

THRALLS OF ZUGGTMOY: THE MYCONIC NIDUS

A TWO/FOUR-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 5-10 CHARACTERS

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Thralls of Zuggtmoy

The Myconic Nidus

Under the Flooded Forest grows a toxic maze of magical fungi called the Nidus. From this horrid realm a cult has struck a terrible blow against the wood elves struggling to regrow the trees in the forsaken swamp of the Flooded Forest. The elves, on the brink of extinction, need the adventurers to navigate this deadly labyrinth and recover a precious object. But the tunnels here crawl with spore-laden beasts and demons, and the very air itself is poisonous.

A 2- to 4-Hour Adventure for Tier 2 Characters. Optimized for APL 8.

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Adventure Primer

The *Thralls of Zuggtmoy* is a two-part adventure that takes place in the subterranean complex of the Cult of Zuggtmoy, under the Flooded Forest. The cult's sanctum is protected by a toxic maze called the Nidus. The Aryvandaara wood elf tribe was attacked by the cultists, who stole the tribal seeress' visions and dreams with an artifact called the Noctic Urn. The elves, weakened by the slaughter, need the adventurers to recover the vile urn.

In the *Myconic Nidus*, the adventurers must navigate a fungal labyrinth, guarding themselves not only against the toxins but the aberrations and demons crawling through the fetid tunnels and the dark magic of Amil-Or, the cult's high priest.

Background

The **ARYVANDAARA** wood elves reside along the eastern edge of Cormanthor in the dreaded Flooded Forest, a massive, rotting bog. Here the tribe survives through the visions of their seeress, **VELUTHIL**, devout servant of the god of knowledge, Labelas Enoreth. Her divine sight guides their hunts and hides them from their foes while they pursue the desperate quest of replanting the trees and cleansing this fetid swamp encroaching across the region.

During the eve of a crucial prophecy, cultists of Zuggtmoy, fungal goddess of rot, crept into Veluthil's chambers as she prepared her ritual and slaughtered her guards, abducted her acolyte and handmaiden, **WENEVAL** and **DAOIN**, and absconded with a powerful tribal artifact, the Horn of Tilvadar, an object of importance to Veluthil's visions. While it would have been a simple matter to kill Veluthil herself, the dark servants had crueler designs.

The cultists revealed the **NOCTIC URN**, a gift from their vile goddess capable of stealing dreams and thoughts. As the unholy device drained her mind of the power of prophecy, Veluthil collapsed into a catatonic sleep. Zuggtmoy's thralls returned to the **MYCONIC NIDUS**, the dream-filled urn in hand. **KUSHAR**, Veluthil's champion and protector, had been left for dead by the cultists and told the tribe's chief, **ILYRANA**, what had transpired. With so many warriors slain, she had to seek aid from outsiders. She asks the adventurers to find those who were taken, Weneval and Daoin, and reclaim the urn and the horn. To complicate matters, Kushar pursued the cultists alone to redeem his failure.

Episodes

The adventure's story is spread over three **story episodes** that take approximately 2 hours to play. These episodes are introduced by a Call to Action episode. The adventure also includes two, 1-hour **bonus episodes** that can be played if time permits, which are introduced anywhere in the adventure.

If you're planning to play the entire adventure in one sitting, you only need to introduce the **Call to Action** once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you'll want to revisit the **Call to Action** each time you play.

- **Episode 1: Ilyrana Seeks Help.** The characters are recruited. Ilyrana asks the adventurers to recover Veluthil's dreams and visions and stop the cult. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: The Myconic Nidus.** The adventurers enter the Nidus and seek the cult's sanctum. To do so, they must complete at least two of the Nidus's encounters. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Episode 3: The Writher.** The characters must also defeat the Writher, the cult's weapon of war. This is **Story Objective B**.

Bonus Objectives

However, this adventure also includes two, 1-hour bonus objectives that the characters can pursue if they have additional time to do so—earning additional **advancement and treasure checkpoints** in the process. These bonus objectives are found in this adventure's appendices, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: Recover the Horn of Tilvadar.** The cult stole the revered Horn of Tilvadar when they kidnapped the seer. The adventurers need to recover the elven relic. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 7**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Close the Portal.** There's an Abyssal portal in the Nidus that must be closed. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 8**.

Episode Sequence

Depending on your time constraints, play style, and environment, this adventure takes approximately 2-to-4 hours to play.

How Will You Play?

The duration of your session depends on how much of this adventure you utilize. At the very least, your session will last approximately 2 **hours**. However, if

you wish, you can provide a longer experience for your players by utilizing the **bonus objectives**.

Story Objectives Only. To complete the both of the adventure's story objectives, the characters play in Episodes 1 through 3 in order.

Bonus Objectives. You can extend this adventure by **1-** or **2-hours** by utilizing the bonus objectives provided in the appendices. These objectives branch off episodes 2 and 3, but their order is fluid.

Episode Flowchart

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the episode but also the outline of the different paths your players may take in reaching their stated objective.



Episode 1: Ilyrana Seeks Help (Call to Action)

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

Scene A. The Aryvandaara Plead for Help

ZUGGTMOY SPEWS FORTH THE SPORES OF MADNESS. Wherever you find worship of the Demon-Queen of Rot, the land withers. The fungal growths seem to parallel the dark devotion for the Spore Queen. With intense fervor, the corrupt roots plunge deeper and deeper.

— Solom Ned'razak, *Mysteries of House Morcane*

This is a single scene that provides the adventurers with the overarching objective for the entire adventure. Additionally, the **Call to Action** should lay out the hooks that provide the characters with possible directions in which they can pursue their objective. After the players have made some initial decisions, it should be relatively easy for the DM to determine the episode sequence to follow.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Aryvandaara village is located high in the trees, amongst the branches of the massive trees rising from the Flooded Forest. These are the last of the trees to survive the great flood that destroyed this section of Cormanthor.

Lighting. Sunlight makes the area brightly lit.

Creatures/NPCs

Ilyrana is desperate to get help. She's lost too many rangers and warriors to the Cult of Zuggtmoy's sudden attack. Time is running out.

Objectives/Goals. Ilyrana wants the adventurers to save Veluthil and stop the cult. At this point, she's desperate enough to hire outsiders.

What Does She Know? Do the creatures/NPCs in this scene have knowledge that might be relevant/useful to the adventurers? What is it, and how might the adventurers get them to divulge this information?

Objectives

- The adventurers need to explore the Myconic Nidus and find the entrance to the inner sanctum.

- Another task is slaying the **Writher**, the cult's fiendish servant.
- The adventurers are warned about **Amil-Or**, the cult's mysterious high priest.
- The adventures will be given an opportunity to rescue the kidnapped acolyte Weneval in part 1 and the kidnapped handmaiden Daoiin in part 2. They will also have the chance to find and help Kushar, the seeress' disgraced bodyguard in part 2.

Story Hooks

- **Druid Circles and Ranger Paths.** A druid or ranger can be asked to help the elves and stop the Cult of Zuggtmoy from growing stronger.
- **Elf-Friend.** If the adventurers have helped the elves of the Cormanthor Forest, or any other village, their reputation as a friend precedes them.
- **Fame and Fortune.** The Aryvandaara may have sent a giant eagle, giant owl, or elf ranger messenger to the party while they're near Ylaphron or Mulmaster.
- **Sanctum of Rot.** If the adventurers have played *CCC-BWM-04-02: Sanctum of Rot*, this episode can be presented as the adventurers escaping the sanctum after stopping the cult, having infiltrated through a one-ways shortcut or Aryvandaara teleportation magic.

Duty of the Elves

The Aryvandaara live within the Flooded Forest trying to cleanse the land and replant the trees destroyed in the flood that birthed the terrible swamp consuming the region. Their duty is sacred and of dire importance to protect Cormanthor.

The Cult's Plot

Now that the Cult of Zuggtmoy has captured the dreams and visions of the elven seeress, they are waiting for a significant celestial conjunction. Once these stars are in trine, the cult will summon an Abyssal servitor of Zuggtmoy known as the Rotting Moon to destroy the tribe and claim the region. The cult worships rot and stagnation and directly opposes the elves and their effort to regrow the forest within the swamp.

Episode 2: The Myconic Nidus (Story Objective A)

Estimated Duration: 75 minutes

Setting Description

The cultists, confident in their victory, did little to conceal their tracks. Following them is easy.

At this point, the adventurers are entering the Nidus and moving against the Cult of Zuggtmoy. The entrance to the lair of the cultists appears as a damp cave leading into darkness. The deeper the adventurers go, the cooler and wetter it becomes.

The cave spreads into a wide chamber that is home to a forest of fungi in an array of colors and sizes. The air is heavy with spores and gases that burn the eyes and throat.

Prerequisites

The adventurers have met Ilyrana and are asked to save the tribe's seeress. Ilyrana explains to the heroes the tribe's situation and their sacred duty to restore the Flooded Forest and purge it of rot.

Story Objective A

Complete at least two of the Nidus's encounters.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. These tunnels are damp and filled with a warm, drifting fog. The air is thick with the scent of rot, as well as hints of brimstone and gas.

Lighting & Sounds. The Nidus is dimly lit with a violet and blue glow. The dull light comes from the mold and slime coating the walls. A sound almost like heavy breathing resonates throughout the caves. Faint screams echo far off in the distance.

Environmental Effects in the Nidus

One hazard of the Nidus is the thick soup of spores and poisonous gases released by the different fungi. The adventurers may have protection against the spore-mist in the form of scarves and spells such as *warding wind*, etc.

Every time the party enters a new area (or every 10 minutes of in-game time), each adventurer must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer 3d6 poison damage. Failure on this saving throw also imposes disadvantage on Wisdom checks and Wisdom saving throws for the next 10 minutes of in-game time. Creatures who don't breathe in the spores have advantage on this Constitution saving throw.

Taking a short or long rest is nearly impossible in the Nidus, unless otherwise noted.

Encounters in the Nidus

Roll randomly or choose from the table below:

Table 1: Nidus Encounters

d6	Nidus Encounter	Type
1	A. Myceloid Den	Exploration
2	B. Smoking Passage	Exploration
3	C. The Kidnapped Acolyte	Social
4	E. Prison Cell	Exploration
5	G. The Myceloids and the Cultist	Combat
6	H. The Pit	Combat

Scene A. Myceloid Den

This tunnel writhes with fungal tendrils and floating spores, which pulse like fireflies through the air. Embedded in the walls are humanoid bodies in various states of decomposition.

From these rotting bodies sprout tubers, puffballs, and long-stalked mushrooms. There's also a large patch of vivid, strangely colored fungi.

Creatures/NPCs

In this fungal garden are four **myceloids** (use **vegepygmy chief** stat block except they have a fungal appearance) and four **fungal hounds** (use **thorny** stat block with a fungal appearance).

If they're aware of the adventurers, the creatures hide amongst the fungi and attack with surprise. They're unlikely to parley.

The Myceloids

These myceloids are vile creatures of Zugtmoy who have dwelled in the Nidus for years. They are the original occupants of the Nidus before the cult came.

The fungal people work with the humanoid cultists and help them protect the sanctum. In return, the myceloids receive a tithe of corpses. This tribute feeds the fungal gardens.

The Fungal Library

This part of the tunnel system is a "library," in which the different fungi are grown to represent a code. This code tells the story of the Nidus, Zugtmoy, and the myceloids. Understanding this bizarre form of writing is impossible without having the perceptions and understanding of a myceloid or myconid.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check discerns that the glowing fungi are some form of writing, but the adventurers require a spell such as *comprehend languages* or a copy of the *Book of Proliferant Light* to decipher it.

Library Stories

If the writing can be deciphered, spending 10 minutes translating the mushrooms reveals the secret messages. This room contains a collection of myths and stories of the Abyss and Zugtmoy, as well as a collection of bizarre poetry.

One of the stories speaks of an ancient ritual to bring a dormant being from Zugtmoy's holy realm to spread the spores of her blessing. This is referred to as the Rotting Moon and it waits for

the right conditions to sprout. If successfully deciphered, award the party inspiration.

Scene B. Smoking Passage

Squat, fat mushrooms dominate this cavern, but there are fewer fungi in this narrow passage. Sections of the stone are bare, showing that the fungi has been burnt away.

Fungal Trap

A dangerous fungus known as hotcap fills these passages. Imported from the Abyss, this mushroom contains explosive spores that ignite when released into the air. Hotcap grows in various places throughout the Nidus. This passage is thick with the fungus.

Any creature that moves within 10 feet of the tunnel must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage a successful one. The hotcap then requires 1 minute to recharge.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the mushroom and its effects. Those aware of the hotcap can trigger it from a distance with tossed stones or other projectiles.

This fungal patch is 5 feet wide and 20 feet long (100 square feet). Effects that deal cold or radiant damage kill 1 square foot of hotcap fungus per 1 damage dealt. A gallon of fresh water, a flask of alcohol, or a vial of holy water kills the hotcap in a 10-foot square area.

Scene C. The Kidnapped Acolyte

In the center of the cave is an emaciated elven woman. She kneels in a spherical cage formed of coarse gray fibers. This cage weeps a blood-red liquid from the surface. Upon closer examination, a thick trunk sprouts from her mouth and connects with the fibers of the cage.

The elf's eyes are rolled back in her head, and tears flow down her face. She twitches and emits the strangled screams you heard earlier. Carved sigils and writing decorate the walls of the chamber.

The Writing

In Abyssal, the writing on the walls spells out a warning: "All who would resist the Rotting Goddess will suffer this fate."

The Abyssal Prison

The cage is not sentient but radiates an Abyssal aura if divination magic is used. The cage can keep prisoners alive and trapped in a cruel stasis for months or years. While in this stasis, the cage slowly drains the victim's soul, during which the prisoner hallucinates a parade of nightmares. The fungal origins and effects are known on a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. This check is automatically past if the adventurers have obtained and read the *Book of Proliferant Light*.

If touched with bare skin, or (even worse) tasted, the victim must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. If failed, the victim suffers 21 (6d6) psychic damage and is subject to horrifying visions of flames, demons, and discordantly singing mushrooms. Failure on this saving throw also imposes disadvantage on all Wisdom checks and Wisdom saving throws for the next 10 minutes.

Freeing the Prisoner

Freeing the prisoner, an elven acolyte named Weneval (**priest**), is possible, though dangerous. First, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (Arcana) check must be made to discern the process to safely free her. Second, a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check must be made to remove the cage from the acolyte's body. Then, the elf must have healing magic such as *cure wounds* cast upon her. Failure to complete either of these steps means that she dies shortly after being freed. These checks are made with advantage if the adventurers have obtained and read the *Book of Proliferant Light*.

The Captive

If successfully freed, Weneval is exhausted and drained, but alert. She profusely thanks the heroes for saving her and uses her remaining magic to clear the toxins in this section of the Nidus, allowing the adventurers to take a short rest. She remembers little except the mention of the cult's leader, an enigmatic man named Amil-Or. There is something sinister about this man's nature. Weneval can safely remain here, protected by her spells and recuperating, waiting for the heroes to retrieve the urn.

The *Book of Proliferant Light* is a detailed codex of fungal spells, creatures, and demons. There are also insane ramblings scribbled throughout.

Scene D. Prison Cell

The passage begins to curve south but stops at a barred door, its frame chiseled from the stone tunnel. Across the door and adjoining walls are marks and symbols.

The Door

This tunnel has an actual barred door built into the walls, leading to a shallow cave. The wooden door is locked with an iron padlock and has magical sigils painted over the wood and surrounding stone. The lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. As well, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that these wards are a now-defunct abjuration enchantment to contain fiends and aberrations.

Amil-Or has long attempted to summon and control powerful allies from the Abyss. Several months back, the high priest conjured four **gibbering mouters** into the sanctum.

These aberrations proceeded to eat several acolytes. They were then restrained and imprisoned within this makeshift cell.

Beyond the Door

If the door is opened, an eerie cacophony of whispers comes from the horrific creatures inside. These things appear as a rainbow of glowing colors that writhe with tentacles, eyes, and pustules.

These aberrations are active, burbling and conversing in meaningless chatter. The gibbering mouters attack the adventurers as soon as the door opens, and they fight until destroyed.

Across the ichor-encrusted floor is an intricate diagram, and covering the walls are tapestries of silk depicting a beautiful woman surrounded by mushrooms.

The Diagram

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the diagram as a summoning circle linked to the Abyss.

Treasure & Rewards

Treasure & Rewards

- **Magic Items.** Inside the chest are a copy of the *Book of Proliferant Light*, a *potion of fire breath*, and a quiver containing 4 +1 arrows.

Scene E. The Myceloids and the Cultist

Brightly luminescent mushrooms cover the walls and ceiling. A dizzying variety of fungi are growing here, some as large as trees. There is one tall mound of rotting matter with purple-black morels covering it. There is a group of fungal creatures present in the cave, as well as a ragged looking human. The man mumbles prayers of Zuggtmoy to the fungal creatures.

The Myceloids

There are five myceloids present in the cave (use **vegepgmy chief** stat block except they have a fungal appearance). Also, Aden'roth (**priest**), a devoted servant of Amil-Or, dwells here. Aden'roth dwells amongst the myceloids and learns from them, hoping to understand Zuggtmoy's secrets.

Aden'roth has allowed himself to become infected with a fungal disease to aid in communication with the myceloids. The fungus people consider the priest amusing and tolerate his attempts to learn their secrets.

Aden'roth's Shelter

Aden'roth is loyal to Amil-Or, and fights to the death before giving away any secrets. Inside his makeshift hut, alongside a filthy bedroll, are the priest's journal and a tattered copy of the *Book of Proliferant Light*.

The journal is written in Common and goes on at some length about myceloid culture and daily life in the Nidus.

The *Book of Proliferant Light* is a detailed codex of fungal spells, creatures, and demons. There are also insane ramblings scribbled throughout.

Also, the journal and book detail the following:

- A "Grand Summoning" is taking place soon. The summoning corresponds with a conjunction.
- The Noctic Urn is an artifact of Zuggtmoy, and steals and stores dreams.
- Dreams are a form of currency to demons.
- The urn can be destroyed by magical force, but if any dreams are contained within during its destruction, the dreams are lost forever.
- The myceloids have inhabited these caverns for several years, and worship and revere Zuggtmoy.
- Aden'roth expresses his suspicions about the true nature of Amil-Or, that he believes his master has "ascended." There is little explanation of this.

Scene F. The Pit

The tunnel here leads into an impressive cavern. The walls of this passageway have etchings of eldritch symbols. Ahead is a black pit. There is a narrow stone bridge extending across this gulf. On the other side the tunnel continues into darkness.

Both sides of the bridge are illuminated by large copper braziers fueled with foul-smelling oil. The rest of the cavern is dark and free of both spores and fungal growths. A rotting smell rises from the pit under the bridge. The bridge itself has two bronze-masked cultists flanking the far side.

This cavern is free of the noxious vapors and mists that fill the rest of the Nidus, so DC 10 Constitution saving throws are no longer required here.

The Bridge Guards

The bridge is always guarded by two **veterans** who stand alert on the far side. If they spot intruders, they shout an alarm and attempt to bottleneck the invaders on the bridge. The guards will also tip one of the braziers into the chasm, riling the **black pudding** below, or try to shove an adventurer into the pit.

The black pudding then churns upwards and attacks anything on the side of the bridge opposite the veterans. The veterans aren't going to willingly put themselves in a position where they'll be attacked by the ooze or knocked into the pit.

Under the Bridge

The pit below the bridge is deep and unlit. It is 30 feet deep, and filled with refuse, rotting bodies, and fungi. To protect the bridge, the cult lured a black pudding into the pit, where they feed it with rubbish and refuse.

The Ooze

The black pudding has not been fed for several days, and it is growing restless. If anyone or anything falls, or is thrown, into the pit, or a creature climbs down, the ooze rushes to attack.

Episode 3: The Writher (Story Objective B)

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

Scene A. Meeting the Writher

Amil-Or conjured and bound the Writher to guard the sanctum, but it proved too hard to control. Thus, it dwells in the Nidus, protecting the cult by relentlessly attacking anything that comes near it. However, after the celestial conjunction, Amil-Or will be strong enough to not only control the Writher but use it as a conduit to create an army of its kind.

The Writher leaves clear signs of its passage and approach. Tunnels it has recently passed through within the last minute are smeared with a black, viscous substance. This ichor smells of rot and brimstone.

Prerequisites

The adventurers must be in the Nidus, and preferably have finished at least two encounters from Episode 2.

Story Objective B

The adventurers must defeat the Writher.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The adventurers encounter the Writher in a lichen-filled cavern. It is at least 30 feet wide and 50 feet long.

Lighting. As with the rest of the Nidus, the cavern is dimly lit by glowing fungi.

Battling the Writher

The Writher (use **alkilith** stat block; see **Adjusting the Scene**) waits near the center of the cave. When at rest, the fiend appears as a pool of slime with a glowing crystal orb in the center. A faint buzzing fills the cave, piercing deep into the psyche of all who hear it (the Writher's Foment Madness ability).

When attacking or moving, the Writher appears as a Medium-sized, churning mass of slime and moss, within which is an egg-shaped orb shining with an ill light.

The Writher's Crystal Orb

While the crystal orb is embedded within the Writher, the fiend gains the following:

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

The orb can be destroyed. It has AC 11 and 40 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

The orb can also be wrenched out of the Writher's amorphous body. Doing so requires being within 5 feet of the Writher and using an action to make a contested Strength check against the fiend.

Once the orb is no longer within the Writher (either shattered or extracted), a massive shock ripples throughout the fiend, and the Writher takes 55 (10d10) necrotic damage. It also no longer has the Legendary Resistance granted by the orb. This can be described as parts of the Writher turning to dust or bursting.

Treasure & Rewards

- **Magic Items.** The Writher is protecting *Miir*, a scimitar of warning.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** The Writher is a **canoloth** with 84 hp.
- **Weak:** The Writher is a **canoloth**.
- **Strong:** The Writher has 180 hp.
- **Very Strong:** The Writher has 210 hp and advantage on attacks.

Playing the Pillars

COMBAT

The Writher is a dumb brute with slightly above animal intelligence. In combat it focuses on hindering as many foes as possible with its Foment Madness ability while lashing targets with its tentacles.

EXPLORATION

To make this fight more challenging, add patches of green slime or yellow mold to any of the cavern surfaces, including the walls and ceiling. Green slime can drip down on targets below.

SOCIAL

While the Writher won't typically respond to diplomacy, a successful Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies that the presence of the Writher heralds a great wrongness and an imminent catastrophe.

Wrap-Up: Concluding the Adventure

With the Writher defeated, the adventurers discover a set of massive bronze doors.

For adventurers playing this adventure's sequel, *Thralls of Zuggtmoy: The Sanctum of Rot*, this doorway leads into the cult's inner chambers. For adventurers who have already played the sequel, these doors instead lead out into the Flooded Forest, where Ilyrana's wood elves await the adventurer's return.

Adventure Rewards

At the end of the session, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include player rewards—magic item unlocks, story awards, or new downtime activities, as follows:

(*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

Advancement and Treasure Checkpoints

The characters receive **1** advancement checkpoint and **1** treasure checkpoint for each **story** objective that they complete, as follows:

- **Story Objective A:** The adventurers must complete at least two of the Nidus's encounters.
- **Story Objective B:** The adventurers must defeat the Writher.

The characters receive **1** advancement checkpoint and **1** treasure checkpoint for each **bonus objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A:** Recover the Horn of Tilvadar.
- **Bonus Objective B:** Close the *gate* into the Abyss before it fully opens.

Player Rewards

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

Magic Item Unlock

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Miir, Scimitar of Warning. This mithral blade is exquisitely crafted from the finest materials, and never becomes dirty. “Miir” means “priceless” in Elvish. This item can be found in **Appendix 9**.

Consumable Magic Items

Characters completing the adventure can find:

+1 Arrows. This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Potion of Fire Breath. This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Dungeon Master Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure's **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG

Appendix 1: Locations & NPCs

The following locations feature **prominently** in this adventure.

- **The Nidus (NIGH duss).** A poisonous, otherworldly maze. The tunnels here crawl with spore-laden beasts and demons, and the air itself is deadly.

Personality: *Corrupt and rotten.*

Ideal: *"Zuggtmoy's spores shall be spread."*

Bond: *"Even the stars will serve Zuggtmoy."*

Flaw: *"Dying in service to Zuggtmoy is failure."*

- **Weneval (WEN a vel).** A young priestess and acolyte to the seeress of the wood elves.

Personality: *Weneval is loyal and appreciative.*

Ideal: *"I will become strong to help others."*

Bond: *"I serve my mistress and tribe."*

Flaw: *"I don't know if I am brave enough."*

Appendix 2: Creature Statistics

Alkilith (The Writhe)

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 157 (15d8 + 90)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	7 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +10

Skills Stealth +8

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

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Amorphous. The alkilith can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

False Appearance. While the alkilith is motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary slime or fungus.

Foment Madness. Any creature that isn't a demon that starts its turn within 30 feet of the alkilith must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, or it hears a faint buzzing in its head for a moment and has disadvantage on its next attack roll, saving throw, or ability check.

If the saving throw against Foment Madness fails by 5 or more, the creature is instead subjected to the *confusion* spell for 1 minute (no concentration required by the alkilith). While under the effect of that *confusion*, the creature is immune to Foment Madness.

Magical Resistance. The alkilith has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The alkilith makes three tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) acid damage.

Black Pudding

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 7

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	11 (-5)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Damage Immunities acid, cold, lightning, slashing

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages --

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amorphous. The pudding can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Corrosive Form. A creature that touches the pudding or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal or wood that hits the pudding corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed.

Nonmagical ammunition made of metal or wood that hits the pudding is destroyed after dealing damage.

The pudding can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical wood or metal in 1 round.

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

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Reactions

Split. When a pudding that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new puddings if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new pudding has hit points equal to half the original pudding's, rounded down. New puddings are one size smaller than the original pudding.

Canoloth (Writher)

Medium fiend (yugoloth), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)

Skills Investigation +3, Perception +9

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

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Abyssal, Infernal, Telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Dimensional Lock. Other creatures can't teleport to or from a space within 60 feet of the canoloth. Any attempt to do so is wasted.

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

Magic Weapons. The canoloth's weapon attacks are magical.

Uncanny Senses. The canoloth can't be surprised while it isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The canoloth makes two attacks: one with its tongue or its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (6d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Tongue. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15), pulled up to 30 feet toward the canoloth, and restrained until the grapple ends. The canoloth can grapple one target at a time with its tongue.

Gibbering Mouther

Medium aberration, neutral

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aberrant Ground. The ground in a 10-foot radius around the mouther is doughlike difficult terrain. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

Gibbering. The mouther babbles incoherently while it can see any creature and isn't incapacitated. Each creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the mouther and can hear the gibbering must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and rolls a d8 to determine what it does during its turn. On a 1 to 4, the creature does nothing. On a 5 or 6, the creature takes no action or bonus action and uses all its movement to move in a randomly determined direction. On a 7 or 8, the creature makes a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within its reach or does nothing if it can't make such an attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The gibbering mouther makes one bite attack and, if it can, uses its Blinding Spittle.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (5d6) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is killed by this damage, it is absorbed into the mouther.

Blinding Spittle (Recharge 5–6). The mouther spits a chemical glob at a point it can see within 15 feet of it. The glob explodes in a blinding flash of light on impact. Each creature within 5 feet of the flash must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of the mouther's next turn.

Priest (Aden'Roth)

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +5

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

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

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Thorny (Fungal Hound)

Medium plant, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Resistances lightning, piercing

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages --

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Plant Camouflage. The thorny has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks it makes in any terrain with ample obscuring plant life.

Regeneration. The thorny regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. If it takes cold, fire, or necrotic damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the thorny's next turn. The thorny dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Thorny Body. At the start of its turn, the thorny deals 2 (1d4) piercing damage to any creature grappling it.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Vegepygmy Chief (Myceloid)

Small plant, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances lightning, piercing

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Vegepygmy

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Plant Camouflage. The vegepygmy has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks it makes in any terrain with ample obscuring plant life.

Regeneration. The vegepygmy regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. If it takes cold, fire, or necrotic damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vegepygmy's next turn. The vegepygmy dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack. The vegepygmy makes two attacks with its claws or two melee attacks with its spear.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Spores (1/Day). A 15-foot-radius cloud of toxic spores extends out from the vegepygmy. The spores spread around corners. Each creature in that area that isn't a plant must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. While poisoned in this way, a target takes 9 (2d8) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Veteran

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Priest (Weneval)

Medium humanoid (wood elf), chaotic good

Armor Class 13 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 33 (5d8+5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of second level or higher, the extra damage increased by 1d6 for each level above first.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*
3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Appendix 3: Myceloid Den Map

(1 square = 10 ft.)



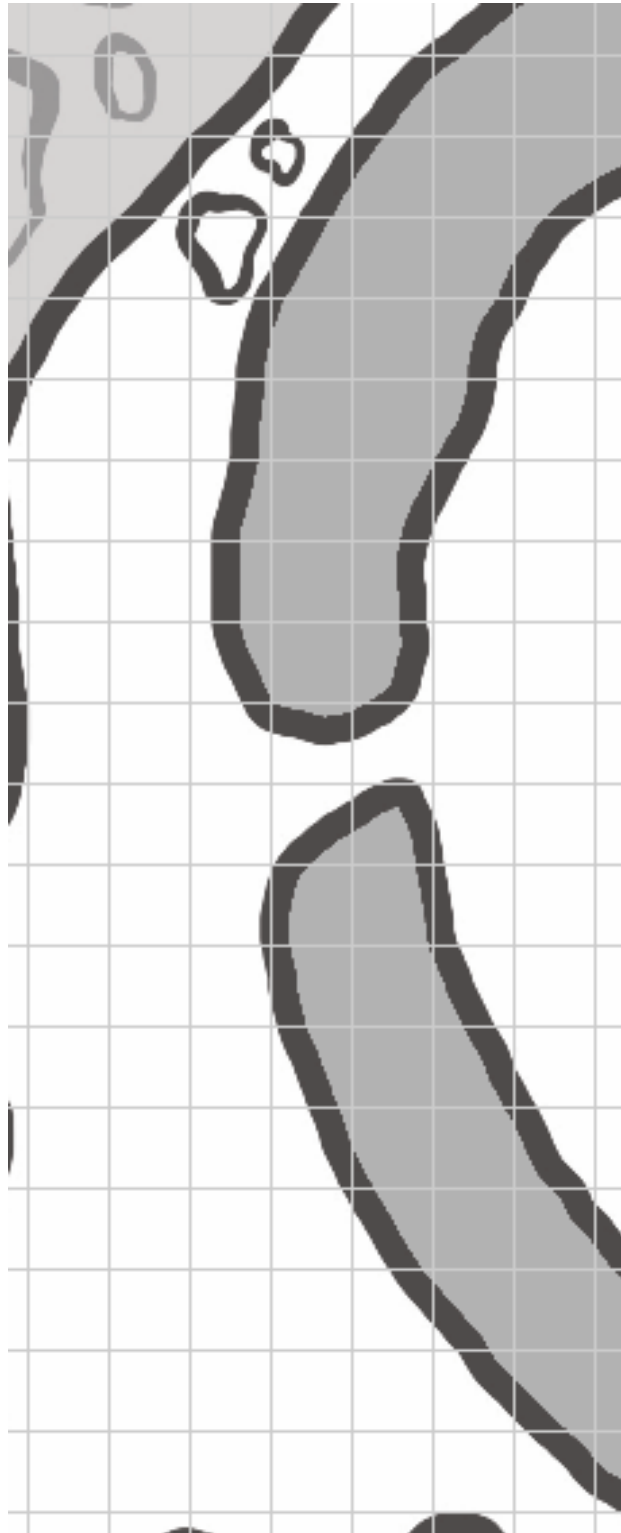
Appendix 4: The Myceloids and the Cultist Map

(1 square = 10 ft.)



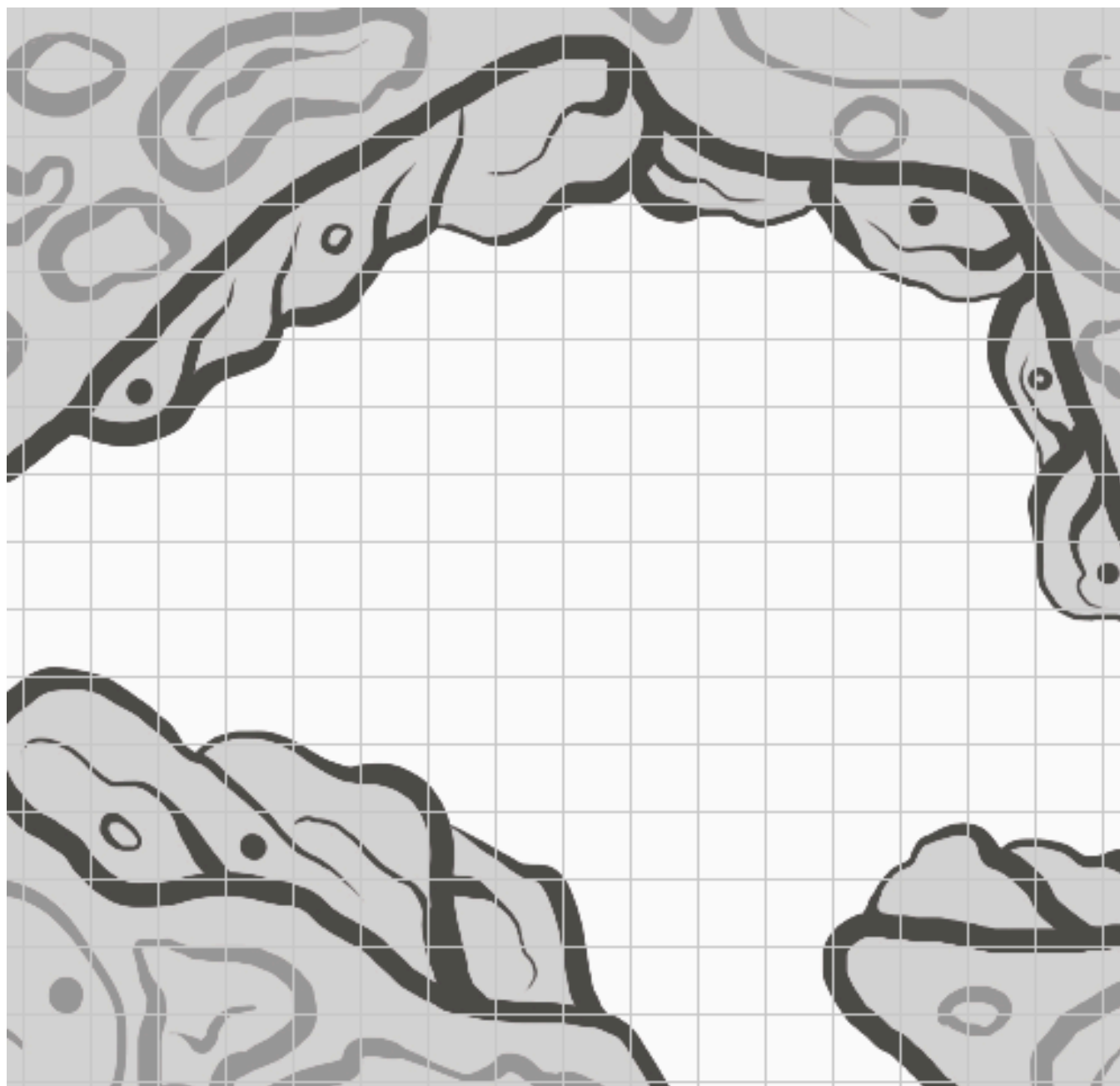
Appendix 5: The Pit Map

(1 square = 10 ft.)



Appendix 6: The Writhe Map

(1 square = 10 ft.)



Appendix 7: Recover the Horn of Tilvadar (Bonus Objective A)

Setting Description

The Horn of Tilvadar is an elven relic. Tilvadar was a renowned hunter before he passed away battling Klauth, an ancient red dragon. The elves tell Tilvadar's legends and say he has joined the court of Solonor Thelandira, god of the hunt. The seeress uses this relic when channeling prophecies of hunting to guide her people to healthy herds.

The adventurers enter a cavern filled with glowing motes of light. At the far end of the cave is a statue of Zuggtmoy, grasping the elven horn.

Prerequisites

Illyana should have asked the adventurers to recover the horn. This bonus objective can be fit between any other Myconic Nidus encounter but should come before the final objective.

Bonus Objective A

Recover the Horn of Tilvadar.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This 50-foot-wide, 150-foot-long cavern is thick with glimmering motes of light drifting through the air. Towering fungi, stalactites, and slick boulders cover the cave's floor. Use the map in **Appendix 4**.

At the far end of the cave is a 20-foot-tall statue of Zuggtmoy in her beautiful human guise, grasping the elven horn. The statue is poised as if blowing the instrument. If the adventurers observe for a moment, they can see the energy motes streaming from the horn, as if the sparkling lights are being blown forth by the statue.

Lighting. The entire cave is dimly lit by both the fungi and the light motes.

Scene A. The Statue and the Horn

The entire cavern is a trap. Amil-Or knows the elves will send their heroes to recover Tilvadar's horn because of its importance and has planned accordingly. The statue is draining the horn's energy to fuel the Nidus and Amil-Or's magic, spewing dangerous motes in the process.

There are several notable elements present: The energy motes, the **ropers** standing guard on either side of the statue, and the statue of Zuggtmoy, which is magically forcing energy out of the elven horn.

The Energy Motes

A creature automatically avoids touching the motes by moving at half speed. Otherwise, every turn a creature moves at full speed requires the creature to make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature that isn't native to the Nidus takes 9 (2d8) necrotic damage and becomes blind. At the end of each of its turns, a creature blinded can attempt a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the effect ends.

The Ropers

Flanking the statue are two **ropers**. These Nidus aberrations wait until a creature is within Tendril range, and then attack, attempting to Reel and Bite targets. The ropers subsist by eating bizarre Nidus creatures and find non-mutated humanoid flesh delicious.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **roper**.
- **Strong:** Add one **roper**.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **roper**. Each **roper** has 143 hit points.

The Statue of Zuggtmoy

The statue of Zuggtmoy is the final trap waiting for the adventurers. After the trap is dealt with, the horn can be retrieved, but the relic's magic is temporarily exhausted and must be restored by the elves.

Trap. Statue of Zuggtmoy

Mechanical Trap (Levels 5-10 deadly threat)

The horn is clasped in the fungal growths of the statue and held to the lips of the Goddess of Rot. If disturbed, the statue's head pivots and the horn spews forth energy.

Trigger. Disturbing the horn or statue.

Effect. The statue's arms and head pivot to face the creature triggering the trap, and a blast of sparkling motes erupts from the horn. Each creature in a 60-foot cone must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 8d8 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Countermeasures. If examined, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) skill check finds that the statue's head and arms can change position. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools can free the horn without triggering the trap. On a failed attempt, the trap is triggered.

Hammering a piton or spike into the proper place can prevent the statue from pivoting, redirecting the blast harmlessly against the cavern wall, or even onto a roper guardian.

Appendix 8: Closing the Portal (Bonus Objective B)

Setting Description

Deep within the Nidus is a gateway to the Abyss. A fungal arch maintains the *gate*, allowing Abyssal fungi and demonic servants of Zugtmoy to enter the Material Plane. If not sealed, this encroachment could mean disaster.

The Abyssal portal is not fully connected. Once the cult's ceremony takes place during the conjunction, the entrance to the Abyss will be fully activated, and the Rotting Moon will enter the Material Plane, followed by a fiendish horde.

Adventurers proficient in Arcana or Religion are aware that Abyssal portals become worse with time and are difficult to seal once opened. Collapsing the arch or magically closing the nascent *gate* are possible options.

Prerequisites

Illyana should have asked the adventurers to close the Abyssal *gate*. This bonus objective can be fit between any other Myconic Nidus encounter but should come before the final objective.

Bonus Objective B

Close the *gate* into the Abyss before it fully opens. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) or Intelligence (Arcana) check or DC 18 Intelligence check reveals the portal's frame, the giant fungi, are vulnerable to damage. Allow this check once per round until an adventurer succeeds.

Area Information

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This roughly oval, 100-foot by 150-foot cavern is filled with a vast array of large yellow fungi. Use the map in **Appendix 4**.

Embedded in the northern wall of the cave is a 25-foot-tall archway made of bulbous mushrooms. The center of the arch is an inky void filled with a roiling miasma of slime and fluids, and a cacophonous buzzing fills the cavern.

Lighting. The entire cave is dimly lit by luminescent fungi.

Scene A. The Abyssal Gate

The arch is a *gate* to the Abyss. It hasn't fully activated yet, but it is too potent to be dispelled.

The Archway

The arch has AC 12 and 200 hit points. It is immune to poison and psychic damage and has a damage threshold of 10.

When the archway takes more than 20 points of damage from a single attack, the creature that damaged it is momentarily surrounded by acrid flames. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. It takes 2d10 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** The arch causes 1d10 necrotic damage.
- **Strong:** Increase the DC to 14 and the arch causes 3d10 necrotic damage.
- **Very Strong:** Increase the DC to 15 and the arch causes 4d10 necrotic damage.

Eyes Beyond the Arch

In the darkness beyond the arch, a swirling miasma comes and goes. Occasionally giant glowing eyes or a toothed maw presses against the archway.

Tongues, pseudopods, and tendrils flail against the other side of the portal. The miasma may drift away momentarily, showing fragments of the Abyss. Such images are beyond mere mortal comprehension.

The Infernal Music

Once the adventurers enter the fungal cave, the buzzing shifts into a bizarre and alien music. It is atonal, lacks rhythm, and is composed of shrill pipes and dissonant chiming. It seems to be reaching a crescendo.

Once the music begins, the adventurers have two rounds to act. On round three, all non-fiends within the cave must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be affected by *confusion*.

The music hits a crescendo every three rounds, again causing the *confusion* effect.

Destroying the Arch

Once the arch is destroyed, the song ceases, and the yellow fungi begins to wither and curl inwards.

Appendix 9: Magic Items

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

Permanent Magic Items

Miir, Scimitar of Warning (Table F)

Weapon (scimitar), uncommon (requires attunement)

This magic weapon warns you of danger. While the weapon is on your person, you have advantage on initiative rolls. In addition, you and any of your companions within 30 feet of you can't be surprised, except when incapacitated by something other than nonmagical sleep. The weapon magically awakens you and your companions within range if any of you are sleeping naturally when combat begins. This item is found on **Magic Item Table F** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

This mithral blade is exquisitely crafted from the finest materials, and never becomes dirty. "Miir" means "priceless" in Elvish.

Consumable Magic Items

+1 Arrows (Table B)

Ammunition (arrow), uncommon

You have a bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this piece of magic ammunition. The bonus is determined by the rarity of the ammunition. Once it hits a target, the ammunition is no longer magical.

This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Potion of Fire Breath (Table B)

Potion, uncommon

After drinking this potion, you can use a bonus action to exhale fire at a target within 30 feet of you. The target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The effect ends after you exhale the fire three times or when 1 hour has passed.

This potion's orange liquid flickers, and smoke fills the top of the container and wafts out whenever it is opened. This item is found on **Magic Item Table B** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Appendix 10: Dungeon Master Tips

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5th-10th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 8**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

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To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first one if they’re outside its level range.

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

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

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master, but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated 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 Players 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, or 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 This Adventure

When combat is a possibility, the adventure will provide a sidebar that helps you to determine the best mix/number of opponents to provide them with to create an appropriate challenge. While you’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience and consideration.

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

Determining Party Strength

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