

Advanced
Dungeons & Dragons®
Adventure
Monstrous Arcana®
For four to six characters of levels 8-10

Dawn of the Overmind

by **Bruce R. Cordell**

SCANNED BY: JACK D. KNIGHT

A new age dawns . . . an age of terror!

They are close. I can feel them even stronger, now. It won't be long before the Masters come again. I have waited for them, waited for their return. Once they extinguish the Light, the true Dawn can begin.

The illithids once ruled a mighty empire that stretched across many worlds. These foul creatures enslaved or destroyed whole races in their quest for ultimate power—until a rebellion spread like fire on dry plains. The mind flayer empire toppled, and the multiverse was freed from eternal servitude.

Now, a hundred suns burn toward extinction, their light stolen by the flayers to reinvent their past. If the PCs do not stop the new dawn, the Dawn of the Overmind, the illithids will rule once again! Following the clues left by their benefactor, the adventurers journey over a vast world of ancient ruins. Buried deeply within these ruins lies an artifact of ancient illithid manufacture. This item is all that stands between the illithids and their nefarious goal: complete and utter domination.

Dawn of the Overmind is the third adventure in a trilogy (originating with *A Darkness Gathering* and continuing in *Masters of Eternal Night*). It can be played alone or linked with the other two parts of the trilogy to form an epic-length adventure. The illithid trilogy supports *The Illithiad*, a MONSTROUS ARCANA, supplement that contains invaluable information on every facet of illithid life, psychology, technology, and ability.

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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

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Commencement

The night went on and on
The sun was rising slow
Somewhere in the dawn
The saddest feelings grow.
—The Samples, *Waited Up*

Introduction

Dawn of the Overmind is the third adventure in a trilogy originating with *A Darkness Gathering*, continuing with *Masters of Eternal Night*, and concluding in this adventure. The adventure pits four to six player characters of levels 8 to 10 (48–60 total levels) against the dark agenda of the mind flayers. DMs can run this adventure alone or link it together with the first two modules to form a seamless epic-length adventure.

The illithid trilogy supports *The Illithiad*, a MONSTROUS ARCANAS[®] supplement. Although *Dungeon Masters* do not need that book to run the illithid adventure trilogy, they can use the additional mind flayer information contained within *The Illithiad* to add even more depth to this adventure.

The encounters detailed in this module are not pinned down to a specific world or campaign. However, descriptions and names of places and individuals critical to this adventure appear within the text. If necessary, the DM should change the names and locations found herein so that she can seamlessly slip *Dawn of the Overmind* into an ongoing scenario.

Psionic or Arcane Illithids?

Although *The Illithiad* focuses on the psionic abilities of mind flayers, some sources suggest that illithids use arcane abilities and powers. Arguments exist concerning the forces tapped and manipulated by psionic devotions: Are psychic forces synonymous with the energy tapped by arcane spells? Whatever the truth, psionic effects are actualized according to a philosophy at odds with that used by spellcasters and arcane beasts. Of course, psionic abilities are not appropriate for every DM's campaign.

DMs whose campaigns do not employ psionics (as described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* or *PLAYER'S OPTION[®]: Skills & Powers*) should substitute the abilities listed below for all illithid, elder brain, and forerunner psionic powers appearing throughout the remainder of this adventure. Arcane creatures can use each of the powers below at will, once per round, save for *mind blast*—which illithids and elder brains can use only once per turn. Illithids use their arcane powers at the 7th level of ability.

Arcane Alternatives (Illithids):

Astral spell, *charm monster*, *charm person*, *ESP*, *levitate*, *mind blast**, *plane shift*, and *suggestion*.

Arcane Alternatives (Forerunners)

Charm monster, *charm person*, *dispel magic*, *ESP*, *levitate*, and *spook*.

***Mind blast (for arcane illithids and elder brains):** The mind blast power, as differentiated from the unique illithid psionic attack described in *The Illithiad*, affects a cone-shaped area 60 feet long, 5 feet wide (in front of the mind flayer), and 20 feet wide at the far end of the effect. All within the cone must make a saving throw vs. wand or be stunned and unable to act for 3d4 rounds.

Common Illithid Characteristics

At various times throughout this adventure, the player characters run across illithids or illithid-kin. Unless noted otherwise in a specific encounter, most illithids have the same ability to extract brains from their prey, and they possess similar psionic abilities (unless the DM substitutes arcane abilities, as noted above). To save space, the standard illithid combat summary and psionic complement appears below. *Dungeon Masters* unused to dealing with psionics can consult *The Illithiad*; however, rules for using psionics also appear in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* and *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers*.

Illithid: AC 5; MV 12, Sw 12; HD 8+4; THAC0 11; # AT 4; Dmg 2 (see note below); SA cephalophagy, psionics; SD infravision; SW –10% penalty to hear noise checks; MR 90%; SZ M (6' tall); ML Champion (15); Int Genius (17-18); AL LE; XP 7,000 (9,000 if using arcane abilities).

Notes: SA—An illithid inserts its tentacles into a stunned victim's skull and draws out the brain (a process called cephalophagy), killing the hapless individual in 1 round. A mind flayer can also use its tentacles in close melee; each successful tentacle attack inflicts 2 points of damage and grasps the target's skull (removable with a successful bend bars/lift gates roll). When at least one tentacle holds the victim, each succeeding tentacle attack by the illithid gains a cumulative +1 bonus (to a maximum of +3 for the last tentacle attack). Once all four tentacles have attached to the victim, the illithid has sufficiently immobilized the struggling target to draw its brain out in the next round.

Psionics Summary: # AT 1; MTHAC0 10; MAC 5; Lv 10; PSPs 1d100+250; Psionic Attacks ego whip (EW), id insinuation (II), mind blast (MB); Psionic Defenses All; Psionic Disciplines astral projection, awe, body equilibrium, control body, domination, ESP, levitation, post-hypnotic suggestion, probability travel, taste link*, and teleport.

*Indicates a psionic power detailed in *The Illithiad*.

Background and Adventure Summary

In *A Darkness Gathering*, the PCs uncovered a group of illithids intent on enslaving a city. Through force of arms and clever deduction, the heroes ended the threat by defeating the illithids living in the sewers below the human settlement. In doing so, the PCs discovered that the illithids' plot ran much deeper: The foul creatures planned to put out the sun! If the dimming of other stars in the firmament above is any indication, this nefarious plot affects more than one world.



However, the PCs rescued a friend from the illithids' vile lair; this companion possessed a mysterious palm print (a psionic seal that resembles magical circuitry) given her in a dream. The shadowed dream messenger named Strom imparted mental directions that would aid the PCs in their quest to stop the mind flayers.

In *Masters of Eternal Night*, the heroes followed the psionic palm print's urging to a barren steppe, all the while hunted by illithid trackers. The psionic impetus finally led the heroes to an impact site made by an illithid planetesimal (a large vessel) that crashed on the PCs' world. The player characters eventually uncovered an ancient illithid nautiloid (a strange flying ship) buried beneath the snow of the impact crater. Through great daring, they assembled four navigational components and activated the ship.

This adventure begins with the characters in possession of the knowledge and the means to locate an ancient world of the illithids. If the PCs use the nautiloid to travel, they will discover a former illithid world, Penumbra.

Penumbra is a vast realm, though not really a planet in the conventional sense. The characters can locate the site of a devastated illithid city with the help of the psionic palm print. Many dangers lurk in these ancient ruins. Buried deeply within them is a device known as the Annulus, a psionic artifact crafted at the height of the illithids' empire. If the PCs can recover this artifact, they will have a chance to derail the illithids' dark plan.

The discovery of the Annulus triggers the psionic seal to carry out its very last directive: It provides the heroes a means to find its creator, the mysterious and long-absent Strom Wakeman. Strom resides at the heart of the Overmind, a great engine of destruction built by the illithids in order to return their empire to its former glory. With his help, the adventurers have the opportunity to penetrate the Overmind and use the Annulus to stop the illithids. If the heroes fail, hope dies with them.

Aleanor Pathsteader

In *A Darkness Gathering* and *Masters of Eternal Night*, the DM was encouraged to use a real PC or NPC from her campaign as the individual chosen by Strom. The module provided information on Aleanor Pathsteader, an NPC ranger, in case the DM had no one to fit the bill. Aleanor's stats reappear here for ease of reference:

Aleanor Pathsteader, hf R7: AC 2 (studded leather +1 and Dex bonus); MV 12; hp 55; THAC0 14 (12 long sword +2 and short sword +2; 8 against illithids); #AT 5/2; Dmg 1d8+2/1d6+2 (long sword +2 and short sword +2); SA two-weapon fighting, tracking (18), move silently (53%) and hide in shadows (65%) in natural surroundings, +4 to attacks against illithids (species enemy), animal influence, psionic seal; SZ M (5'8" tall); ML Champion (15); AL CG; XP 975.

Notes: Aleanor's move silently and hide in shadows percentages are halved in city or dungeon settings.


SA—She can shift the encounter reaction of a natural animal if the creature fails a save vs. rods (with a -3 penalty); her psionic seal gives Aleanor mental directions toward her required destination.


S 15, D 18, C 14, I 13, W 16, CH 15.


Special Possessions: Guardian (long sword +2), short sword +2, studded leather armor +1.

Character Involvement Hooks

Dungeon Masters do not need to incorporate characters who have played through *Masters of Eternal Night* into this adventure. DMs who wish to run *Dawn of the Overmind* alone should use one of the bulleted points provided below to start the PCs on this adventure. Additionally, DMs running this module as a stand-alone adventure should have the brainmate (a lump of gray matter the size of four fused fists) rather than the psionic palm print give the PCs hints and information. The object communicates telepathically with the party and the nautiloid.

 In an unrelated scenario, the characters unearth a nautiloid (complete with a navigational brainmate) from an ancient tomb. After this discovery, one or more of the player characters receives prophetic dreams from concerned deities. The dreams inform the PCs that the nautiloid's discovery was destined to happen, and that the player characters must follow the brainmate's instructions in order to avert catastrophe.

 DMs who do not wish to include space travel in their campaigns may dispense with the material presented on the nautiloid. In this case, Penumbra lies on the PCs' very own home world. A map, a sage's report, or the report of a dying adventurer leads the party to Penumbra's location. If this information alone is not enough to tempt the characters, the DM should include hints of fantastic magic or psionic engines of destruction waiting for a daring party to find them.

 The carnival comes to town! Amid many strange sights and displays, the carnies offer interested folks the opportunity to see "an amazing discovery." The carnival workers pull over a large wagon covered with a great tarp. The tarp hides "a relic of the stars." For 1 gp, the PCs can have a look at the strange, terrible object beneath the tarp: It's the nautiloid! PCs who take a strong interest in the ship can pay an additional 10 gp to go inside for a look. Once inside, the nautiloid (complete with brainmate) launches itself toward its predetermined destination (Penumbra), despite the possibility of the characters wishing otherwise! The brainmate has chosen the PCs as Strom's agents for stopping the illithid dark agenda.