

Level Design Document

The Sky-Blind Spire

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Level Goal

The Sky-Blind Spire has the player explore a mysterious structure that defies the fabric of reality and controls a powerful being trapped inside.

Intrinsic Goals

The player comes to the spire to free the entity trapped on the spell as it is said that once done the spirit will grant a wish. To do so he will have to discover how the growing spark that follows him works as it grows bigger every room the player explores.

New mechanics

The growing spark.

As the player explores the different rooms of the spire a flying spark that follows the player will grow bigger little by little. Once the spark is at its biggest form (after passing by all the main rooms) the spark will be capable of ending the spell at top of the tower to end the level and will guide the player to the rooftop altar to do so.

The changeling cone.

Inside the spire there's a 40 foot fall that changes the sizes of those that travel along it. Those that fall from top grow double its size and those that climb up have their body shrink to half the initial size. Yet when something is thrown up or down the changeling cone the appearance of it does not seem to change as the room itself acts as a visual illusion to trick the eye.

Non-euclidean space.

The level occurs inside a magically created spire that does not follow the logical order of place and structure, it looks different from the outside to what really hides inside, creating some sort of confusion and extra considerations the player has to take once inside.

New dynamics

Intrinsic exploration of space.

As the player delves into the exploration of space inside the spire and notices the non-euclidean nature of the place a further more in depth exploration of the place, trying to understand the complexity of how it operates and where every path leaves to.

Further exploration of the rooms.

While the non-euclidean space makes the player be more attentive to each interconnecting path the growing spark pushes the player to enter each room at least once with the objective of making the spark grow bigger in size.

Context on the overall Story

The level is an optional dungeon of the last zone in an open world game and gives some insight and lore about Titardinal, who was a long time ago an important mage whose spells and impact on the world still persist to the current day. There is also hidden one of the eight minor gods that shaped the earth trapped inside the lake in his last breath of life, furious about being trapped because of the spell but even more exhausted from its long life and grateful to the one that is able to set it free to die.

Extrinsic Goals

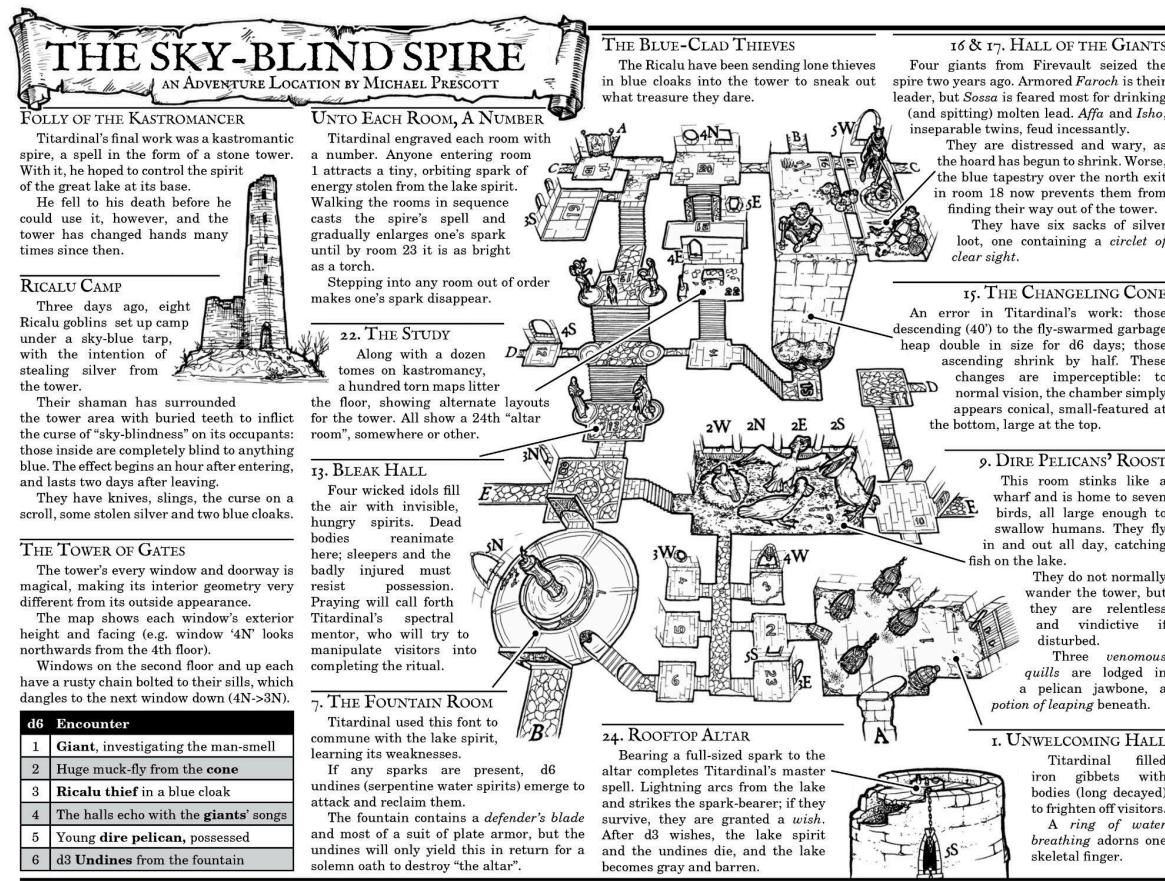
This level can teach problem solving, as the whole level is one big puzzle that must be completed. The player is taught to follow breadcrumbs and to explore to find the next clue.

There are different types of enemies dwelling in the tower that force the player to adopt rapid thinking to adapt to each situation.

Level Summary

The Sky-Blind Spire, Created by Michael Prescott, is a one-page dungeon and grand prize winner of the One Page Dungeon Contest 2016.

Link to the [OPD](#).



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Story

The Sky-Blind Spire is a spell built in the form of a tower by an ancient mage called Titardinal. The purpose of this tower was to control the spirit of the great lake at its base, but the mage found an early death before that, the tower has remained unused and changed hands many times. Legends say if you complete the tower's spell, the spirit will grant you a wish. You have heard of the legend, and you went inside the tower to complete Titardinal's spell and make your wish come true.

Gameplay and Summary

The objective of the level is traveling the insides of the tower, visiting rooms that have a spark, a small creature that will protect you from the spirit of the lake. The

first room that you enter makes the spark appear around you and grows bigger each room. When the spark is big enough, you just need to find the altar to complete the ritual. The player can go to the top of the spire, to try and take your wish! If you try to go without the spark's protection, the spirit of the lake will strike you with lightning. If you successfully explored the spire and the spark is big enough, the spark will protect you and you can go to the top to complete the spell and make your wish. When you finish, the spirit of the lake will die and the lake will turn gray.

The majority of the gameplay is a block and attack first person, where you need to time between attack and defense in order to defeat the enemies. You also need to explore the tower in order to try getting the spark as big as possible (which will also trigger some events), rewarding the player that explores all of the spire.

List of events

The fountain Room.

At first glance, there's nothing to be found here, but if you enter this room again later on while having a spark big enough following you, 4 enemies will appear trying to get it back.



Bleak Hall.

Four idols fill these stairs with invisible spirits. Dead bodies reanimate here, voices also can be heard, encouraging you to complete the ritual.



The Study.

Along with a lot of tomes and books, You can see a map showing alternate layouts of the tower. All show a 24th “altar room” somewhere at the top. You can see how to make it to the top of the spire.



Hall of the Giants.

Four giants are occupying this room. They are distressed as they have begun to shrink and also cannot make their way out of the tower because some type of blue tapestry has blocked their way out.



The changeling cone.

An error in Titardinal's work: Those who descend to the garbage pile double in size for the rest of the level. Ascending from it shrinks you by half.



Dire Pelican's Roost.

In this room there are 7 birds, large enough to swallow humans. They do not wander around the tower, but they are relentless if disturbed.

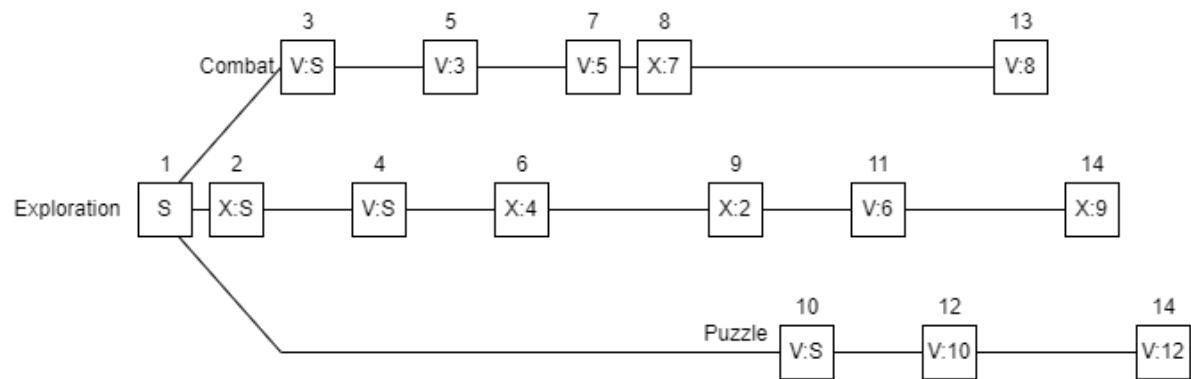


Rooftop Altar.

If the player takes a full sized spark to the altar, the spell is completed. A lightning strikes him, and in case of surviving, one wish is granted, completing the level.

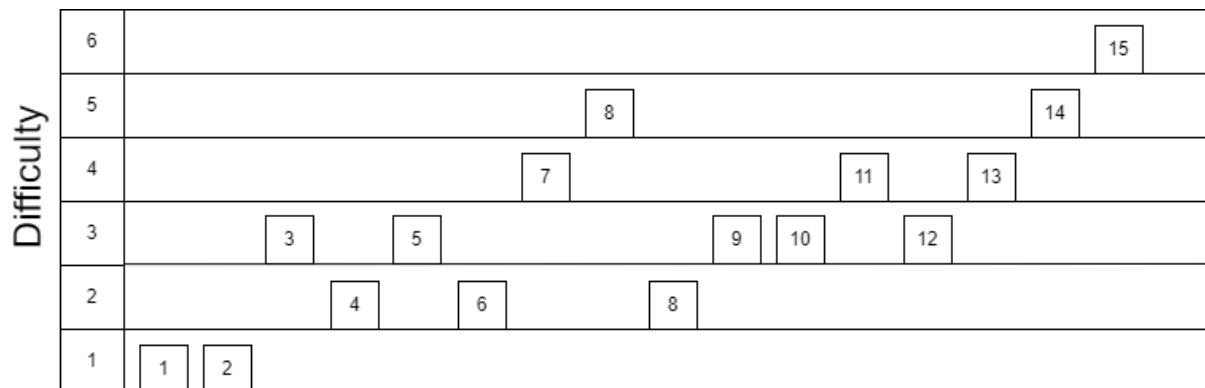


Cadence



The cadence in the level is divided in three main branches, the exploration of the map and level being the main one, the different combat encounters that the players face through the game and the three puzzles hidden inside the spire.

Difficulty Potentials



Challenge

The exploration challenges get higher in difficulty as the player has less new sites to discover while exploring the dungeon and has to recall upon the paths to new sites.

Player Guidance

Textures

Various textures through the level signal the player the intended direction to explore further into the dungeon.

Breadcrumbs

The leaves and branches on the levels act as breadcrumbs that can be followed, no more than two can be seen at the same time and the next one to follow is seen from the previous one.



Affordance

The negative affordance that the various groups of skeletons situated before dangerous encounters such as the giants warn the player of the dangers ahead.



Visual language

The Brown and rectangular angles of the dungeon are contrasted with the vivid green leaves with rounded shapes situated all around to give a sense of security to the player.

Leading lines

Different sections of the level have props disposed in a way to indicate the way to go to the player while being discrete. For example in the first room of the spire the leaves trail into the door and the fire skeletons' positions point directly at it.



Light

The doors with sparks in the room they lead to have torches directly situated on each side of them while the rest of the dungeon has been lit by placing them on the walls.



Constraints

Theme

Genre:

The genre of the level is similar to the game the level editor is from: action, exploration, open world, fantasy.

Dynamics:

- Reward: when you collect all the sparks the player is granted a wish on the rooftop.
- Achievement: Obtain all the sparks.
- Emotion: Exploring the dungeon, killing enemies along the way and obtaining rewards as they explore.

Time

Gameplay time: 10 minutes.

Developing time: Two month.

Team

Number of designers: Four.

Profiles:

- One being centered in game mechanics.
- One designer specifies map creation and the flow of the game.
- Another one specialized on challenges and rewards.
- The last one in charge of contextualizing and creating a story.

Tools

Level editor:

Skyrim: Creation Kit

Level 0:

There are some level 0 of props related to traps, but we don't use them, so we take the props from the props menu.

Props and final art:

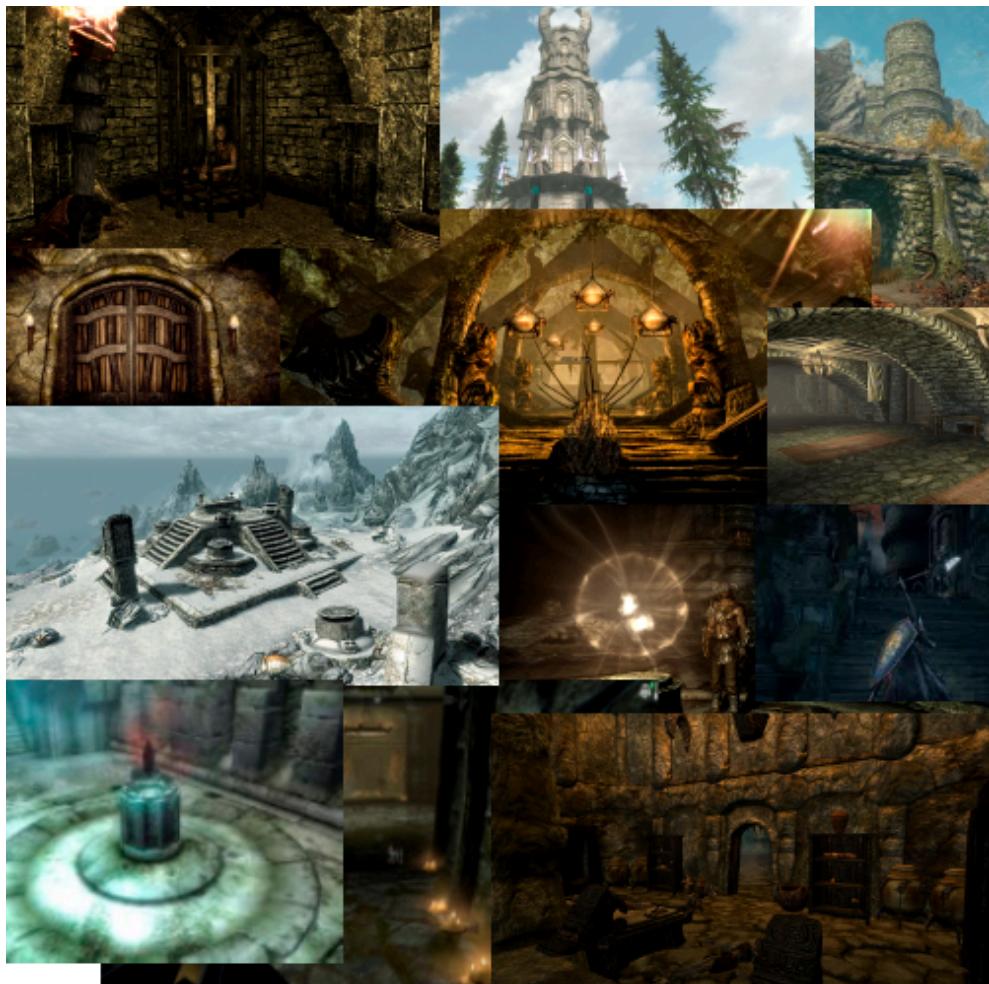
The props and art used for the level are the ones that the level editor already has, the same as Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim.

Key points

Research & References

Art goals

Moodboard.



Art direction document

- [Art direction The Sky-Blind Spire](#)

Structure

Acts

The level is structured in four different acts that conform to the whole narrative and gameplay structure of the tower.

Presentation.

As the player approaches the silent spire at the center of the lake a large flying creature projects its shadow over him while entering inside the structure. The habitants and travelers of the paths around the lake tell stories about a mad mage that casted a long forgotten spell to control a god trapped inside the lake below but a premature death made the tower home of different owners, not all of them human. Recently a group of goblins set up a camp close to it and have not been seen again since.

Increasing conflict.

Once the player enters the spire sees a group of iron gibbets with long decayed corpses inside as a warning of the perils inside. With a broken wooden door that leads into the next instance. When the intruder crosses the room a small flying blue colored spark begins to follow him. As he continues exploring the place it is not before too long that the player notices that something is wrong with the tower, without going up any stairs the different windows across the instance show the surrounding areas from different perspectives that the ones that should be possible. Showing in the same room different altitudes and directions.

Also the player encounters different obstacles and enemies along the way. Such as, giant pelicans, giants, goblins, water spirits and non euclidean physics such as a 40 foot fall that makes the player change size in function of the direction the player traverses it.

Clímax.

Once the player finds the altar at the top of the tower and brings a spark big enough after having explored the majority of the spire a lighting coming from the lake strikes him.

Resolution.

In case that the player ends up surviving the lighting strike he is granted a wish. And the level is completed.

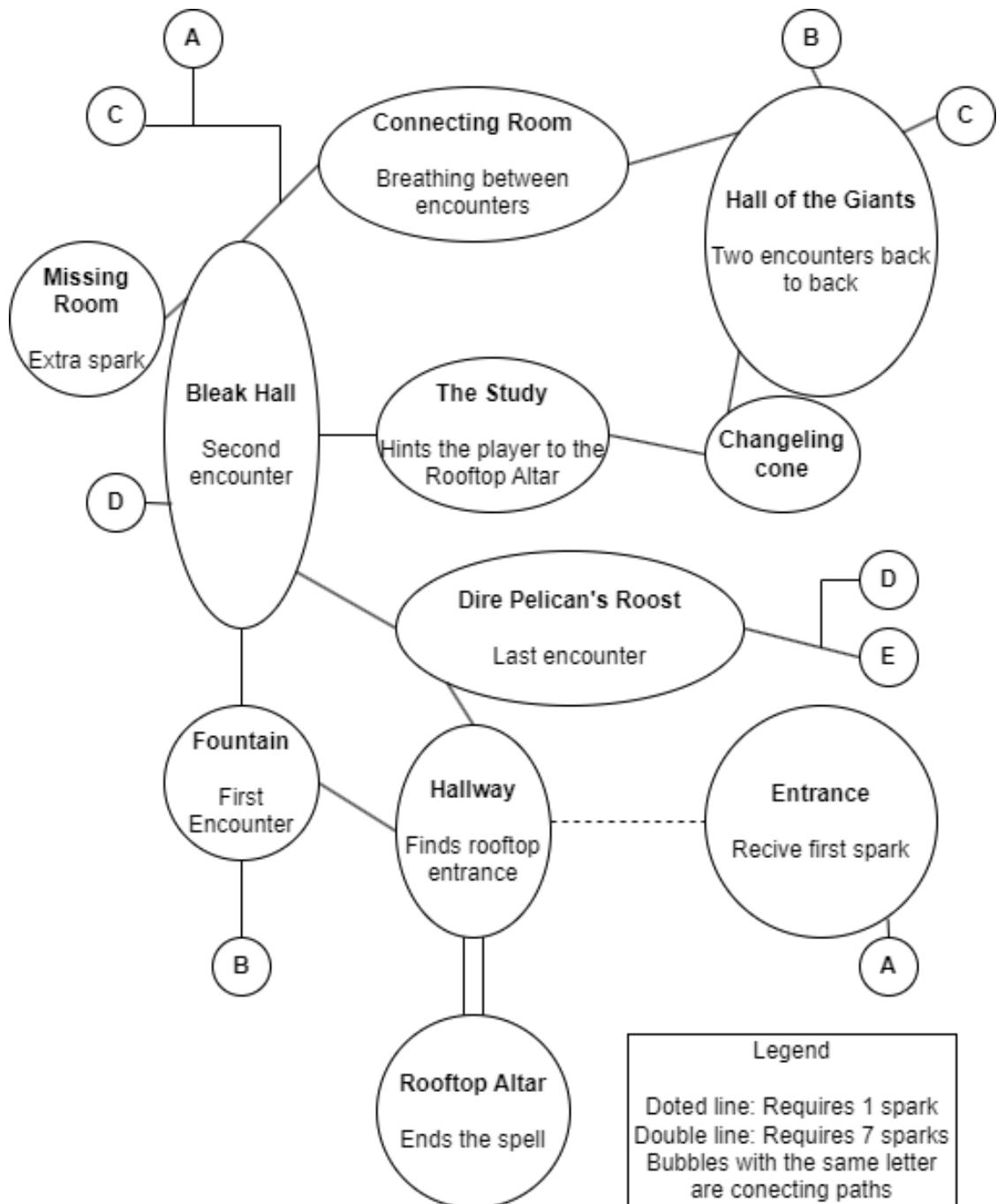
How does the level fit in the overall game?

This level is an end-game optional dungeon that will be available to the player on later stages of the game when exploring the last zone of the world. As it is designed for an open game world the player will be able to get extra information about the spire and its dangers before even starting the level or blindly step in due to casualty even so it is placed as a landmark (an imposing tower inside a lake) but it's hard to

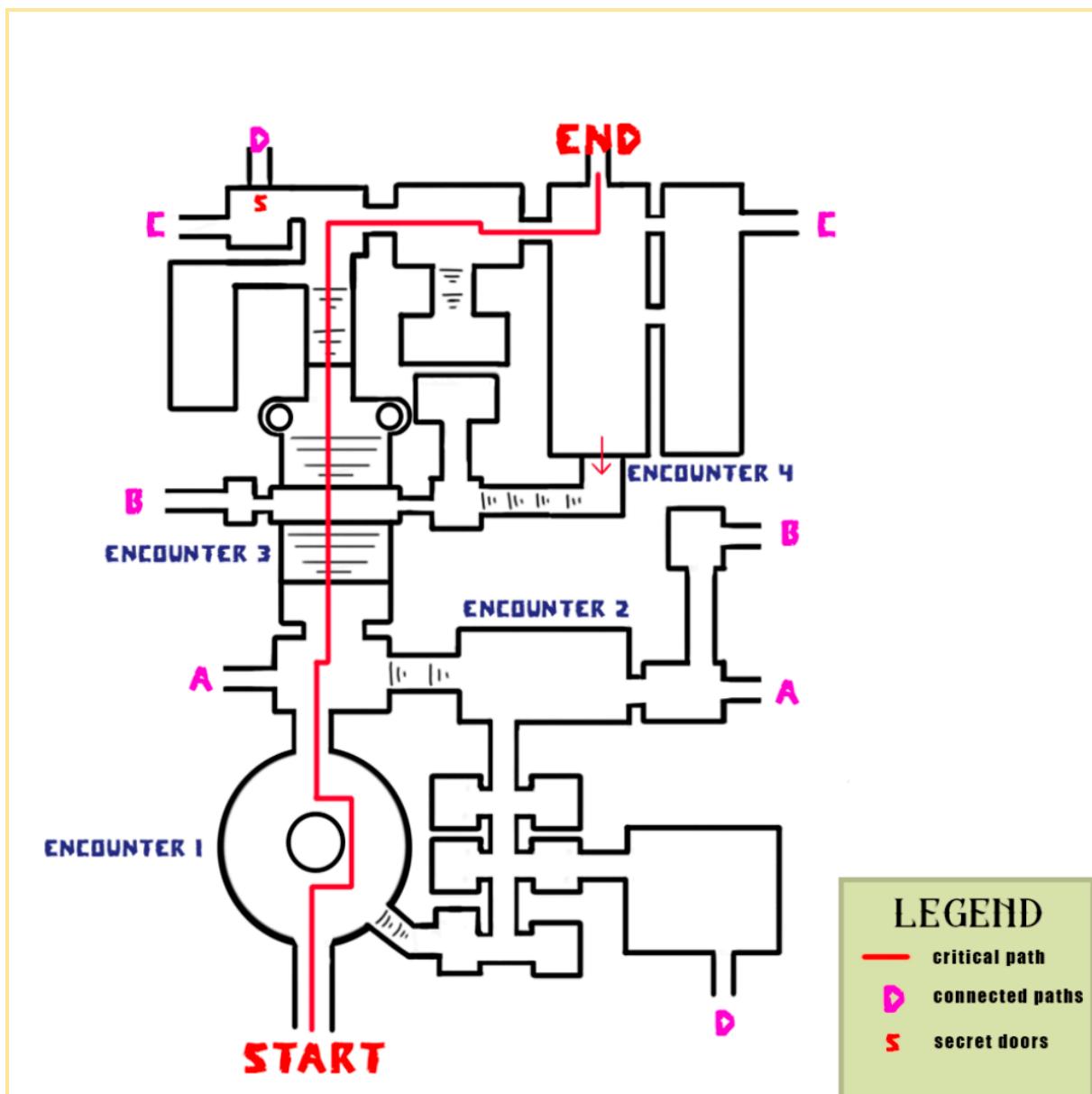
reach due to the player being unable to travel through water easily. Making the previous exploration and gathering of information more probable to happen than randomly ending up at the entrance. One of the ways of getting there is using a boat or a group of fishermans that tell stories about the dungeon.

Flowcharts & Maps

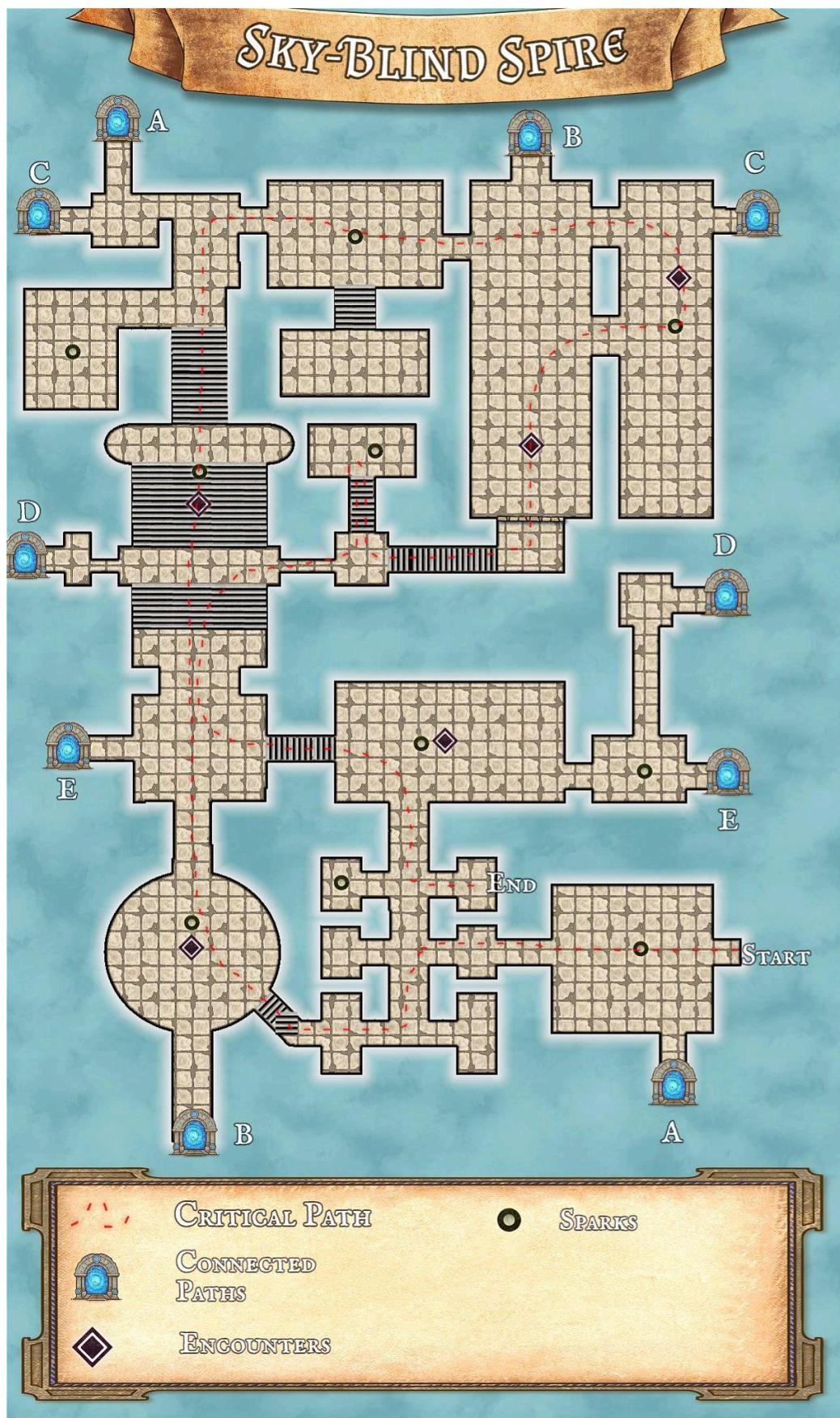
Flowchart



Wireframing / Mockup



Digital blueprint



In this map, we can see the start and end of the level, along with the critical path the player needs to follow to complete the level. We can also see the sparks from all the towers (note that we don't need all of them to complete the level). We can also see the main encounters with enemies and the corridors that connect with each other (in the level editor, those are represented by teleports).

Assets

Asset Name	Type	Reused
Walls	Building	Yes
Floor / Ceiling	Building	Yes
Stairs	Building	Yes
Cages	Building	Yes
Fountain	Decoration	No
Statues	Decoration	Yes
Carpets	Decoration	No
Skeletons	Decoration	Yes
Candles	Decoration / Light	Yes
Torches	Decoration / Light	Yes
Books	Decoration	Yes
Bottles	Decoration	Yes
Ceramic Vases	Decoration	Yes
Wood Tables	Decoration	Yes
Bookshelf	Decoration	Yes
Chest Treasure	Decoration	No
Smithing Tools	Decoration	No
Wood Desk	Decoration	Yes

Star	Decoration	No
Sparks	Entity	Yes
Giants	Entity	Yes
Spirits	Entity	Yes
Invisible dead people	Entity	Yes
Giant Birds	Entity	Yes