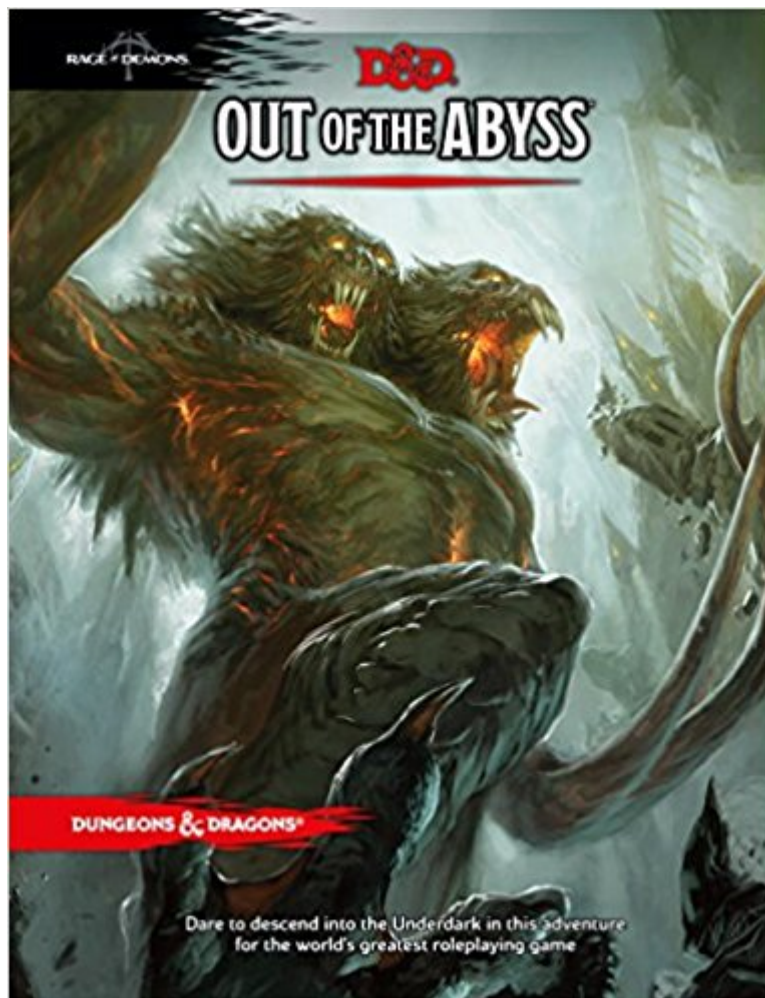


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Out Of The Abyss (D&D Accessory)



Synopsis

Dare to descend into the Underdark in this adventure for the world's greatest roleplaying game! The Underdark is a subterranean wonderland, a vast and twisted labyrinth where fear reigns. It is the home of horrific monsters that have never seen the light of day. It is here that the dark elf Gromph Baenre, Archmage of Menzoberranzan, casts a foul spell meant to ignite a magical energy that suffuses the Underdark and tears open portals to the demonic Abyss. What steps through surprises even him, and from that moment on, the insanity that pervades the Underdark escalates and threatens to shake the Forgotten Realms to its foundations. Stop the madness before it consumes you! A Dungeons & Dragons® adventure for characters of levels 1-15

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Customer Reviews

I've only read through half the book, but already I can tell you some very important information. I'll try not spoil anything except for how the characters start the adventure. The MOST important thing to realize about this adventure is that the mechanics are quite complex. DMs must keep track of many "conditions" which are not normally of high importance. Examples include: Drow level of pursuit throughout the first 6 chapters, levels of character insanity, dozens of important NPCs (and their actions), levels of exhaustion. There are many random encounter tables and many set encounters which require A LOT of pre-planning. For example, if you don't pre-plan, you will be turning pages to find many different tables and stat blocks in the middle of an encounter which would break the game

flow. A DM will probably need to create a special DM screen to deal with all these potential situations. To use an analogy, this adventure is like a complex machine with many gears (which must be oiled) and many moving parts. It is NOT for new DMs. However, if a DM is willing to do all the hours of necessary "homework", this adventure is simply phenomenal!! The characters start out as prisoners of the Drow with no equipment and have to escape their captors. Then the situation gets very "sandboxy" as the NPCs who are with the characters each want to go to different areas of the Underdark. The choices of where to head are up to the players. What makes the adventure so great is the richness of the NPCs, and the variety of encounters. Some are heavy combat and some are role-playing and can be resolved in many creative ways. There are all sorts of decisions characters must make which have consequences later on. The environments/encounters are extremely rich and some are truly bizarre (as would be appropriate for the Underdark). In conclusion, a DM can't read a chapter an hour before the game and effectively run this adventure. DMs must really be willing to do the necessary prep work. But, if they are willing to invest the time, this adventure will provide months of fantastic entertainment as it takes the characters from 1st to 15th level.

UPDATE (10/16)- I have now run the entire adventure and, in my opinion, certain serious flaws have become apparent. I will start with what I consider the worst flaw (and the reason I dropped the adventure from 5 to 3 stars). The campaign is advertised as going from 1st to 15th level. However, the 2nd half of the adventure (when you supposedly go from 8th - 15th level) is still chocked full of encounters with very low CR monsters. For example, when you are supposed to be around 12th level, there is a major encounter with troglodytes (CR 1/4!). The authors seem to imply that somehow this would actually be challenging for a 12th level party. Another example is the fact that the random encounter tables in the 2nd half of the book are almost exclusively full of monsters below CR 6. Once again, the characters are way beyond that sort of threat at that point. This sort of flaw is repeated numerous times. With the exception of a 2 or 3 boss encounters these encounters are boring for the party. As a DM, I had to completely re-do most of the encounters not only to challenge the party, BUT TO GIVE THEM ENOUGH XP TO EVEN GET TO THE LEVELS THEY NEEDED TO BE AT for the finale. The encounters as written are basically useless. Other flaws include numerous errors in organization such as stating that Overlake Hold is the home of the Deepking (pg. 62) and then stating the Deepking lives in a totally different place (pg 82). These errors are much less serious but there are so many and they do get annoying. Finally, the organization of the chapters is pathetic.

I ran the first half of the adventure for my players; I used it as a bridge to get the PCs from 3d to 5th

levels, between Lost Mines of Phandelver and Storm King's Thunder, which we're doing next. My verdict: Out of the Abyss is incredibly imaginative and exciting. Examples (spoiler alert): the drow outpost of Velkynvelve is made up of mostly hollowed out stalactites connected by walkways made of spider webs, all suspended over an enormous cavern, run by an arrogant drow priestess and her disgruntled (and possibly helpful) ex-boyfriend. Cool! The players have to escape from this outpost, with a collection of charming NPCs (my favorite: Shuushar the Awakened, a pacifist kuo-toa whose radiant enlightenment drives everyone crazy). My PCs managed to flee without their weapons, then had to fight minotaur skeletons using crude clubs made out of bones they picked up along the way. They then traveled to the kuo-toa city of Sloobludop (traveling there on the "Darklake" via a boat made from a giant mushroom cap) and saw it destroyed by Demogorgon, summoned by an insane kuo-toa ritual. From there they went to Gracklestugh, the City of the Gray Dwarves, where no one can be trusted, and they chased after a mad little gnome down tiny little tunnels by eating mushrooms that make you grow smaller. They were also befriended by a colony of wererats and found a red dragon egg at the request of an old fat cranky dragon working for the dwarves as a forge-lighter. NICE!!!! Is it too complicated, with a lot of prep work and modifications required? Is the 2d half a bit too much? Are there some details you have to blow off or fudge as the DM (eg drow pursuit level, exhaustion level, insanity)? Yes yes and yes. But the people who wrote this are just so incredibly imaginative. THAT is why I buy published adventures instead of doing my own. It's incredible stuff. I can't compare it to Princes of the Apocalypse, because I haven't read that one, but it seems somewhat more imaginative and more literate than Storm King's Thunder (which requires even bigger modifications by the DM in my view), and the milieu is different enough from traditional D&D adventures that it makes returning to something more traditional like STK seem fresher. Curse of Strahd I have skimmed and that one also seems excellent (easier to run and maybe even more immersive, but less varied). Anyway, I loved Out of the Abyss!

Negative: The layout of the material is poor. In previous books, namely *Princes of the Apocalypse* (D&D Accessory), the first chapter was dedicated to using the book. It included a synopsis of the story, an explanation of the book's format and other general but useful information. Out of the Abyss simply drops you into the campaign and assumes that you know how to use the book which is frustrating. Consistency also seems to be an issue as the book's format slightly changes the deeper into it you go. Physically my book was scratched and dented on arrival with the pages slightly warped into a wavy texture from what looks like humidity damage. Positive: The cast of characters is robust and the environment is imaginative. With ease you will be able to pull your

players into the Underdark and pit them against some of the fiercest creatures Wizards of the Coast has ever created. There are plenty of maps to keep your players visually satisfied and the NPC portraits are beautifully done. The balance of the material seems a bit heavy at first but as your characters progress you will find the campaign is meant to be challenging for both the players and the DM which is a plus for me. Overall if you are a DM with enough time to properly prepare for this campaign then it is well worth your investment. If you are short on time however you might want to look into one of the two previous adventures. If you are simply looking for a book to add to your collection and refer to for ideas for your own home brew campaign this is also a great investment. It is so densely packed with information it borders on a setting source book.

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