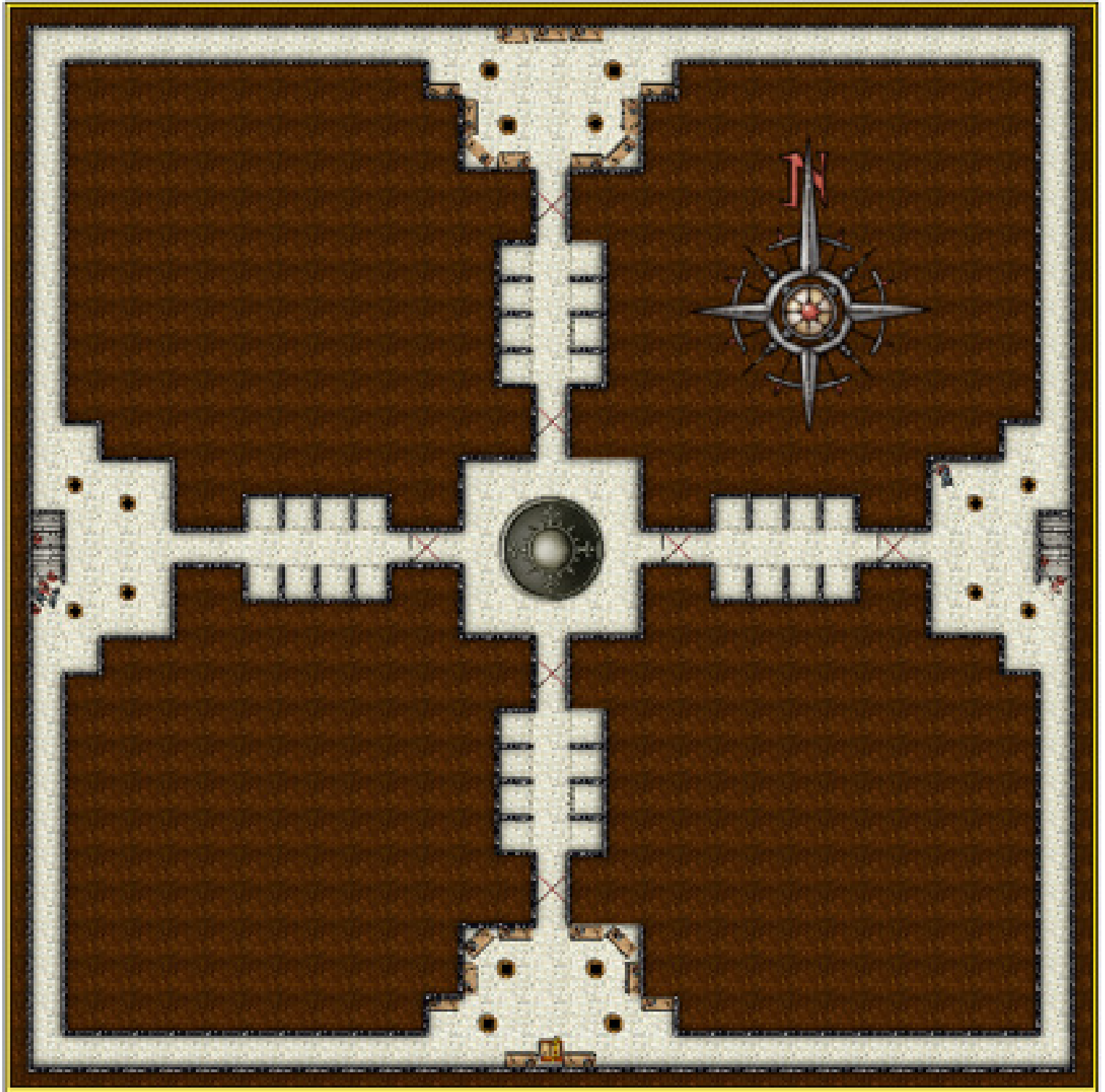
Frightful Presence. Also affects sentient magical objects

Melee Attacks. Deals necrotic damage, and uses the worm effect of the Spawn of Kyuss (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*).

Legendary Actions. Reduce from 5 actions to 3, removing all of the “heads” and replacing with “Agitate Rot Grubs,” which duplicates a worm inside of a host.

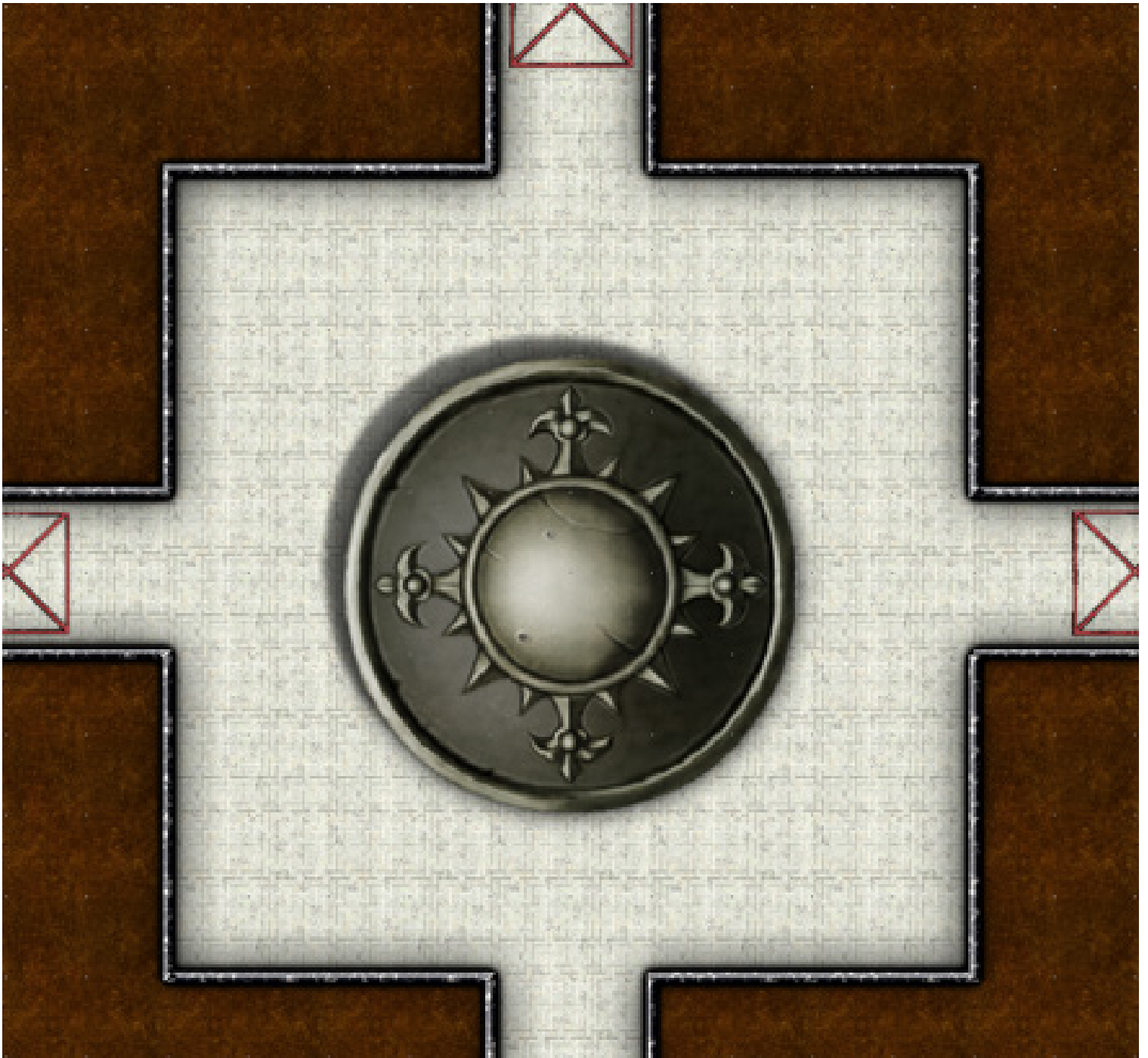
Map Appendix (Main Level)

The "X" sections mark the presence of the black mass (see adventure description). There should be another "X" to the far west (to match the other retention hallways).



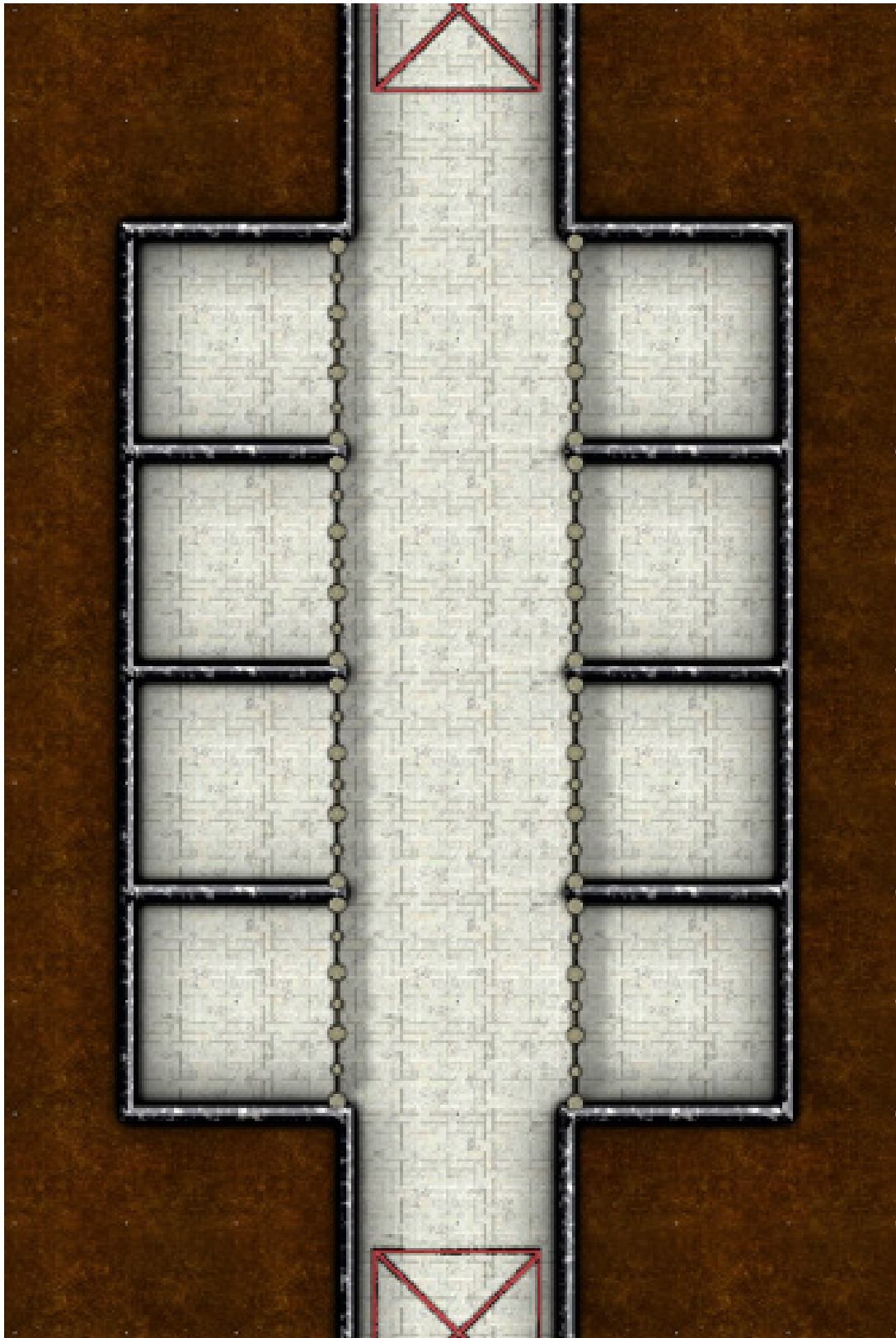
Map Appendix (Main Level; Entrance Chamber)

The "X" sections mark the presence of the black mass (see adventure description).

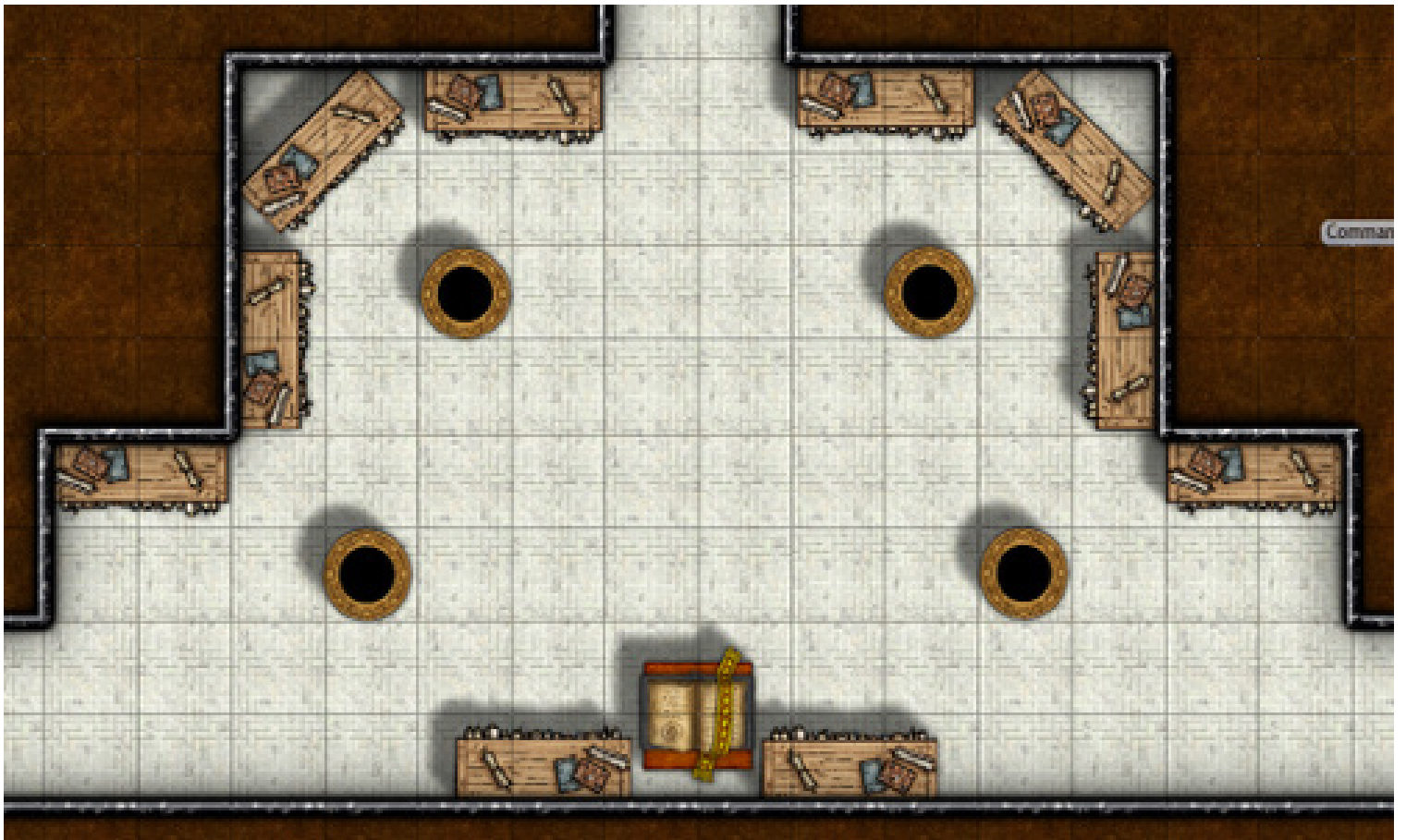


Map Appendix (Main Level; all Retention Cells)

The "X" sections mark the presence of the black mass (see adventure description).

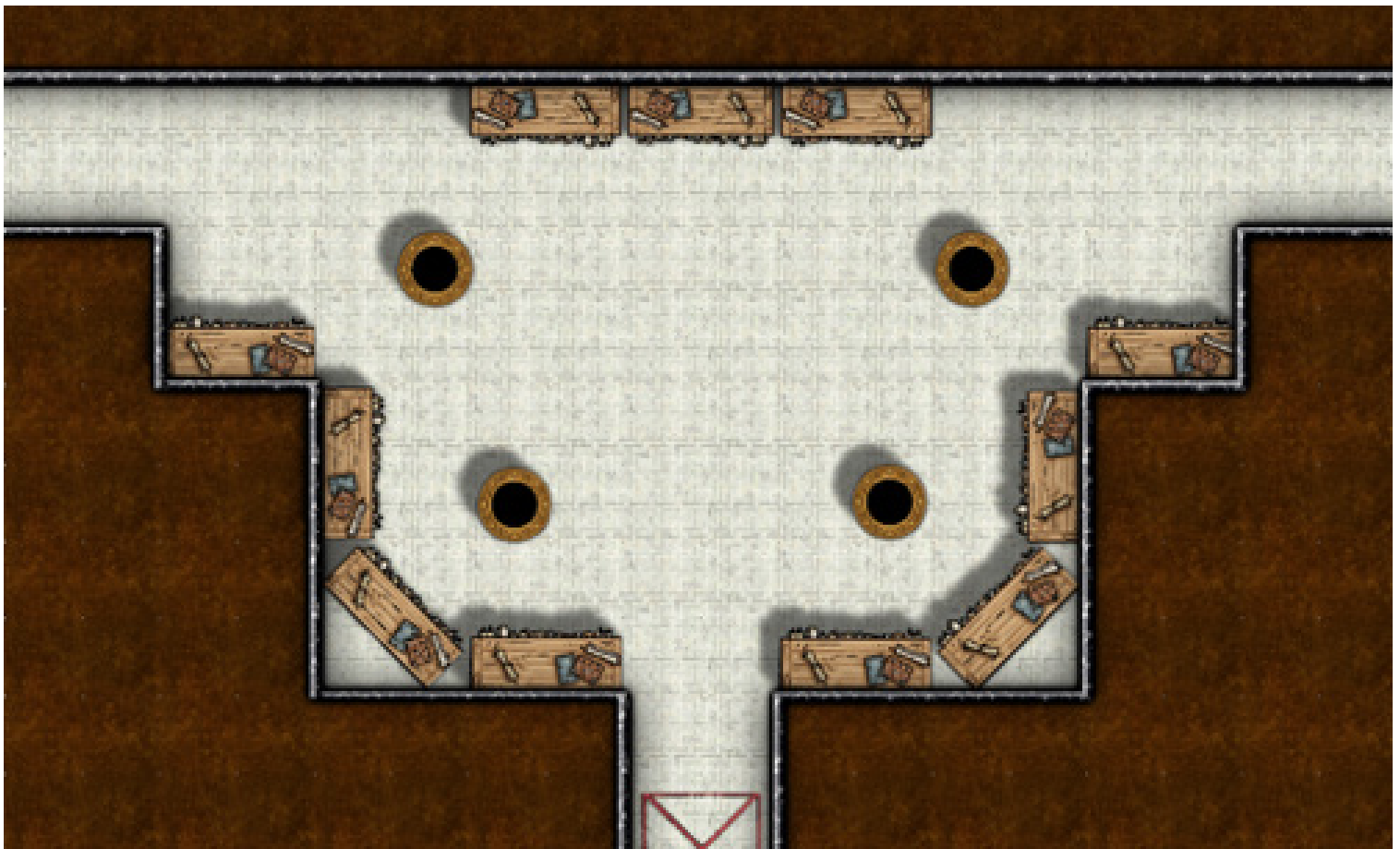


Map Appendix (Main Level; South Catalogue)



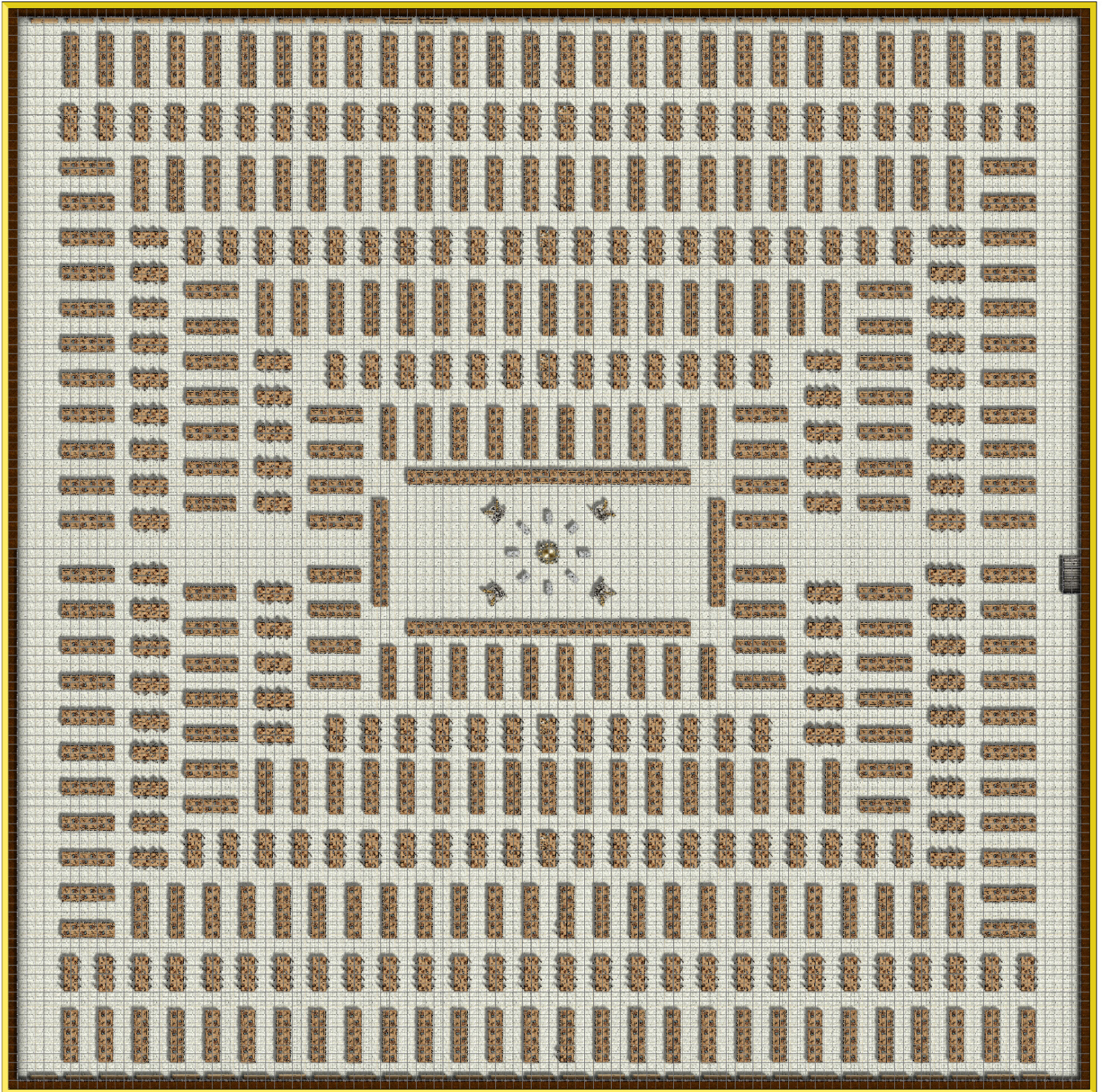
Map Appendix (Main Level; North Catalogue)

The "X" sections mark the presence of the black mass (see adventure description).



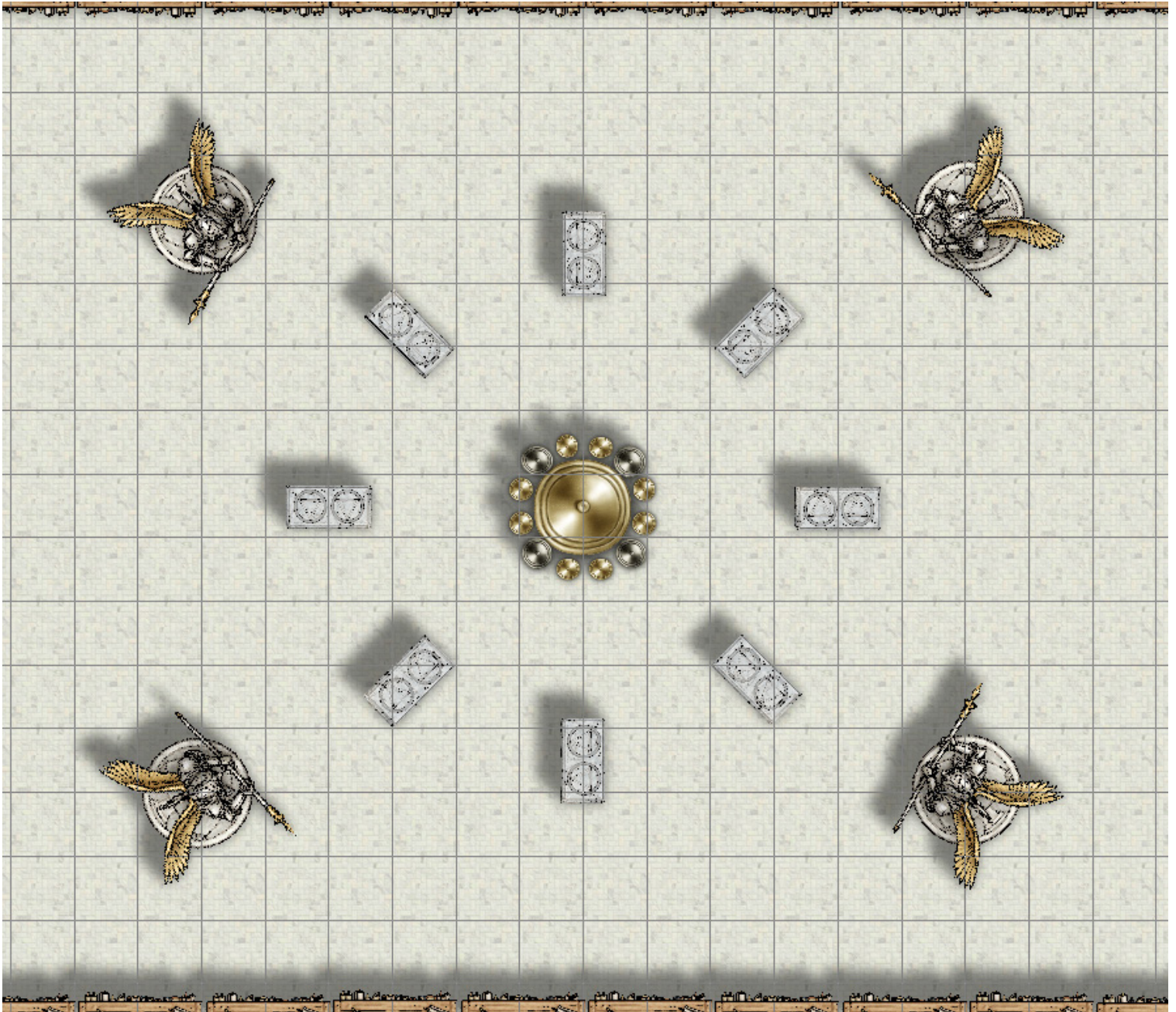
Map Appendix (The Lab Proper)

This map only indicates the scale of the floor. It's huge! This image is included to give the DM an idea of the scale of the room and for narrative purposes; for completionists, the full map of this floor is available as a separate file.



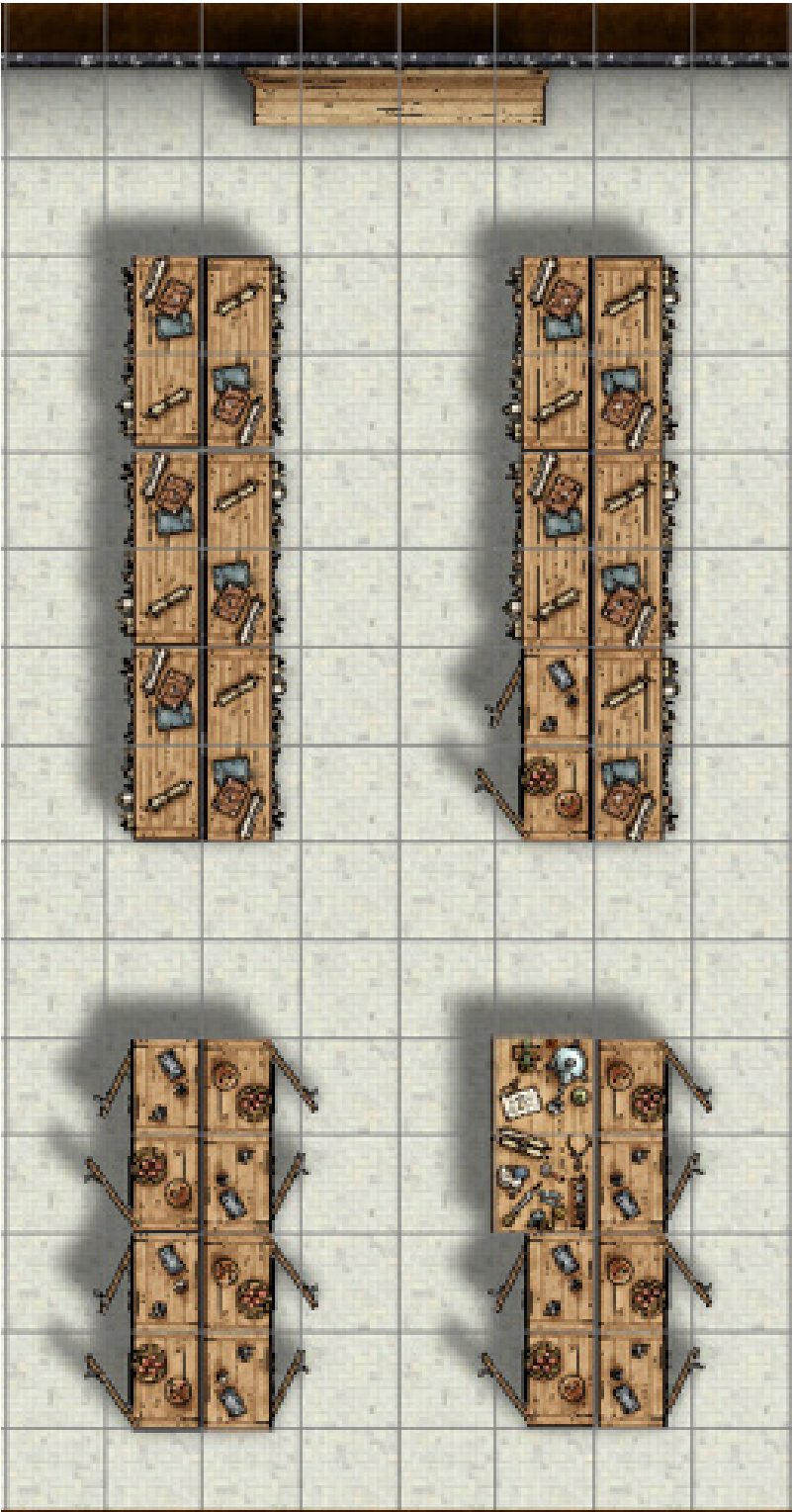
Map Appendix (The Lab Proper; The Harness)

This is the layout for the tactical encounter when the characters are inside of the lab proper. The spaces off-map are filled with shelves, racks, and mundane tables.



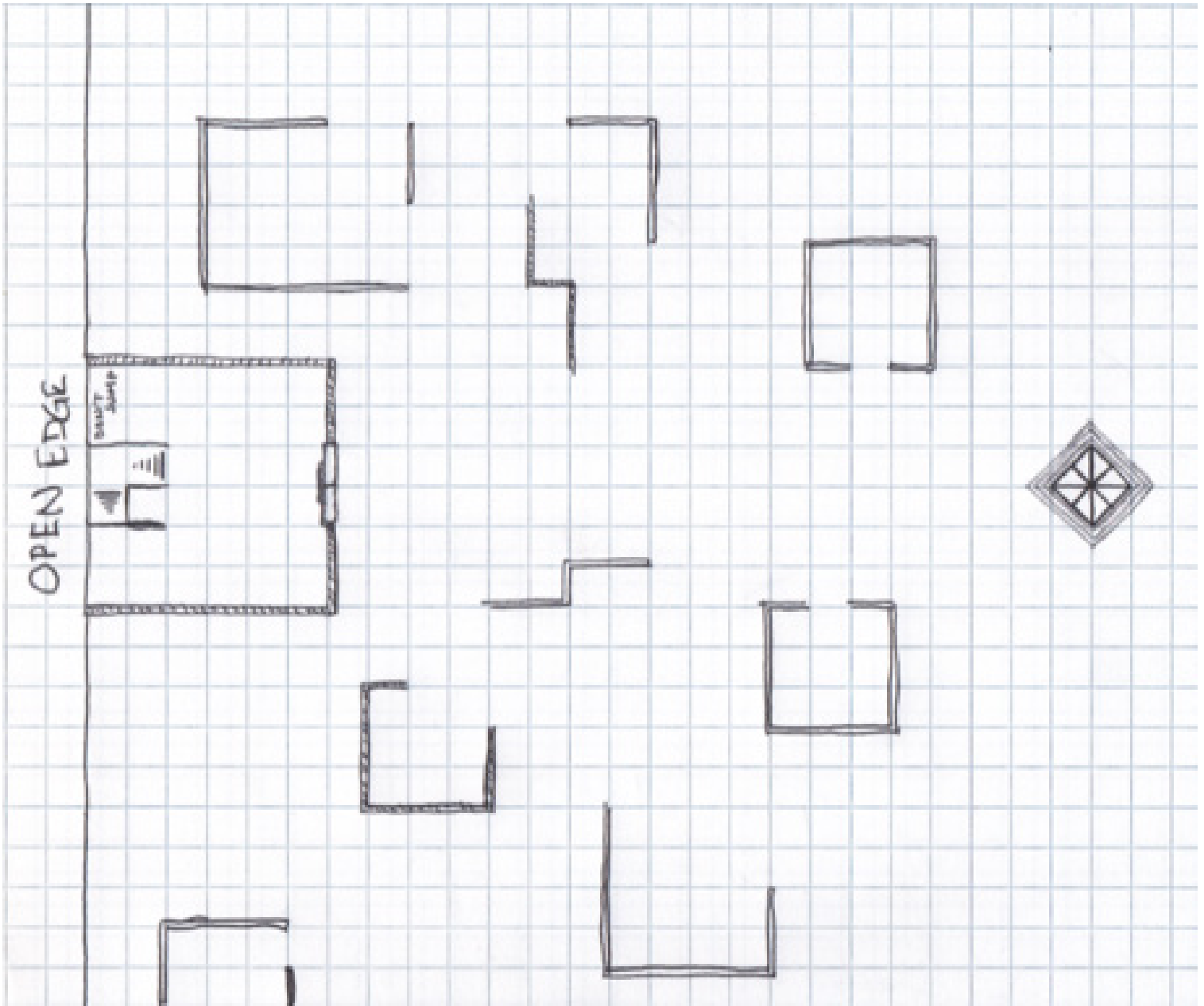
Map Appendix (The Lab Proper; sample of racks & shelves).

This map only indicates the scale of the floor. It's huge. An updated version will show the complete contents when available on dmsguild.com.



Map Appendix (The Writhing Battery)

This map is intentionally incomplete; feel free to adjust and modify this map as befits your players and game!



Player Appendix – The Face of Kyuss

Show this to the characters when they see Kyuss escape from the Writhing Battery, or at the end of the adventure.



Player Appendix – Zulkir Dar'lon Ma

