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The dungeon of the Mad Magician takes place almost entirely in Undermountain, a vast dungeon complex near the town of Waterdeep. Undermountain has shown several times in past editions, being the subject of a couple of box sets as well as a couple of previous hardcover adventures. What this book is completely one bigass dungeon crawl. Undermountain is effectively a giant super dungeon that can fill the campaign running from levels 5 to 20. Unlike previous versions of Undermountain, this book is dedicated to going deep rather than wide. It highlights twenty-three different layers of the dungeon, including several that were described in detail earlier. Unlike the titular dungeon in the Tomb of Destruction, the focus here is exploration, venturing into strange levels of dungeons and interacting with residents rather than wacky funhouse traps and puzzle chambers. There are strange magical effects, odd cameras, and many more monsters, but fewer deadly traps. The book is 320 pages long, making it little more than the Player's Handbook and the Dungeon Master Guide. As mentioned, there are twenty-three layers of dungeon with more than 650 individual cameras and rooms, with many additional sub-chambers. There are also five pages about the city of Skullport and twelve monster stat blocks, half a dozen of which are reprinted. **Dungeon Levels Here's a rundown of the different levels of the dungeon. Level 1 and 2: Big Dungeon**Level 3: Hobgoblin SettlementLevel 4: Mini UnderdarkLevel 5: Underground ForestLevel 6: Dwarf RuinsLevel 7: Stone Giant Cave Level 8: Swamp CaveLevel 9: Magic AcademyLevel 10: Dream EnclaveLevel 11: Besieged Troglodyte WarrenLevel 12: Minotaur MazeLevel 13: Junkyard / WorkshopLevel 14: Fire Giant ForgeLevel 15: Funhouse / Obstacle CourseLevel 16: Githyanki InvasionLevel 17: Mind Flayer BastionLevel 18: Evil CultistsLevel 19: Oozes with Spelljammer shipLevel 20: Lich LairLevel 21: Planar MineLevel 22: Rando FortressLevel 23: Evil Archmage Lair More or less... Some are harder to condense to a single descriptor. There are often more than a few twists and surprises. What I take away from the level may not be a defining trait for someone else. Good As mentioned, Undermountain has been detailed before, but tends to focus on the top three levels that were (implausibly) large, sprawling horizontal dungeons. The maps of these layers here are much smaller, covering only half of these levels (or probably a quarter in the case of the third level), but keep the same overall layout. There are several changes that involve the passage of time, such as several collapsed passages. On each map, the passages continue with the map, implying that the other cameras are simply not covered here. This means that dungeon numbers from past books have not disappeared, and still exist: allowing dungeon Master to expand the dungeon if players want to continue update what was before if they have past books or even add new cameras from their own imagination. I expect the DMs Guild to fill in a few few area in short order.) The book begins with a list of dungeon levels and the appropriate level of character to delve into them. Also in the introduction there is a sample xp reward for bypassing traps and environmental hazards: Convenient. Meanwhile, each chapter begins with the expounding of the inhabitants and the major conflicts of this layer. It helps a lot to prepare and even reminds you to read certain sections of the Monster Guide. There are several quests at the beginning of the book to get player characters going, and more provided later to keep them delving. Several additional quests are included in the later dungeon levels. There's a wide range of dungeon levels, including artificial catacombs, caves, and even forest and swamp. While it's strange, the whole complex is clearly managed/curated by a crazy archima, making the wizard made this excuse less handwavy. The book repeatedly mentions Halaster making changes to accommodate residents or attracting new creatures to reside in a level, then customize it for their needs. This variety of male adventures is very easy to steal from as you can just pull the dungeon level for one to three gaming sessions. If you need a Cave Underdark or a former dwarf fortress chicken you can easily steal one. Especially in the general absence of a comprehensive plot. Despite the ease of theft, the layers are also not fully autonomous, as factions on adjacent floors can interact in an attempt to fight enemies or spread their influence or in a consistent manner. This encourages you to continue to delve, or provides an opportunity to continue if the dungeon level rise. Meanwhile, Halaster is a constant presence throughout the dungeon. He is not some mysterious force that does not appear before the climax, suddenly getting into the story. Instead, Halaster constantly recalls delivering it around and threatening, with statues and illusions about himself or messages of spells teasing the PC. I really like it because the players always resemble the Big Bad present and knows about them. This allows him to interact with Halaster before the final fight without directly exposing him to the risk of being killed too early. The inclusion of different mirror gates allows you to quickly transport between levels. But not always directly where you want. They require some experimentation and research, like much of the rest of the dungeon. For a campaign completely installed in a dungeon, this is very useful, since the party is likely to make repeated trips to the surface during their adventure. A campaign like this really needs regular breaks with a trip to the city to avoid burnout, as well as sell the found treasure. The dungeon is presented as a change rather than a static place where computers are the first adventurers to arrive. There are repeated mentions of past adventure companies that have died or trapped during the study (some of which may serve as a PC replacement or hirelings). Strangely, no more traps were pre-triggered or treasure treasured but it's easy enough to explain with Halaster and other inhabitants of the dumping traps. It reminds players that their computers are not somehow the first to reach certain levels in the famous dungeon, and makes the dungeon feel like a living world. Similarly, at the end of each chapter gives some advice on how this dungeon level can change as a result of PC actions. Both of them really make the dungeon feel like it's a lively, breath-adventure site, and that player choices and decisions have an impact. As mentioned, several monsters not from the Monster Guide are reprinted. Most of the time. The space was clearly at a premium as a few monsters didn't make the cut, such as the captain's dream at home. In these cases, rather than locking in a monster not in the main book, the description offers an alternative that is in MM to be used if Dungeon Master lacks Tom's enemies. I like that expensive accessories are not provided. Bad Despite the beginning in the yawning Portal Inn and Tavern, there is no map for this location, and it only gets a description of a quarter of a page. It gets more fleshed out in Tales of a yawning portal, an adventure that doesn't really happen there. This would have been the best place for the fun image of the tavern and its inhabitants, which appeared early in Waterdeep: Dragon Heist. I think the space prevented this, since this book was small, while this one was bursting at the seams. No vertical map. I would love the cutout showing roughly how deep you get and the variable location of each level. Such a map would also be a good place to put a crib of a network of mirrored gates. As it is, you need to make a list of which levels are related. (But, again, space.) I'll have that dick and say: I'm not a fan of the card. Maps are simplistic monochrome art lines. I find them bland and lacking in detail, and can't be shown for games, especially on virtual countertops. This design was understandable by Dragon Heist because they were common and could be used for several different meetings. I think the number of cards in this book was a factor since it made more art cards cost exorbitantly high. I must clarify that this is not a shot at either the skill or artistry of the cartographer; I'm sure they worked them out on these cards and I'm glad they get to see their name in credits or books. It's the best feeling. I'd prefer a different aesthetic to the cards. The lack of map detail also exacerbates another problem: the lack of read aloud/grey box text. This means that DMs need to disassemble more information to describe what they see and can't even use the map to describe the look. While not everyone uses text to read aloud, I prefer using it or not. But as the phrase repeated often in this review, I think the space may have been there just wasn't a page count to spare to include adjectives for each room. Teh Teh also has extremely limited art. Each chapter has a half-page headline and a map. There may be a small added piece, but often nothing more. No art objects or cool cameras or unique monsters or headshots of NPCs. zero art of Halather flying saucer, and while there is the art of mechanical purple worm/bore machines, there is neither for a pretty big hate machine that gets a very small description with which to draw the description. Which falls into another complaint. Hell, there's off-ton pop culture Easter eggs in the name rooms. Things like Keep Calm and Carry on or Alas, Poor Yarek. (To get the second example, I literally opened a random page. This is usually pretty ignored, since only DM needs to know the names of the numbers, but there are plenty of other dullness and anachronisms throughout the book. (See the aforementioned flying saucer.) I'm not a player who thinks the game should be super serious, but my players also don't need the help of stalling a session with wackiness and bad jokes. And I don't like that the book feels the need to discourage people who want a more serious and more dramatic game. (The no more ... If you're the type of gamer who makes it like a dumber adventure, then this can be a big plus.) The ecology of the dungeon is so-and-so. It's certainly not an implausible early Gigaxian adventure, but it's strained in a few places. Such as the presence of eighty troglodytes in a small area of a layer the size of an urban quarter. It's not the worst I've seen, but it's weird in places. However, this is another advantage of the tunnels that lead to the extended dungeon, as there may be more than enough space for all kinds of mushroom farms or ecology that just don't detail in this book. Finally, the penultimate level is strange. It is the fortress/manor of the Waterdawn noble family, which somehow made it a mile underground. It's just... Weird. Not the level you expect to find at the bottom of a massive dungeon. After fighting past mind flayers, drowsiness, fallen angels, a few dragons, and dashing you'll find... a fallen and spoiled noble family. Ugly What the hell is going on with the baby's lava? Of all the monsters directly updated on appearance from the 1st edition ... (I think I'll use images from the Misfit Monsters Rangers) The big problem that only involves semi-related is Maps and Miscellany Accessory. This sheet contains all the maps in this adventure printed on individual sheets and laminated. This would have been much more useful if the maps were full of color and detail: I would have liked a similar product for tomb destruction. However, given that the cards are black and white, they are simply printed on a home printer. You pay for what you can do with \$1 worth of plastic page protectors, free app smartphone, and maybe \$3 worth of paper and toner. There is no Plan for Halather. Well, technically he has six plans chosen randomly at the beginning (and re-chosen whenever you you But it's pretty tacked-on and won't affect your time spent delving. What I suppose is that you are a dungeon crawling into Undermountain for the sake of scanning through the dungeons. But it's pretty much not an adventure for you if you like, if you want something beyond the thinnest plot veneer. I know not everyone wants a plot, but it's usually easier to strip one if you want to add your own rather than invent something. Awesome Adventure has a list of useful mushrooms. I think it may have also been in the abyss, but it's still useful and fun. There is a selling price of spelling! Useful. And necessary for my upcoming game this weekend. Even if I never use anything else in this book, it will have a positive impact on my desk. There is a miniature castle that squeezes you when you enter. Fun. But adding a fairy dragon make it much more fun and fun. A giant golden snail. enough said. Speaking of beasts, there are many unique and individual monsters. Part of this may have been for space, as they couldn't make many new monsters or reprint unusual beasts from the guide to monsters, but so often simple changes work. Such as the large gray yf from duergar, which has extra magical powers. Or crystal golems, which are modified stone golems. It's such a small change and just needs a couple of feature tweaks, and yet will work easily at the table as well as be evocative. Crystal golems are sure to reveal themselves in my future adventure. There's a lot of small references to other content, most often Dragon Heist, but Tom of Ioes gets the name dropped a few times as well. They have always felt like suggestions of other sources to read for extended knowledge, and less like glaring forks or content needed to reproduce. It's a tough balance. However, this means that the connections between this adventure and Dragon Heist are weak at best. There is no straight line that leads from one to the other. But a remotely qualified DM should be making it work. Especially if Big Bad is Kanathar and you can combine the two, venturing to reach Skullport before the climax of Dragon Heist. Final thoughts I was initially unimpressed by Dungeon Mad Magician. While the dungeon was large, there seemed to be a lack of inventive pitfalls of Tomb Annihilation and a driving story plan to inflame Acheraak's soul. Fewer things stood out, partly because of maps and art. While flipping through the book, there was less to catch my eye and pull me to read a level or section. Once I went beyond my initial experience, I grew more favorable to this product. This book is not what I want, but I think that's what a lot of other people want. And that's an important distinction. This is a very large book of almost two dozen dungeons to make Oom. Two dozen old school dungeon modules to throw in your campaign as needed or build a story around. View module Grognaaria complained was lost with Dragonlance Dragonlance not a book that has such a cool idea and history that you will drop everything to include in your game, but it is a book you could turn to when you need to troglodyte Warren or look away when work kicks, but you still have to plan a session. If you don't want to make a vital story and tick the clock, this adventure is far more preferable than many of the past adventures that have been much more story-heavy. Whether you want to make your own story or hate having to strip history, this volume is perfect for you. Especially if you want to return to a simple style of play where adventurers roam the dungeon for the sole purpose of searching for treasure, kicking in the doors and trying to turn the inhabitants of the dungeon against each other. Which really seems to fit the tone of Undermountain. This product tries to stay true to the spirit of Undermountain, instead of trying to add a deep story by assigning a complex plot to Halaster. He's not trying to reinvent it in something that isn't. And I can respect that. Shameless Plug If you liked this review, you can support me and encourage future reviews. I have a number of PDF products on the DMs Guild website, including a bundle of my ravenloft books, including the recently released Destiny Maps and my first adventure at Guild, Smoke, Snow and Shadow. Others include my first level 1 to 20 class, tactics, seven-piece rod, traps, sickness, legendary monsters, book Rule Option. Also reviewing my book, Jester David As a guide to Fantasy Worldbuilding is on DriveThruRPG, available for purchase as a PDF or print on demand! (Now in color!) The book is a compilation of my Worldbuilding blog series, but all entries have been updated, edited and expanded to nearly two hundred pages of tips on creating your own fantasy world. Also, I have T-shirts available for sale on TeePublic! TeePublic!

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