

PUZZLES, PREDICAMENTS, AND PERPLEXITIES

A collection of challenges for adventures and campaigns of all levels





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INTRODUCTION

Adventurers will find themselves tested in many ways during their careers seeking fame, fortune, justice, and truth. Some of these tests will challenge their strength, agility, spellcasting knowledge, and combat skills. Other encounters will require diplomacy, conversation, observation skills, and social interaction. A rare challenge presents elements of both and requires deeper thinking and analysis. Puzzles meant to guard treasure and secrets present a unique challenge to characters and players. While these puzzles may be designed to prevent intruders from entering places where they are not welcome, they also suggest a worthy reward lies on the other side.

Puzzles, Predicaments, and Perplexities presents ten original puzzles for your Dungeon & Dragons 5th Edition campaign. These encounters are designed to be inserted into your adventures at any point with minimal preparation needed. Each puzzle is presented with a description of how it works, its solution, and several hints that can be provided to the players if they are having trouble solving it. The hints are provided in a way to direct the players towards the solution without giving away the complete answer directly. The full solution should not be revealed to the players until all the hints have been exhausted and it has become apparent the puzzle will not be solved. It is our hope this will be a rare occurrence, as the answers to unlock the solutions should become evident by slowly revealing more about each puzzle using the provided clues.

SCALING THE PUZZLE DIFFICULTY

The puzzles, as presented, are intended for Tier 1 (levels 1-4) characters. However, they are easily adaptable for all levels. Some simple adjustments can be made to scale the difficulty up for higher level characters.

Adjusting the DC for related skill checks is the most convenient method for changing the difficulty of a puzzle. The recommendation would be to increase the DC by 2 points for each Tier over 1. For example, a check that is described here as requiring a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check would become a DC 15 for Tier 2 (levels 5-10) characters, DC 17 for Tier 3 (levels 11-16) characters, and DC 19 for Tier 4 (levels 17+) characters. Keep in mind that, ultimately, the players should succeed in solving the puzzle. It should be challenging, but not impossible. Adjusting the DC of the associated skill checks is one way to tune the difficulty of the challenge.

The puzzles included can also be comprised of a trap component to punish characters for attempting incorrect solutions. These traps are meant to increase the sense of danger and urgency around finding the proper solution to the puzzle. The inclusion or exclusion of these traps also provide a technique for adjusting the difficulty of the puzzles.

For lower-level characters or newer players, the puzzle itself may provide enough of a challenge without the extra threat of a fireball landing on their heads if they press the wrong button. For higher-level characters or experienced players, that threat can transform a tedious exercise in pattern identification into a potentially deadly encounter. Several of the puzzles have a sidebar entitled *Raise The Stakes* that includes optional additions to make the encounter more difficult or dangerous. Appendix A includes a table with suggested traps that can be scaled to match the level of the party.

OPENING DOORS AND MORE

By their very nature, these puzzles are constructed as mandatory obstacles for the adventurers to overcome by finding the correct solution. For many of these puzzles, that is represented by a locked door that can only be opened by solving the puzzle. While a locked door may be the most common and logical choice as a barricade forcing the party to engage with the puzzle, a variety of options can be substituted as best suits your particular campaign or adventure. Some other options for successfully solving a puzzle include:

- Opening a locked chest.
- Uncovering a hidden message.
- Transporting the party to an alternate plane.
- Unlocking the shackles of a chained prisoner.
- Closing a magical portal.
- Revealing an invisible artifact.

There is also an opportunity to chain together several of the puzzles so that they connect with one another. For example, the two keys needed for the Triangle Lock can be found in a closed chest that can only be opened by solving Colors and Clatter and behind a door guarded by Sand Sculptures.

MAKING THE PUZZLES YOUR OWN

While the puzzles as presented here are suitable for plugging right into any adventure with no need to change them, DMs are encouraged to adjust and customize the puzzles to better fit their own game. There are numerous ways to customize each puzzle. This can include making the puzzles more personal to your group of adventurers, adjusting the puzzle descriptions to fit the setting of your dungeon, changing the symbols or languages involved to match your game world, or involving known NPCs as part of the solution. The puzzles presented provide the frameworks for logical and solvable problems and solutions that can be shaped and personalized to fit your adventure.

THE PUZZLES

The puzzles in this book have been devised in a fashion that they can be inserted into almost any adventure at logical points. This could include adding additional challenges within officially published adventures or inserting new obstacles into your own custom adventure.

Some may be more challenging than others, though a puzzle that appears simple at first may surprise you by stumping the players. Every adventuring party is different, and the way they approach challenges such as those presented here can vary drastically. Be prepared and open-minded when players surprise you while dealing with these trials.

COLORS AND CLATTER

This particular encounter is a logic puzzle in which the characters must use clues and some trial and error in order to deduce the solution. The characters enter a room with five separate levers and they must pull the levers in the correct order to unlock a door out of the room. A note found in the room provides clues to the proper order. Each lever has a unique color on its handle, and pulling each lever causes a distinct sound to play. When the levers are pulled in the incorrect order, a trap shoots from the wall and damages those in its path. When the levers are pulled in the correct order, the locked door opens, and characters can proceed into the next room.

THE PUZZLE

The levers begin in the upright position, with their handles pointing straight up towards the ceiling. They can be pulled in only one direction, downwards in the direction away from the locked door. Once a lever has been pulled down into the set position, it cannot manually be moved back to its original upright position. A character attempting to force the lever back into position will quickly realize that the levers are not very strong and will snap before being successfully forced back into position. A character who insists on forcing the lever will break it in half with a successful DC 16 Strength check. The lever can still be used while broken.

When all five levers have been pulled into their down positions, there are two possible outcomes. If the levers were pulled in the correct order, the locked door will automatically open. The door will remain open and the levers remain in their pulled position for one hour, after which the levers reset and the door closes. If the levers were pulled in an incorrect order, a trap is triggered. See Appendix A for guidance on trap types and damage. After the trap has been fired, the levers reset themselves into their original upright position.

Each of the levers has a pronounced color painted on its handle. Each lever also causes a unique sound to play throughout the room. The table on this page lists the position of the levers with their handle colors, audible tone, and order they must be pulled for the correct solution.

Physical Position	Color	Sound	Correct Order
1	Black	Roar	2
2	Yellow	Buzz	3
3	Blue	Lute	5
4	Green	Wind	4
5	Red	Bell	1

The room also contains the skeletal remains of an unfortunate adventurer who failed to solve the puzzle. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a scorched piece of paper in the skeleton's hand. While the edges of the paper are blackened and burnt, the words are still legible:

The second lever will sound like a roar
A primary first helps open the door
The last lever pulled is the color of sky
After the second will buzz like a fly.

This information gives the characters everything they need to figure out the order of the levers once they know the sound each one plays. Unfortunately for them, they will have to pull the levers in order to discover their sounds, which means they will trigger the trap at least once unless they get extremely lucky and get everything right the first time.

THE SOLUTION

The note reveals the order of the levers, either by direct statement or by process of elimination. Walking through each line:

“The second lever will sound like a roar” - Once the levers have been pulled, it will be revealed that black lever causes the roaring sound, so the black lever is the second one pulled.

“A primary first helps open the door” - This is probably the most difficult part of the puzzle. The “primary” here is referring to a primary color - red, blue, and yellow. There is a lever for each of those, so the trick here is to figure out if there’s a way to assign two of the three colors to other positions. There is. More on this later.

“The last lever pulled is the color of sky” - This is easy enough. The sky is blue, so the blue lever will be in the final, or fifth, position. This also eliminates blue as one of the primary colors possible for the first position. That means the first lever has to be either red or yellow.

“After the second will buzz like a fly” - “After the second” is a confusing way of indicating the third position. Pulling the levers will reveal the yellow one causes the buzzing sound. That places the yellow lever in the third position. It also places another primary color, meaning that red is the only primary color remaining without a set position. By process of elimination, it goes into the first position.

With four levers placed in their positions, only one lever and one position remain open. The green lever slides into the fourth position.

In summary, the solution is:

- 1st - Red: The only primary color not explicitly given a position by the clue.
- 2nd - Black: Emits the roar sound when pulled.
- 3rd - Yellow: “After second” position, emits the buzzing sound when pulled.
- 4th - Green: The only lever and position not mentioned in the clue.
- 5th - Blue: The color of sky in the final position.

HINTS

Should players be unable to solve this puzzle and if they have triggered the trap 2 or 3 times, allow them to perform skill checks of their choice to learn more about the puzzle. The hints provided by the DM should be based upon what aspect players are getting stuck on. A few possible hints:

- Players should be encouraged to take precise notes regarding which color levers result in what sounds.
- With a successful DC 11 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Survival) check, they realize “primary” refers to the primary colors, which are red, blue, and yellow.
- With a successful DC 10 Intelligence check, they understand that the phrase “after second” means the same as “third.”
- If four levers are placed in their proper positions, a successful DC 12 Intelligence check reveals that the fifth and final lever will fit into the only remaining position.

UNDER PRESSURE

This particular puzzle is fairly simple on the surface, but may require some creativity and environmental awareness for the party to overcome it.

THE PUZZLE

There is a locked door on one end of the room with no obvious hinges, locks, handles, or other ways to open it. The door does not move when pushed, pulled, or otherwise manually forced. The door is opened by applying enough weight to a pressure plate in the room. The trick here is that “enough weight” is equal to the combined weight of all members of the party. Read the following when the group enters the room:

This square room is 20 feet wide on each side and has a small 10 foot long hallway across from where you entered. You can see a stone door closed at the end of that short hallway. On the floor in the center of the room is a large diamond shape outlined in orange, with a red triangle painted in its center. There is nothing else of note in the room.

Characters who examine the diamond on the floor with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check will notice that it seems to be more than just a painting but also a carving. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check will also reveal that the shape appears to be a pressure plate. When a character steps onto the pressure plate for the first time, read or summarize the following:

As you step onto the diamond shape, you feel it begin to sink into the floor slightly. A noise that sounds like rocks grinding together fills the room. The stone door in the hallway begins to lift slowly and then stops, revealing a sliver of an opening at its bottom.

As each additional character steps on the diamond, the door opens an inch more. When the final character steps on the diamond, the door opens completely. When any character steps off the diamond, the door slams closed. The characters must all step off and back on the diamond in order for it to open again. The challenge is to figure out how the group keeps the door open when it will only be fully open if the entire group is on the diamond. There are several possible solutions.

SOLUTIONS

The easiest solution is to find something to put on the diamond that weighs as much as (or more than) the combined weight of the entire party. The group could get creative with this using spells or magic items that could potentially create this scenario. However, the most readily available solution would be to use something that was found in the environment. For this to work, it's important that the DM describe this environmental feature in one of the areas leading up to this room. Map 1.1 provides an example scene that includes environmental items which could be used as weights. See Appendix F for a larger view of this map and an alternate version. A few examples include:

- Several large boulders in the courtyard approaching the keep.
- A toppled statue obstructing the path leading into the ruins.
- Pieces of broken columns strewn about a nearby room in the dungeon.
- A large stone bookcase in the library of the castle.

Of course, if the item weighs more than the entire party combined, it will take some effort to move the item to the puzzle room and place it on the pressure plate. Allow each character to contribute to the effort by making a Strength skill check. The total combined DC of all the rolls added together should be 7 multiplied by the number of characters in the group. For a three person party, a DC of 21; a four person party, a DC of 28; a five person party, a DC of 35. The items are large enough that all the party members can contribute to the task of carrying it. A failed check results in one level of fatigue for each character who attempted to carry the item.

Another approach to solving this problem would be to get through the door while it is open. This is nearly impossible from a distinctively physical point of view, with the characters attempting to race to the fully opened door from their location on the diamond pressure plate. The door is 20 feet from the center of the room and it begins to shut instantly once the character steps from that spot. A successful DC 33 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is required to get through the door before it slams shut. On a failed check, the character takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage from slamming into the closed door.

Without the ability to move at insanely fast speeds and race through the slamming door before it shuts, other options are available. A teleportation spell, such as *misty step* or *dimension door*, could allow a character to magically move from their spot on the diamond into the room before the door closes. There is also the possibility a character can slip through the crack that opens at the bottom of the door when some (but not enough) weight is applied to the diamond. While the size of the opening is not large enough for a humanoid to fit through, shapeshifting spells and abilities such as *gaseous form* and *wild shape* could allow a character to change into a form small enough to slip through this tiny space.

If a character manages to make it through the door alone before it closes, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a hole in the wall near the door. Inside this hole is a lever that will open the door once it is pulled. When the lever is pulled the door opens from the inside and will remain open for one hour, regardless of the weight on the diamond pressure plate.

RAISING THE STAKES

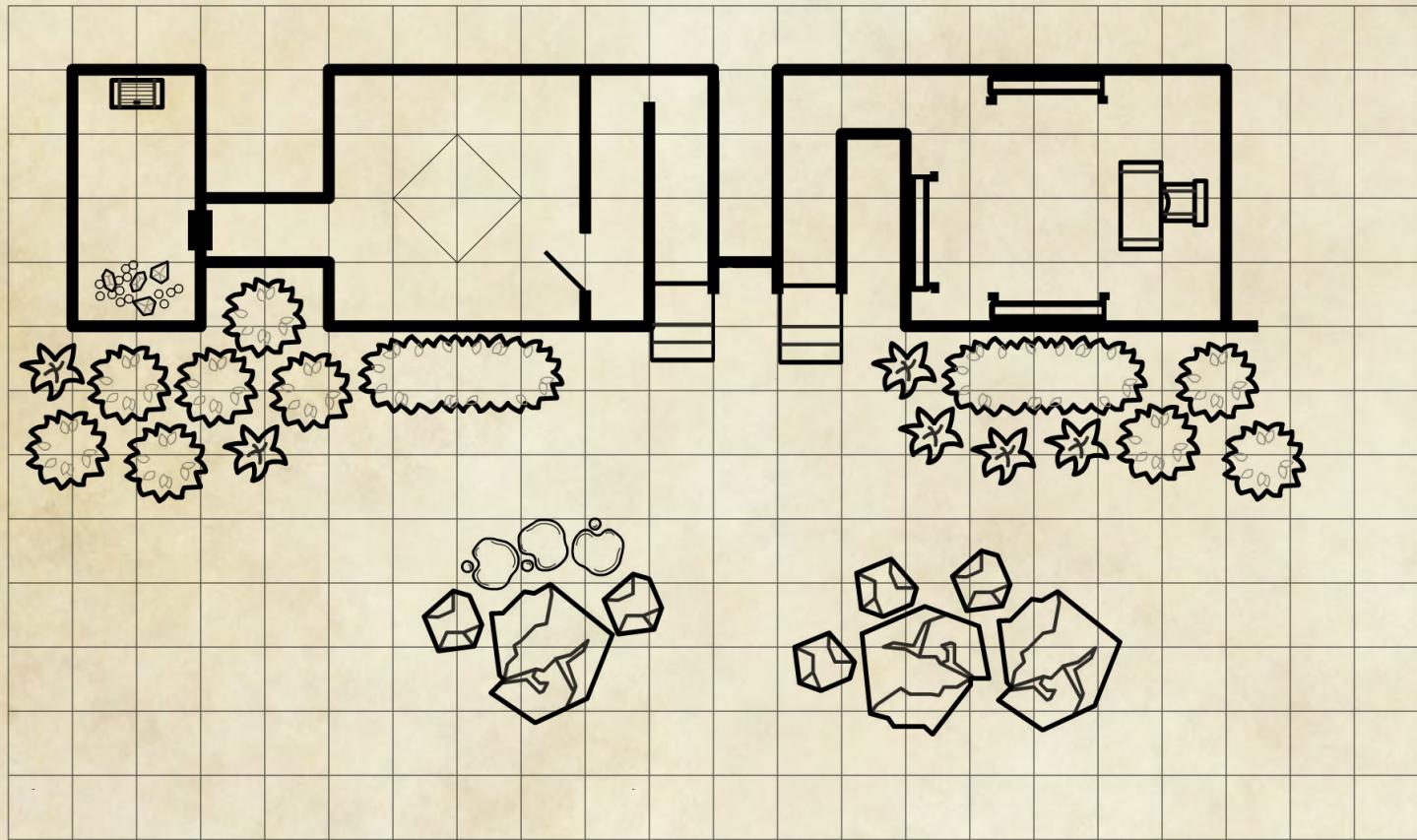
For Dungeon Masters who would like to make this puzzle a bit more dangerous, a simple trap can be added to the encounter. When any creature enters the space next to the closed door, a trap is fired from the door. The trap shoots out in a straight line (which will cross over a section of the pressure plate) for 100 feet. See Appendix A for options for this trap. The trap resets when the door has been completely opened and closes again or after 20 minutes have passed. The trap is disabled and will not trigger if the door is approached while it is completely opened with enough weight on the associated pressure plate.

HINTS

Characters who struggle to come up with the solution can be given hints by the DM. Some possible hints given to bewildered groups include:

- A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Survival) check gives a character the idea that someone could transform into a mouse (or something similarly small) and slip under the slightly opened door.
- A successful DC 12 Intelligence check allows a character to recall the presence of heavy looking items in the area that could be stacked on the pressure plate to open the door.
- A successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check reminds a player they have a teleportation spell they could likely use to transport themselves through the door before it can slam shut.

MAP 1.1 - PRESSURE PLATE, COURTYARD, AND LIBRARY



THE TRIANGLE LOCK

In this challenge, the party encounters a steel door with 120 keyholes presented in a large triangular shape. The triangle begins with one keyhole at the top and fifteen keyholes along the bottom row. The party must use two keys to turn the correct four keyholes in order to unlock the door. Locating the keys and identifying the correct keyholes are the means for solving this puzzle.

THE PUZZLE

The keys used to open the door can be placed anywhere in the dungeon, adventure, or campaign. Having them found at different locations well in advance of encountering the door can add a bit of intrigue and mystery regarding their purpose when they are first discovered. Alternatively, the keys can be located nearby, such as in a hidden chest or in the possession of a hostile creature. The door may be encountered before the keys are found, making their retrieval a critical point of advancement, or the keys may have been discovered long before the group comes upon the door.

Each key is made of brass and measures eight inches in length with a triangular handle. The two keys are identical with the exception of a message engraved on each one. On the first key, the engraving says, "Five from the right with three in between." The second key's engraving says, "Five from the left with three in between." These words provide the instructions for placing the keys into their correct holes within the door's triangular locking mechanism.

The steel door is 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. In the center of the door are the 120 keyholes in a triangular shape. Surrounding the triangle of keyholes are beautiful decorative engravings. These can be customized to fit the theme of your adventure or the setting the door is found in. Examples of the carvings can include animal depictions, dwarven runes, or demonic visages.

The door has no visible handle or hinges. However it does have four very noticeable and large clamps around its edges. The steel clamps originate from behind the door and wrap around its edge at each of its four corners. These clamps represent each lock that must be opened in order to open the door. When a key is turned in its correct keyhole, one of these clamps will make a creaking noise and pivot into an open position. When all four clamps have been released, the door opens. The door cannot be opened by magical means. A successful DC 12 thieves' tools skill check can pick the lock in a specific keyhole, but this has the same effect as turning the key in that keyhole. Successfully picking a correct keyhole will release its door clamp. Successfully picking an incorrect keyhole will have the detrimental effect as described below. Without the clues on the keys, it is unlikely a character will discover the correct keyholes by chance.

The writing on the keys is what indicates the correct keyholes needed to unlock the door. However, the keys will turn in any of the keyholes. When a key is turned in its incorrect hole, the party will hear the sound of metal scraping against stone. This will act as a clue that something happened with the key turn. That sound is a second door behind the main one that is sliding closed. That second door is also 10 feet tall and 10 feet wide, and begins in a fully opened position. Each incorrect key turn causes the door to lower by two feet. After five incorrect key turns, the second door is sealed completely shut. The only way to open this second door is for the party to turn each incorrect key turn in reverse order from which they were turned originally. Each turn will partly open the door by two feet, with the fifth turn opening the door completely. It is possible to have the second door closed while being able to open the main door. It is also possible for the party to pass through the second door without it being completely opened if they can fit through its current opening.

THE SOLUTION

The shape of the triangle and alignment of keyholes in separate rows mean that there are only two rows where the keys can be placed while fulfilling the instructions on both. There are fifteen rows in the triangle, with the number of keyholes in each row equal to the row's position. The first row has one keyhole, the second has two, the third has three, all the way down to the fifteenth row having fifteen keyholes.

Finding the correct keyholes within this array can seem daunting at first, but the words on the keys provide everything needed to find the solution. The "three in between" part of each clue appears on both keys and means that there must be three keyholes kept empty between the correct keyholes. Now the trick is to find which rows allow for the keys to be moved five from the left and right while still providing three empty key holes between them.

The first two locks are found on the fifth row. Starting from the left and moving the first key "five from the left" puts it in the fifth (and final) position on this row. Starting from the right and moving the second key "five from the right" puts it in the first position on this row. That leaves positions two, three, and four empty - the three between them that are required. When each of the keys are placed into these keyholes and turned, the corresponding clasps on the door creak and open - the top left clasp will open when the key in position one is turned, and the top right clasp will open when the key in position five is turned.

The second pair of locks is found on the thirteenth row, two rows from the bottom. Starting from the left and moving the first key "five from the left" puts it in the fifth position on this row. Starting from the right and moving the second key "five from the right" puts it in the ninth position on this row. That leaves positions six, seven, and eight empty - the three between them that are required. When each of the keys are placed into these keyholes and turned, the corresponding clasps on the door creak and open - the bottom left clasp will open when the key in position five is turned, and the bottom right clasp will open when the key in position nine is turned.

RAISING THE STAKES

An option to increase the sense of urgency while solving this puzzle is having the walls next to the door begin to close in on the party once the first incorrect key is turned. The walls begin 40 feet apart and close at the rate of 10 feet per round. At the end of four rounds, the walls are completely shut and any characters still standing between them take 4d10 bludgeoning damage, are pushed back into the open area away from the door, and are knocked prone. The walls retract back into their original position 10 minutes after closing completely. Turning a key in a correct hole will stop the walls at their current position. Turning a key in an incorrect hole causes the walls to resume closing.

See Diagram 1.1 for a diagram of the exact solution. In the diagram, the X's, A's, and B's all represent keyholes. The key engraved with "five from the right with three in between" will unlock the two keys holes marked with A's. The key engraved with "five from the left with three in between" will unlock the keyholes marked as B's.

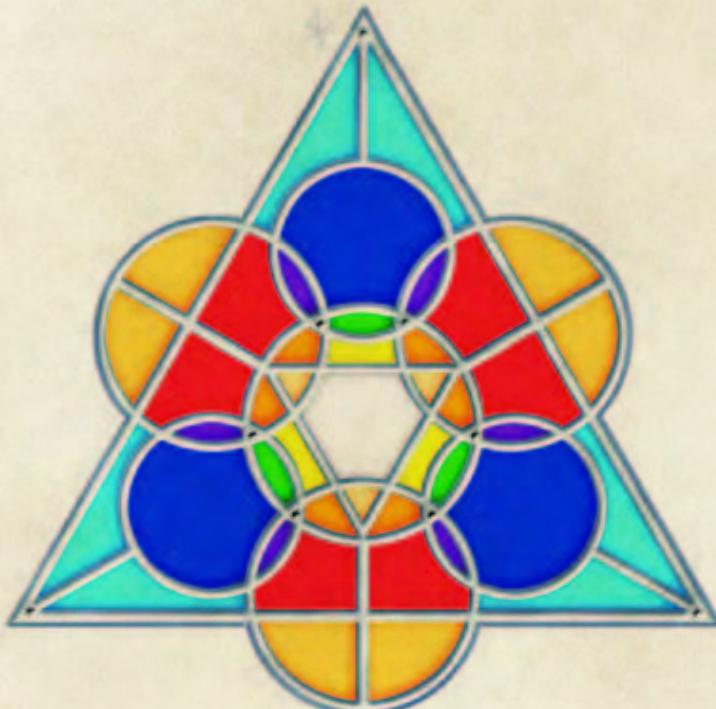
DIAGRAM 1.1: TRIANGLE LOCK SOLUTION

X
XX
XXX
XXXX
AXXXB
XXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXBXXXAXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

HINTS AND HANDOUTS

See Appendix B for a handout showing the appearance of the triangular keyholes. For players who have difficulty solving this puzzle, the following clues can help point them towards the correct solution:

- Players should be encouraged to make note of which keyholes they have tried, particularly if they need to engage the incorrectly turned holes again in order to open the secondary door.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check when an incorrect keyhole is turned determines the mistake is causing a secondary door to close behind the main door.
- A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers scratches around one of the correct keyholes, indicating that keys have been placed into that hole more often than the other holes.
- A successful DC 14 thieves' tools check reveals that the incorrect keyholes are linked together by the same mechanical contraption that sends signals to close the secondary door. Once this has been identified, the character can locate one of the correct keyholes. A natural 20 roll on this check allows the character to find all the correct holes by spending 1d8 hours examining each hole for its lack of attachment to this mechanism.
- If the players are struggling with figuring out the proper keyholes from the clues, a successful DC 10 Intelligence check has them realize that the "three in between" wording appears on both keys, meaning they should be three holes apart on the same row.
- For players who struggled mightily with the first door, a benevolent DM might allow that the second door opens or is easily bypassed when the puzzle is solved. The purpose of the second door is to have a consequence for turning keys haphazardly in the incorrect holes, not to further discourage frustrated players.





RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

This puzzle requires the group to decipher symbols, recognize patterns, and deduce a sequence in order to unlock a door. The locked doorway has two distinct features. Embedded in the wall to the right of the door is a grid made up of stone buttons, each adorned with a unique symbol. Above the door is a series of alternating green and red gems, which appear to be emeralds and rubies. There are four green gems and three red gems.

THE PUZZLE

The key to opening the locked door is to get all four of the green gems illuminated in order from left to right. When one of the stone buttons is pressed, a gem will illuminate. If the button pressed is not one of those needed to unlock the door, a red gem will light up. If the button pressed is one of those needed to unlock the door, its matching green gem will light up, with the position of the gem matching the button's position in the correct pattern. For example, if the button pressed is needed for the sequence in the third position, then the third green gem will illuminate.

The panel of buttons is arranged in a rectangular shape, with buttons positioned vertically and horizontally. Appendix C contains an example set of runes that can be used for these buttons. The example panel contains sixteen buttons arranged in a four by four grid.

Buttons remain pressed until the puzzle has been reset. The puzzle can be reset in three ways:

- All the red gems are illuminated, which triggers a trap. See the Raising The Stakes sidebar for details on the trap triggered when all three red gems are lit.
- All the green gems are illuminated in their correct order, which opens the door. This solves the puzzle. The door remains open for six hours before closing and the puzzle resetting.
- After an hour of no additional buttons being pressed.

If all of the green lights have been lit up, but were illuminated in the incorrect order, the door remains closed. In this situation, the puzzle needs to be reset before the correct solution can be entered. This can be done by waiting an hour for the puzzle to reset or by forcing it to reset by lighting up all the red gems and triggering the trap.

CUSTOMIZING THE PUZZLE

This puzzle is extremely easy to customize to fit a specific adventure, location, or theme, with both the difficulty level and contents of the puzzle easily configurable.

The DM can determine how many buttons are on the grid, but it should be no fewer than nine buttons. The more buttons present, the more difficult the puzzle. The symbols or runes on the buttons can be customized by the DM to better fit the environment of the puzzle or the overall theme of their adventure. Similarly, the markings on the buttons can change how they are deciphered by the party. Some examples of adjusting the button symbols include:

- Magical runes deciphered by a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) skill check.
- Letter or words written in a foreign language that can be translated by someone proficient in that language.
- Thieves' cant symbols that can be decoded by a thief in the party.
- Pictures representing universal holidays and events that can be identified by a successful DC 11 Intelligence (History) skill check.

Whichever symbols or markings are chosen, there should be a logical sequence found within them that tells a story the characters can figure out. This can be something such as putting the words of identified spells in alphabetical order, placing symbols for the four seasons in their expected sequence, or following the order of days as they appear on a calendar.

The difficulty of this puzzle can also be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the number of red and green gems. Increasing or decreasing the number of green gems changes the length (and complexity) of the unlocking sequence. Decreasing the number of red gems will raise the chances of triggering the trap for incorrect button presses, while increasing the number of red gems will give the party a bit more room for error.

THE SOLUTION

The puzzle is conquered when the proper buttons are pressed in the correct order, which illuminates the green gems in the proper sequence from left to right and opens the locked door. There are essentially two ways to solve the puzzle:

- Trial and error. Since the green gems light up when the correct buttons are pressed and the red gems light up when the incorrect buttons are pressed, players can take notes on which buttons had what effect.
- Deciphering the symbols. The markings on the buttons will tell a story that implies a specific sequence. Figuring out what the symbols mean is the first step, then they must recognize a logical sequence among the symbols and press the corresponding buttons in order.

The most likely outcome will be utilizing a combination of the two. Trying buttons will reveal which ones are correct and in what position, and that information can help determine the story being told and sequence expected within the symbols. Pressing a wrong button allows the group to immediately eliminate it from the correct pattern. In the worst case scenario, a simple process of elimination will leave the party with all the correct buttons, though they may be in bad shape from triggering the trap several times in the process.

For the example in Appendix C, the story being told by the Elder Runes is one of the history of a weapon, from its creation to its usage. The correct sequence of rune buttons to be pressed to solve this puzzle is:

1. Earth - Ore is mined from the earth.
2. Fire - The ore is heated in a forge to be shaped by its fire.
3. Water - The forged weapon is cooled by being quenched in water.
4. War - Once completed, the weapon is used in war.

RAISING THE STAKES

How deadly this puzzle can be depends on the damage the trap causes when all the red gems are lit up. There's a good chance the party will trigger the trap at least once (and likely more) while solving the puzzle, so keep that in mind. Use Appendix A for guidance on choosing a trap that is right for your party.

HINTS

Characters who struggle to come up with the solution can be given hints by the DM. Some possible hints given to stumped parties include:

- If the group fails to decipher the symbols or runes based on a skill check or character knowledge, a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check allows one of the characters to suddenly recall seeing one of the markings in the past and then remembering the type of symbols they are.
- If characters continue to press the same incorrect buttons repeatedly, they can stop resetting after the trap is triggered. If the characters cannot press the incorrect buttons, they'll be directed towards the correct buttons.
- A successful DC 11 Intelligence check will reveal that the order of the correct buttons is important to solving the puzzle. The character realizes that the red gems light up from left to right in order when pressed, but the green gems light up in different positions depending on their spot in the unlock sequence.

SAND SCULPTURES

This riddle depends on the group's ability to see things from different angles and put together separate components to find the solution.

THE PUZZLE

The room where this puzzle is found has four waist-high pedestals each with different features, as follows:

- The first pedestal has a stone bowl embedded into its top. The bowl is filled with fine white sand. The surface of the sand is smooth and flat. The bowl cannot be removed from the pedestal.
- On the second pedestal rests a feather quill, its tip broken off.
- The top of the third pedestal has a series of runes carved into its surface with a horizontal line below them.
- On the fourth pedestal lies a piece of a broken sword blade, its surface polished to be highly reflective.

The door leading out of this chamber is locked and has no visible lock, handle, or hinges. It cannot be opened by mechanical or magical methods. In order to solve this puzzle and open the door, the group must use the feather quill to draw the correct pattern in the bowl of sand. That the tip of the quill is broken is irrelevant, since they won't be doing actual writing with it, but instead creating the design in the sand.

The runes carved into the pedestal which make up part of the solution can be customized to fit the party, adventure, or setting. Whether or not the characters can recognize or interpret the symbols is not important for this particular puzzle. They only have to be able to draw them in reverse in the sand. Understanding what they mean is irrelevant. A set of example symbols can be found in Diagram 1.2 on the next page and in Appendix D.

THE SOLUTION

Solving this puzzle requires figuring out two main things:

- The quill must be used to draw a pattern in the sand.
- What that pattern should look like.

The quill and the bowl of sand go together. That leaves the broken sword blade and runes to provide the rest of the solution. This is done by using the sword blade as a mirror and placing it on the line below the runes. The reflection of the runes in the blade's surface reveals the symbols to be drawn in the sand. When the group uses the quill to draw these mirrored carved patterns into the surface of the sand, the door slides open.

The initial view of the carvings is shown as the group approaches the pedestal, as shown in Diagram 1.2. In order for the group to view the reflection of the symbols in the surface of the blade, they will have to view the markings from the opposite side of where they first observed them. This view is displayed in Diagram 1.3 and is simply an upside down perspective from their initial view. When the sword blade is placed on the line, the reflection in the mirrored surface provides the solution to this puzzle. The correct solution for the sample symbols can be found in Diagram 1.4.

DIAGRAM 1.2: CARVED RUNES - INITIAL VIEW

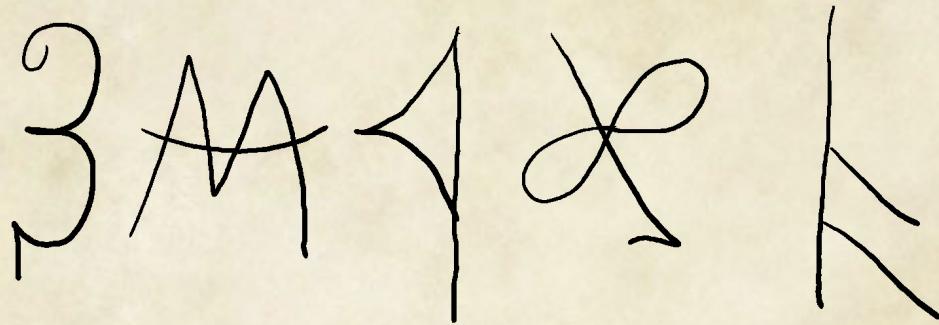


DIAGRAM 1.3: CARVED RUNES - OPPOSITE ANGLE VIEW

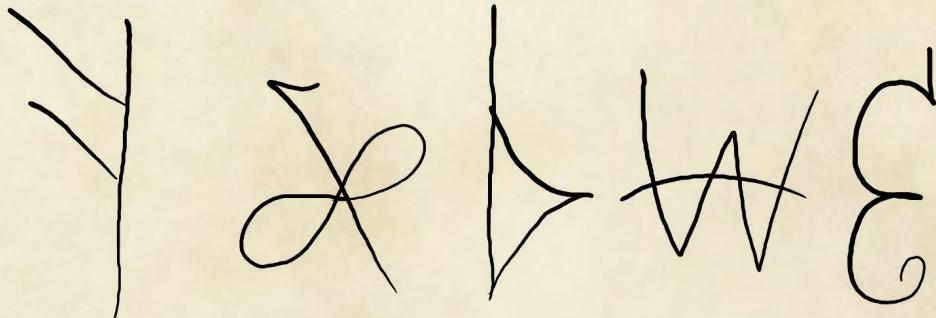
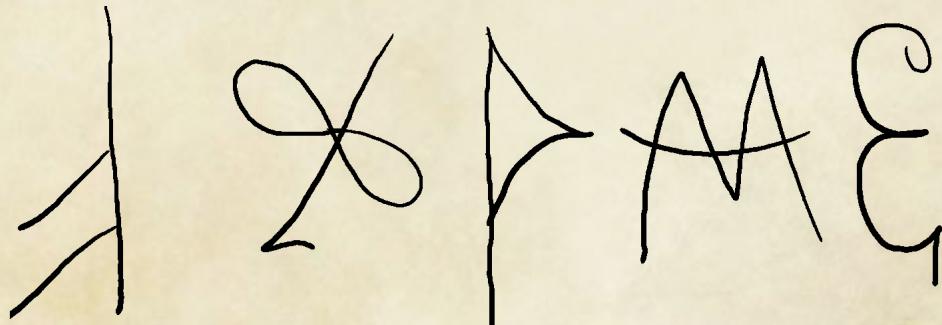


DIAGRAM 1.4: CARVED RUNES - REFLECTED SOLUTION



HINTS AND HANDOUTS

See Appendix D for a handout that can be given to players showing their initial view of the symbols. For groups that struggle to solve this puzzle, the following clues can be provided to help guide them towards the solution:

- A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check shows that the line beneath the carved symbols is the same length as the sword blade, nudging the group towards placing the blade on the line.
- A character handling the blade will notice its extremely reflective surface. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check on the blade will show that it's just as reflective as a high-quality mirror.
- If an incorrect pattern has been drawn into the sand, or if its smooth surface has been disrupted in any way, a cool breeze arises from around that pedestal, blows across the sand, and makes its surface smooth again. This resets the puzzle. A character who witnesses this realizes that drawing in the sand is the key to solving the puzzle with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check.



MIRROR, MIRROR

The party will have to be observant and precise to solve this puzzle, as it depends on noticing things that they might not expect, and then matching those things exactly in order to solve it.

THE PUZZLE

This puzzle can be put into any situation where the party is in a setting that has multiple rooms. The reward for solving this puzzle is meant to be a specific item the group is trying to obtain. This could be a magic item, special weapon, required key, or anything else that would relate to your campaign. Solving this puzzle will award the party the item they seek. The party walks into an ordinary room. When they enter the room, read or summarize the following:

As you walk through the door, you notice some simple furnishings arranged around this room. Several tables and chairs are set up in groups in the middle of the room. A fireplace with a large mantel is against one wall. Directly across from it on the opposite wall is a giant mirror that takes up almost the entire wall.

The furnishings within the room can be customized by the DM to match the theme of the location, though the fireplace and mirror should always be present. The room reflected in the mirror is an almost exact mirror image of the real room, with some notable differences. The room in the mirror shows a few extra items placed in different locations within the room. These items are not present in the physical room the party is standing in; they are only visible within the reflection. On the fireplace mantel in the mirrored room sits the item the party is looking for.

Characters searching the room in general will notice these phantom items in the reflection with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal that the item they are looking for is resting on the fireplace mantel within the reflection. Characters who specifically state they want to look at the reflection in the mirror will notice the extra items without requiring a skill check. See Appendix F for two different maps for use with this puzzle. In the example scenario for this puzzle, the items seen within the reflection are as follows:

- On a small square side table to the left sits a candle made of black wax, its flame burning steadily, but the candle never getting smaller.
- On a large, round table in the middle of the room rests a glass vial of red liquid.
- On the floor, propped up against a wooden chair, is a metal shield.
- Resting on the seat of a wooden stool is a gnarled wand.
- The item the characters seek, a silver key with a skull handle, sits atop the fireplace mantel.

The items can be customized to be random objects the players might come across within their travels, or they can be items that would have more personal meaning to the characters. The table below provides several example items that can be used based on the classes of the characters in the party.

Class	Items
Barbarian	two-handed axe bear fur cloak drinking horn
Bard	musical instrument flamboyant scarf costume mask
Cleric	holy symbol prayer beads crystal vial of clear liquid
Druid	specifically colored leaf deer antlers shillelagh
Fighter	two-handed sword plate mail helmet pair of spiked gauntlets
Monk	quarterstaff loose-fitting vest pair of sandals
Paladin	shield with a holy symbol on it plate mail gauntlet golden chalice
Ranger	wooden longbow quiver full of arrows long brown cape
Rogue	stack of 10 gold coins set of lockpicks black hood
Sorcerer	dragon scale magic staff crystal ball
Warlock	summoned demon or imp vial of blood length of metal chain
Wizard	magic wand spell book pointy wizard's hat

THE SOLUTION

In order to solve this puzzle, the party needs to make the actual room match what they see in the reflection. The group will need to gather up these items and place them in the exact same spots in the real room as they appear in the mirrored room. The characters will have to look closely at the mirror as they place the items to make sure the positioning and angle match precisely. They should only see one instance of the item when they look at the reflection, so the overlap must be perfect. Once all the items have been placed properly, a burst of light flashes from the mirror. At that point, the item they are seeking will disappear from the reflection and will appear on the mantel in the real room.

Of course, in order to place the items in the proper positions, the party will have to possess those items. They may already own some of the items. They may have to locate others. Those items could be found within their current location, or they might have to travel elsewhere to purchase or discover the items. This puzzle can be used as a central goal within an adventure that spans multiple sessions, or it can be solved within a single session if the items are easily accessible.

TIPS AND HINTS

If the group has trouble figuring out this puzzle, consider using the following hints to guide them towards the expected solution:

- For parties that are completely stumped about what to do, a successful DC 11 Intelligence check gives them the idea of trying to create the reflected scene within their actual room.
- If the group is having trouble locating one of the required items, give them a random encounter of enemies to fight, and have the item available to be looted from the corpses once they've defeated the enemies.
- A party that leaves this room without noticing the items within the mirror should be redirected here. This can be done by an NPC or a note they find that says something along the lines of, "Beware of that mirror, it has more power than it seems."
- For groups unsure about placing items in the same place as their reflections, a signal can be given when one of the items is properly placed:
"As you place the vial on the table, you notice it glow briefly before the aura fades away. You get the feeling this is where it belongs."



A LIST IN CHAINS

A large chasm separates the party from where they are and where they need to be. A series of platforms hang from the ceiling high above them. A set of six chains with symbols on them hang from the ceiling. Pulling on these chains will adjust the positioning of the platforms. Pulling the chains in the correct sequence will align the platforms in a formation that allows the group to cross the chasm.

THE PUZZLE

This puzzle is better suited for a lower-level group that doesn't have access to the *fly* spell or other means of easily crossing the chasm. Since there is no physical barrier preventing the group from crossing the gap, they might try and bypass the actual puzzle by other means. Depending on their abilities and creativity, this might be an acceptable solution. However, the presence of the platforms and marked chains should be emphasized when describing the room as to encourage the group to at least attempt to solve the puzzle before trying to cross the chasm using other methods. Read or summarize the following when the party reaches this obstacle:

As you move forward, you see that the floor ahead drops away suddenly into a deep chasm that stretches the entire width of the room. Looking over the edge, you see nothing but darkness. The pit descends down further than you can see. The ceiling above the chasm extends upwards 50 feet. Hanging from that ceiling, you see several wooden platforms suspended on chains. The platforms are arranged in a scattered pattern of different locations and different heights, some very close to the ceiling with others only 20 feet above you. Next to the wall on your right are a group of six chains hanging from the ceiling. Each chain has a circular medallion hanging from the end of it. Each medallion has markings painted onto it.

The chasm is 70 feet across. Whether or not the group can see the other side depends on the lighting of the environment and their vision abilities. A character that can see the other side simply sees that the chasm ends, and solid ground returns at the same level they are currently standing.

Characters who examine the chains will notice that each medallion has a unique design painted onto it. See Diagram 1.5 and Appendix E for an example of possible designs. The trick here is deciphering what the designs represent and figuring out the proper sequence to pull the chains. Each chain will move multiple platforms, which is why the sequence is important to the solution. Even if they pull a correct chain, if they pull it in the wrong order, a subsequent yank on another chain will move it out of position.

RAISING THE STAKES

For this particular puzzle, the chasm offers an opportunity to introduce dangerous consequences for pulling the incorrect chains. As an optional addition to this puzzle, pulling three incorrect chains in a row will trigger a *gust of wind* spell. A line of strong wind 60 feet long and 10 feet wide blasts from the area the chains are hanging towards the chasm for one round. Each creature that starts its turn in the line must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed 15 feet towards the chasm. Any creature that would be pushed into the chasm by this effect must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check in order to avoid falling into the chasm. Any friendly character within 5 feet of the affected character may use their reaction to help, giving the character advantage on their skill check to avoid going over the edge. A character who fails their saving throw and skill check falls 80 feet to the bottom of the chasm, suffering 8d6 bludgeoning damage and falling prone.

When the first chain is pulled, read or summarize the following:

As you pull the chain, you feel the resistance from springs and mechanical devices attached to the chain in the ceiling above. The sounds of gears grinding and chains moving echo off the walls of the chamber. You notice that one of the platforms hanging from the ceiling has changed position and has moved closer to the ground, while another platform moved up towards the ceiling.

THE SOLUTION

When the chains are pulled in the correct sequence, the platforms properly align and form a bridge that the characters can walk across to pass over the chasm. This puzzle does not have a timed reset of its mechanism or sequence. Whenever the correct first chain is pulled, that begins the tracking of the current sequence. Basically when the first chain in the sequence is pulled, the puzzle begins checking for the proper sequence following from that point.

The designs provided in the sample in Diagram 1.5 represent the rising and setting sun over the horizon. The sun rises in the east - design C, with the quarter sun on the right side of the panel. Then rises straight in the sky at noon - design F, with the yellow circle fully visible above the horizon. Next, the sun sets in the west - design E, with the quarter sun on the left side of the panel. Lastly, the sun vanishes beyond the horizon and is out of sight - design A. As mentioned, these designs can be replaced with anything you like, as long as a logical sequence can be deduced by the players.

When the last correct chain is pulled in its correct order, read or summarize the following:

As this chain is pulled, the platforms adjust once again, moving up and down, and rotating in all directions. When the shapes finish moving, you see that they have come to a halt in a position that provides a bridge across the chasm. Several of the platforms are perfectly aligned to form a continuous path so the group can safely walk across them to the other side.

The proper solution is:

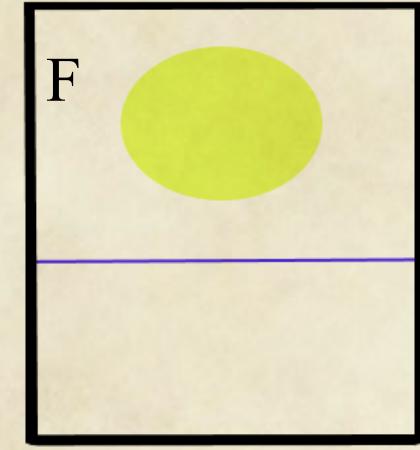
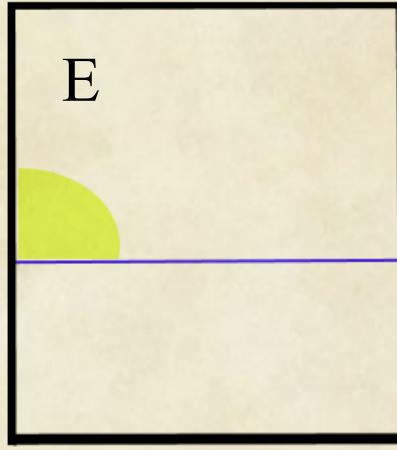
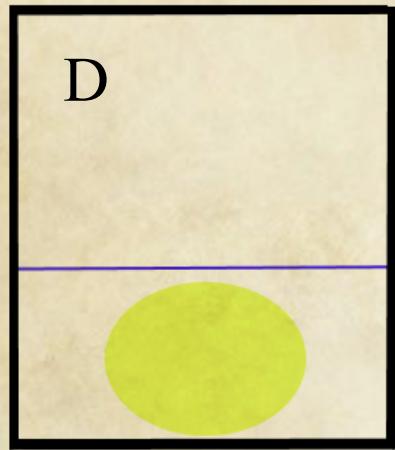
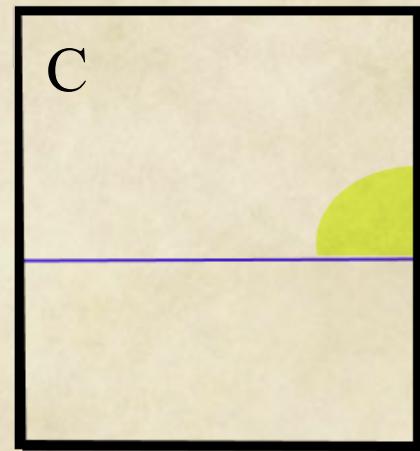
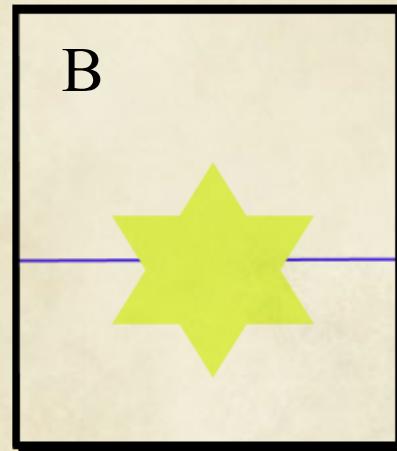
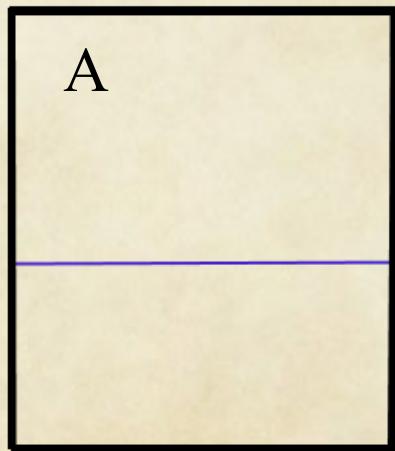
1. Symbol C - Sun rising in the east.
2. Symbol F - Sun in the sky at noon.
3. Symbol E - Sun setting in the west.
4. Symbol A - Sun vanished beyond the horizon.

HINTS AND HANDOUT

See Appendix E for a handout that can be given to players showing the appearance of the designs on the chains. For players who have difficulty solving this puzzle, the following clues can help point them towards the correct solution:

- If the group fails to understand or recognize the designs, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Survival) check allows the symbols to be identified as the sun and the horizon.
- If characters continue to pull the same incorrect chains repeatedly, they can become stuck in the pulled position. If characters cannot pull the incorrect chains, they'll be directed towards the correct chains.
- A character examining the pattern in which the platforms are moving when the chains are pulled can realize that the order of the chains is important with a successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check.

DIAGRAM 1.5: CHAIN SYMBOLS



PUSHING FORWARD BACK

Becoming lost in a dungeon is nothing new. Getting confused about where they are going and where they have been is a standard experience for adventurers. This magical encounter provides a new twist on that experience by having players wind up exactly where they started, even when they are certain they've done nothing but walk in a straight line.

THE PUZZLE

This puzzle involves a long, straight hallway that the party must travel down in order to advance further in their adventure. The length of the hallway is at the DM's discretion, but should be at least 30 feet. When the character gets halfway down the hallway, they get turned around and head back in the direction they came from, despite them not physically changing direction or sensing any type of force or altering of their movement. The character experiences this as if they are simply walking in a straight line, but always wind up where they began. There is no physical indication that this is happening to them.

While this hallway can be inserted into any location, it should be done in a way that the starting point is obviously and clearly also the ending point when they get turned around by the trickery. Although it might take the players a moment to understand what happened, they should soon realize they are heading back in the same direction they came from, even if it takes them a few rooms or areas to realize it. Some examples that can help indicate they are back where they came from include:

- A wooden door that the party just opened and remains open.
- An empty treasure chest the group recently looted.
- A room with distinct features, such as a long stone table or a desk with several books on it.
- The dead bodies of several enemies the party just defeated.

There is a magical effect on the hallway that causes this phenomenon. That same effect also does strange things to the lighting and the ability for creatures to see ahead of them. While it seems that they have clear vision down the hallway, shapes and objects in the distance only become clear when they are within 10 feet of the end of them. This feature prevents creatures affected by the weirdness from immediately realizing they've been turned around as soon as it happens. For example, if the hallway is 60 feet long and a character can usually see 60 feet, when they get to the midway point at 30 feet, they would essentially be able to see the landmark at the end of the hallway they just came from immediately. The magical aura here prevents that, meaning the character would have to walk 20 more feet (in their mind, 50 feet away from where they came, but in reality, 20 feet back in the direction they came from) before any creatures or notable landmarks from that spot come back into view.

Similarly, someone looking down the hallway will lose sight of creatures or items moving away from them once they have gone 10 feet away from them. This effect isn't a magical disappearance, but more of an accelerated loss of visual contact due to the distance. The DM can describe this as if the creature or item has moved away at a faster than usual rate, them vanishing into a strange fog, or a trick being played on the eyes due to flickering shadows. The important aspect here is that while the players will quickly realize they are getting turned around, it takes some time for them to figure out when it is happening or how.

THE SOLUTION

Characters will likely go through a few trips of the reversal process trying to understand what is happening. Once they understand they're getting turned around without their knowledge, then they must figure out how to overcome the effect. The solution is for them to find the midway point in the hallway, and for them to physically change direction and turn around at that midway point. Since the effect turns them around at that point, the characters turning themselves around will point them in the direction they want to go and lead them to the opposite end of the hallway. A *detect magic* spell or successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check will reveal the exact location of the magical effect and indicate the midpoint of the hallway where they need to turn around. Otherwise, trial and error or some other clever techniques can help identify this point in the hallway.

HINTS

Characters who struggle to come up with the solution can be given hints by the DM. Some possible hints given to bewildered groups include:

- A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Survival or Perception) check can give the player the idea to throw or shoot a projectile down the hallway to see what happens. Note that any harmful spells or projectiles will come right back at the party, and they should roll appropriate attack rolls (against themselves!) or saving throws.
- A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check reminds a player to drop breadcrumbs on the ground as they walk down the hallway. When the breadcrumbs end (and begin to double up in the opposite direction), they will realize they've reached the point where they get turned around.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that looking at the pattern of the bricks on the floor could be a clue. While the stones and bricks are of different shapes and patterns for the length of the hallway, there is one totally straight and uniformly sized line of bricks at the midway point in the hallway.

LIKE CLOCKWORK

To solve this puzzle, players will have to recognize the existence of patterns and then use those patterns to locate a hidden object.

THE PUZZLE

The setting is a large room filled with a wide variety of items. This could be a treasure vault, library, warehouse, or any type of building or room that would have a large number of items stored in it. The quantity of items and size of the room is important to the mechanics of this puzzle because the characters are essentially trying to find a single small item among a vast array of similar items. An important point to emphasize while describing this scene is that it would take a very long time to find the sought-after item by simply searching using traditional means. Describing their objective as “trying to find a needle in a haystack” (or another metaphor of your liking) should help the players realize there has to be an easier way to find what they are looking for.

In the example scenario for this puzzle, the players are trying to find a large magical ruby stashed somewhere within a vast treasure vault. There are shelves, chests, bowls, vases, and tables spread around the room. Large piles of coins and gems lie against some of the walls and pillars, while neatly stacked coins rest against the walls. However, what might initially look like disorganized chaos does contain a hidden order to it. The key to that order are tiny clockwork automatons deployed by the vault’s owner. These creations are tasked with moving and sorting items into their appropriate places. When the party enters the room, have each character roll a Dexterity ability check. The player with the lowest result accidentally kicks over a stack of gold. Read or summarize the following:

As you enter the room and look around at the treasures surrounding you, you fail to notice a stack of gold coins piled neatly against the wall. You kick over the stack and send the coins scattering across the floor. Within moments, a small crab-like creation emerges from a nearby hole in the wall and heads towards the spilled coins. You notice that the creature is made up of various gears and springs as its claws work to pick up the coins and place them back into a stack. Once the coins are ordered, the automaton scampers away and disappears back into the wall.

These clockwork automatons live within the walls around the room and are programmed to arrange the items in a very specific way. Gold coins will be stacked against the east wall, while silver coins are stacked against the west wall. Magic wands go in the chest with the bronze trim while magic necklaces are placed on the table with the red tablecloth. When items are where they belong, there is nothing for the automatons to do, and they remain dormant within the walls. When the items are disrupted or new items are added to the collection, they go to work. Putting the clockwork creatures to work and following where they place certain things is the key to solving this puzzle.

The clockwork creations are small mechanical creatures with an AC of 11 and 10 hit points each. If the party destroys one and examines its remains, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a series of weights and wires that are indicative of it being programmed to follow a pattern.

Destroying and examining multiple automatons shows they all have very similar settings in this regard. Any automaton that is destroyed is replaced by another from within the walls. There are fifty living in the walls in total, and the group would have to destroy all of them before they stop carrying out their duty of arranging misplaced items.

THE SOLUTION

There are two parts to solving this riddle. The first is the characters realizing that there are patterns and an order to how the clockwork creatures organize the items. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check by a character who is watching the automatons in action reveals that there is a system behind their actions. The character will notice that they are definitely moving the same types of items in the same direction. Once the group realizes that, the second part towards the solution is using those patterns to help figure out where the item they are looking for would be kept. The characters can do this by disrupting the items in the room, either by knocking them over or displacing them. They can also introduce new items for the automatons to sort by simply placing them on the ground.



RAISING THE STAKES

Given enough time, the group will find the item eventually. Without a sense of urgency, they might even ignore the automaton patterns and search for the item the traditional way. The sound of an alarm going off, with hostile creatures coming to check things out at any moment, is one method of increasing the pressure on the group. The alarm can be triggered by opening the door to the room, tripping over a hidden wire, or when the first item within the room is disrupted. Once the alarm is sounded, the group has 1d4+1 rounds before guards arrive. Although there is no combat yet, initiative rolls should be made and characters must adhere to their usual turn guidelines for what they can do. If they solve the puzzle and find the item before the guards arrive, they can slip away and avoid combat. However, if the guards arrive before they find the item, combat ensues. The guard encounter should be of proper CR to be a medium difficulty encounter for the group. If the party defeats the guards, they can continue the search, but unless they find a way to disable the sounding alarm, more guards will arrive before long.

For the treasure room and large ruby example, players who knock over coins or move around items will notice that the automatons will always put them back where they came from. However, that doesn't make it any easier to find the ruby, since the stash of large red gems may be hard to find or out of plain sight. In this scenario, all gems are placed in vases along the north and west walls. A gem that is moved from one of these containers will be returned to the one it was removed from. A gem that is introduced by the party will be sorted based on its color and size. A red gem will go in one direction. A large gem will go in a similar direction, but different vase. A large red gem will lead them directly to the location of the item they are looking for.

Although observing the clockwork creations and taking advantage of their predictable movements is the most efficient way of finding the item, the players should be allowed a chance to search in a more traditional manner. The chances of them finding the item by looking around the room are directly related to how much time they spend searching. The check to see if they find the item will be a percentage roll using a 1d100. For every hour spent manually searching, their chances of finding the item increases by 5%. For one hour, a result of 1-5 on a 1d100 means they find the item. If they spend two hours, the success range increases to 1-10 on a 1d100. All the way up to 20 hours spent searching, they will have a 99% chance of finding the item – a roll of 100 will still be a failure. Twenty hours is a lot of time to spend searching, but the group could get lucky and find the item in less time. See the Raising the Stakes sidebar for details on making time a component to solving this puzzle, which certainly will not allow the group the luxury of searching for the item for 20 consecutive uninterrupted hours.



HINTS

For parties who are having trouble solving this puzzle, the following hints can point them towards a solution:

- If the group hasn't realized that the clockwork creatures are important in solving this, a large rat scurries across the room and knocks over several items. This sends several automatons into action at once and should certainly draw the attention of the players.
- If the rat still hasn't tipped them off towards looking at the automatons, have a lost NPC goblin stumble into the room, knock some items over, and run back out shouting, "Me hates this room! Stupid gear thingys making everything neat! Me likes messes!" Several automatons will rush to clean up his mess.
- If the characters have recognized the pattern, but fail to understand how to use it to find the item they are looking for, a successful DC 12 Intelligence check gives them the idea to try placing their own objects upon the ground to see how the clockwork creatures react to them. The creatures will come out and sort those items as expected.
- If the characters understand how to find the item, but do not have any items similar to the item they are looking for to use to lead the automatons to their desired item, have the clumsy goblin drop a suitable item as he rushes out of the room. In this case, the goblin drops a large red glass ball – worthless in value, but close enough to a large red ruby that it will be sorted to the same location.

KEY WORDS

Solving this puzzle will require the party to locate a set of words and speak them in the correct order. While that might not initially seem like much of a challenge, locating those words and understanding the languages they are written in can add a level of complexity.

THE PUZZLE

The party approaches a large stone door with no visible handles or locks. The door cannot be opened by physical or magical means, and remains firmly in place until the key phrase is spoken aloud. Examining the door reveals that it is locked by magical means, and that only a specific key of some kind will open it, although, with no key hole, what that key may be is part of the mystery.

There are several scenes carved into and around the door, all depicting portrayals of two or more humanoid figures standing in groups. Several races are represented among the figures - humans, dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, tieflings, dragonborn, orc, goliaths, aarakocra, and giants. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check by a character examining these carvings will reveal that the figures appear to be conversing with one another. While some of the displays vary in tone and number of figures, the poses, gestures, and open mouths carved into the scenes convey a message of verbal communication between the characters. The words that make up the phrase that must be spoken to unlock the door are located somewhere on the same level as the door. As with other puzzles in this book, the DM is free to customize this puzzle to place those words wherever they may fit within their own adventure. Within this example, the words are carved into the base of statues located throughout the dungeon. See the table below for a list of the statues and words carved into each. Any character that examines a statue finds the word with a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Map 1.2 on the next page and the maps found in Appendix F are examples illustrating the locations of the statues scattered throughout a dungeon level. For a more straightforward solution, the statues can be standing on either side of the main hallway. While this eliminates the exploration aspect of the puzzle, the players will still need to notice the words, translate them, and form the correct key word sentence in order to solve this puzzle.

Since the words are written in a variety of languages, it is possible that the party does not contain any characters who speak one or more of the specified languages. Here are a few possibilities for deal with that scenario:

- This becomes part of the challenge itself. The party must find a creative way to translate those words.
- The group obtains one or more scrolls containing the *comprehend languages* spell. These can be placed within a chest in the dungeon, looted from defeated enemies, or purchased from a nearby vendor.
- The party comes across an NPC that speaks one or more of the required languages. This can become obvious when the NPC greets the group in a language they do not understand. The NPC also speaks Common, so they are capable of translating the words, for a small fee.
- The DM can change the words into a language the group does know. For the most simplistic solution, all the words can be written in Common.

RAISING THE STAKES

Once the group finds all the words and understands they must speak them in a particular order to unlock the door, the sense of danger can be increased with the threat of injury for failed attempts. In this scenario, one of the statues (logically the dragonborn barbarian or majestic stag), is located straight down the hallway from the door. When the key words are spoken in the incorrect order, the statue charges down the hallway and smashes into the door. Any character within its path must make a successful DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d8 bludgeoning damage. The trap resets and the statue slowly returns to its original position after 5 minutes. Although the key word lock is magical in nature, the statue is moved by a spring loaded mechanical device. It can be disabled with a successful DC 13 thieves' tools check.

Alternatively, rather than having a statue from down the hallway charge at the door, the statue that holds the word meant to be spoken next charges from wherever it may be on the floor. For example, if they get the first word wrong, the halfling (who has the first word "All" carved into it) is the one that comes crashing through. This can provide an additional clue to help the players solve the puzzle if they notice different statues arrive based on where they are in the phrase.

Statue Description

A smiling halfling lifting a mug of ale in the air as a toast.

An elven ranger with a bow and quiver slung across her back, arms spread wide in a friendly gesture.

A majestic stag deer looking into the distance, large antlers almost touching the ceiling of the room.

A tall dragonborn barbarian wielding a two-handed axe and holding it in position to swing downwards with a ferocious attack.

A human bard sitting on a stool and strumming a lute, she wears a fancy cap with a feather in it and her mouth is open in song.

A dwarf priest in long, flowing robes, with hands folded in prayer and a key hanging from his belt.

Word	Language
"All"	Halfling
"Together"	Elvish
"We"	Sylvan
"Are"	Draconic
"The"	Common
"Key"	Dwarvish

THE SOLUTION

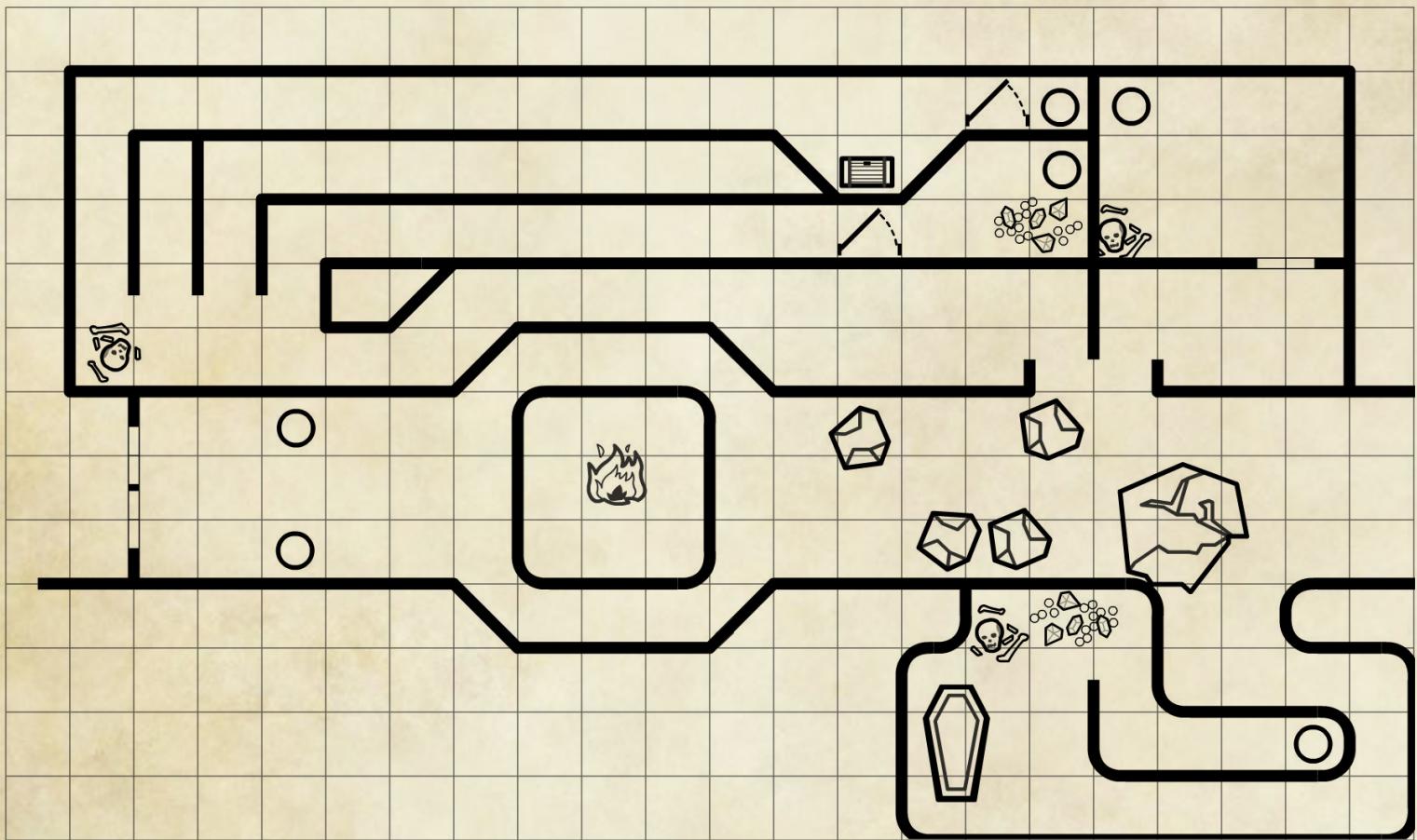
When the party has found all the words that make up the key phrase, opening the door is a matter of speaking the phrase out loud within 20 feet of the door. The correct phrase is: "All together we are the key." When the correct phrase is spoken, the mouths of the figures carved into the door glow a bright blue color, and the door slowly swings open. The door remains open for 1 hour, after which it will close and will require the key phrase spoken again to open. The opposite side of the door has a lever that can be pulled in order to open it. The key phrase need only be used from the initial direction when approaching the door.

HINTS AND TIPS

For groups that are having a tough time solving this puzzle, the following hints can help lead them to the correct solution:

- If the group is having a hard time realizing that a spoken phrase is the key, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check (or a passive Perception 12 or higher) notices that the mouths on the carvings glow with a faint red light when words are spoken within 20 feet of the door.
- For characters having trouble finding the words carved into the statues, the DM may give one of the statues a noticeable feature that causes the party to examine it more closely. This could be the statue being part of a trap, such as the dragonborn statue swinging its axe at any character that gets too close. This could also be an audible clue, such as a singing voice coming from the human bard statue, or a visual clue, such as the key hanging from the cleric statue emitting a glowing aura.
- If the characters have collected the words but do not understand how to use them, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check reveals that some magical locks can be opened by speaking key phrases.

MAP 1.2 - KEY WORD DOOR AND STATUE LOCATIONS



APPENDIX A: PUZZLE TRAPS

The level of danger for some of these puzzles can be adjusted by selecting different spells as the trap component for the encounter. The tables in this appendix provide some suggestions and options for spells to be used as those traps. While the tables provide several of the details about each spell, some of them may include additional effects. Please consult the source material for full details on each spell.

The first table shows the recommended spells for each of the puzzles with variable trap components. See the details within each puzzle for descriptions of what triggers the trap and when they reset. These suggestions for each Tier of character levels take into consideration the likelihood and frequency of the trap being set off.

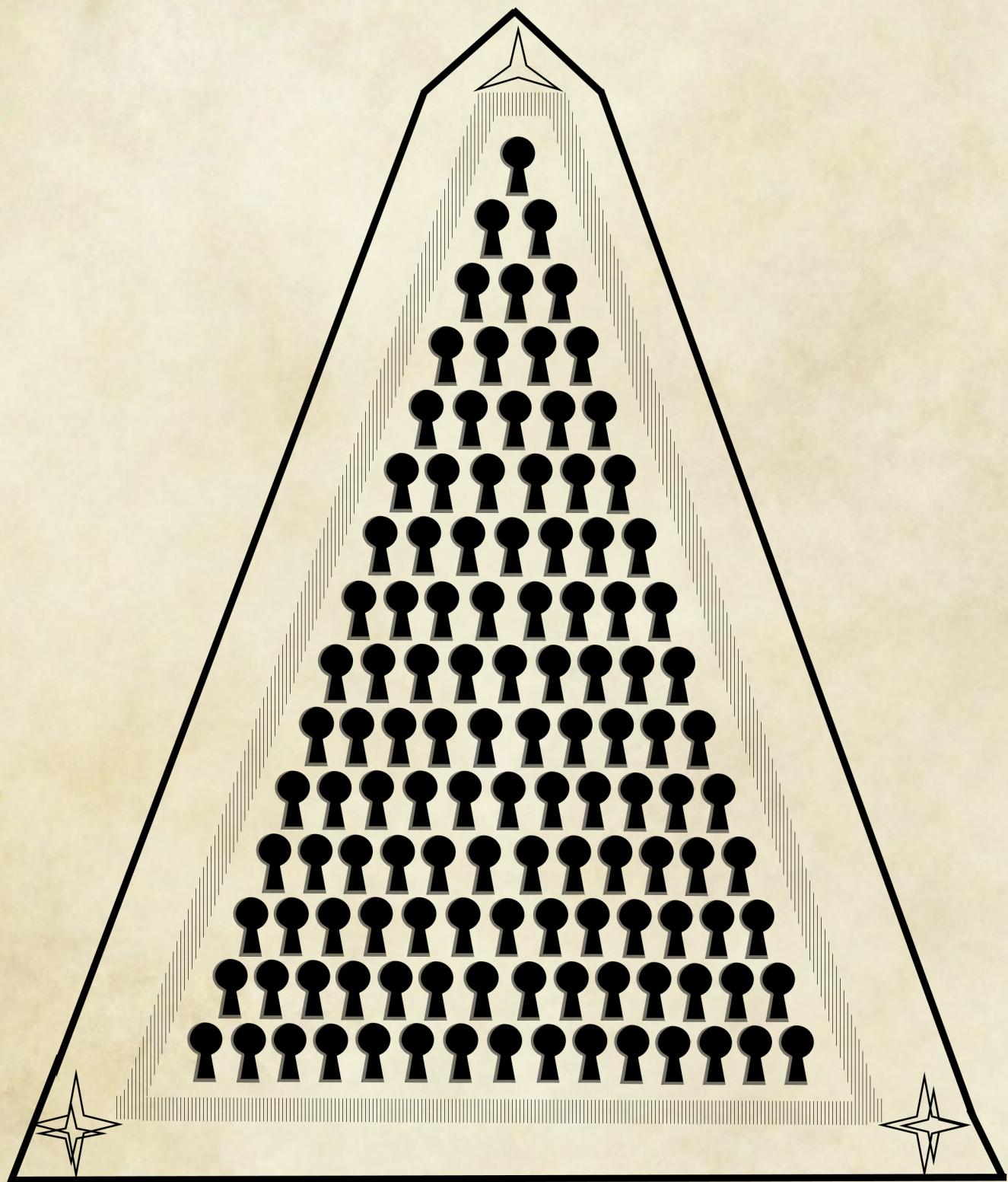
Puzzle	Tier 1 (Levels 1-4) (Saving Throw)	Tier 2 (Levels 5-10) (Saving Throw)	Tier 3 (Levels 11-16) (Saving Throw)	Tier 4 (Levels 17+) (Saving Throw)
Colors and Clatter	Thunderclap (DC 10 CON)	Shatter (DC 12 CON)	Fireball (DC 13 DEX)	Incendiary Cloud (DC 16 DEX)
Under Pressure	Thunderwave (DC 11 CON)	Lightning Bolt (DC 13 DEX)	Fire Storm (DC 14 CON)	Chain Lightning (DC 16 DEX)
Red Light, Green Light	Magic Missile (None)	Cloudkill (DC 13 CON)	Cone of Cold (DC 14 CON)	Abi-Dalzim's Horrid Wilting (DC 17 CON)

The following table provides additional options for spells to be used as traps based upon the the level tier of the party, how dangerous the trap would be, and whether it would affect a single target or multiple targets in an area. A trap intended to be a setback is unlikely to kill or seriously harm characters of the indicated levels, whereas a dangerous trap is likely to seriously injure (and potentially kill) characters of the indicated levels. A deadly trap is likely to kill characters of the indicated levels.

Character Tier	Trap Danger	Single Target or Area of Effect	DC Spell - Range (Area) - Saving Throw - Damage (Type)
1	Setback	Single Target	Fire Bolt - 120 - DEX - 1d10 (Fire) Poison Spray - 10 - CON - 1d12 (Poison) Sacred Flame - 60 - DEX - 1d8 (Radiant)
1	Dangerous	Single Target	Hellish Rebuke - 60 - DEX - 2d10 (Fire) Magic Missile - 120 - None - 3d4 + 3 (Force) Dissonant Whispers - 60 - WIS - 3d6 (Psychic)
1	Deadly	Single Target	Phantasmal Killer - 120 - WIS - 4d10 (Psychic)
1	Setback	Area of Effect	Thunderclap - 5 - CON - 1d6 (Thunder)
1	Dangerous	Area of Effect	Moonbeam - 120 (5) - CON - 2d10 (Radiant) Shatter - 60 (10) - CON - 3d8 (Thunder) Thunderwave - 5 (15) - CON - 2d8 (Thunder)
1	Deadly	Area of Effect	Circle of Death - 150 (60) - CON - 8d6 (Necrotic) Cloudkill - 120 (20) - CON - 5d8 (Poison)
2	Setback	Single Target	Hellish Rebuke - 60 - DEX - 2d10 (Fire) Magic Missile - 120 - None - 3d4 + 3 (Force)
2	Dangerous	Single Target	Phantasmal Killer - 120 - WIS - 4d10 (Psychic)
2	Deadly	Single Target	Harm - 60 - CON - 14d6 (Necrotic)
2	Setback	Area of Effect	Moonbeam - 120 (5) - CON - 2d10 (Radiant) Shatter - 60 (10) - CON - 3d8 (Thunder) Thunderwave - 5 (15) - CON - 2d8 (Thunder)
2	Dangerous	Area of Effect	Circle of Death - 150 (60) - CON - 8d6 (Necrotic) Cloudkill - 120 (20) - CON - 5d8 (Poison) Fireball - 150 (20) - DEX - 8d6 (Fire) Lightning Bolt - 100 - DEX - 8d6 (Lightning)
2	Deadly	Area of Effect	Otiluke's Freezing Sphere - 300 (60) - CON - 10d6 (Cold) Cone of Cold - 60 - CON - 8d8 (Cold)
			Fire Storm - 150 (100) - CON - 7d10 (Fire) Chain Lightning - 150 - DEX - 10d8 (Lightning) Incendiary Cloud - 150 (20) - DEX - 10d8 (Fire)

Character Tier	Trap Danger	Single Target or Area of Effect	DC Spell - Range (Area)	Saving Throw - Damage (Type)
3	Setback	Single Target	13	Phantasmal Killer - 120 - WIS - 4d10 (Psychic)
3	Dangerous	Single Target	14	Harm - 60 - CON - 14d6 (Necrotic)
3	Deadly	Single Target	15	Finger of Death - 60 - CON - 7d8 + 30 (Necrotic)
3	Setback	Area of Effect	13	Circle of Death - 150 (60) - CON - 8d6 (Necrotic) Cloudkill - 120 (20) - CON - 5d8 (Poison) Fireball - 150 (20) - DEX - 8d6 (Fire) Lightning Bolt - 100 - DEX - 8d6 (Lightning)
3	Dangerous	Area of Effect	14	Cone of Cold - 60 - CON - 8d8 (Cold) Fire Storm - 150 (100) - CON - 7d10 (Fire) Chain Lightning - 150 - DEX - 10d8 (Lightning) Incendiary Cloud - 150 (20) - DEX - 10d8 (Fire) Sunburst - 150 (60) - CON - 12d6 (Radiant) Delayed Blast Fireball - 150 (20) - DEX - 12d6 (Fire)
3	Deadly	Area of Effect	15	Abi-Dalzim's Horrid Wilting - 150 (30) - CON - 12d8 (Necrotic)
4	Setback	Single Target	16	Harm - 60 - CON - 14d6 (Necrotic)
4	Dangerous	Single Target	17	Finger of Death - 60 - CON - 7d8 + 30 (Necrotic)
4	Deadly	Single Target	18	Power Word Kill - 60 - None - Target under 100 hps dies
4	Setback	Area of Effect	16	Cone of Cold - 60 - CON - 8d8 (Cold) Fire Storm - 150 (100) - CON - 7d10 (Fire) Chain Lightning - 150 - DEX - 10d8 (Lightning) Incendiary Cloud - 150 (20) - DEX - 10d8 (Fire) Sunburst - 150 (60) - CON - 12d6 (Radiant) Delayed Blast Fireball - 150 (20) - DEX - 12d6 (Fire)
4	Dangerous	Area of Effect	17	Abi-Dalzim's Horrid Wilting - 150 (30) - CON - 12d8 (Necrotic)
4	Deadly	Area of Effect	18	Meteor Swarm - 600 (40) - DEX - 20d6 (Fire) + 20d6 (Bludgeoning)

APPENDIX B: TRIANGLE LOCK



APPENDIX C: BUTTON PANEL RUNES

War & Danger

Decision

Guardian

The Air

Safety & Shelter

Goblins

Safe Passage

The Sun

Fey

Death

Camping Place

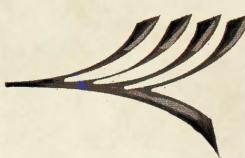
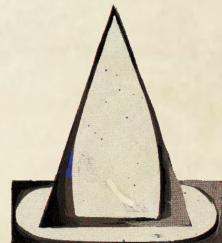
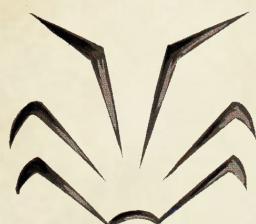
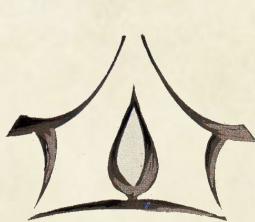
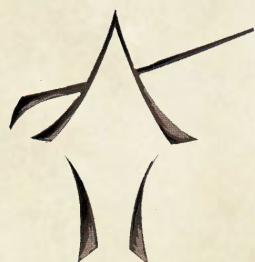
The Earth

Fire

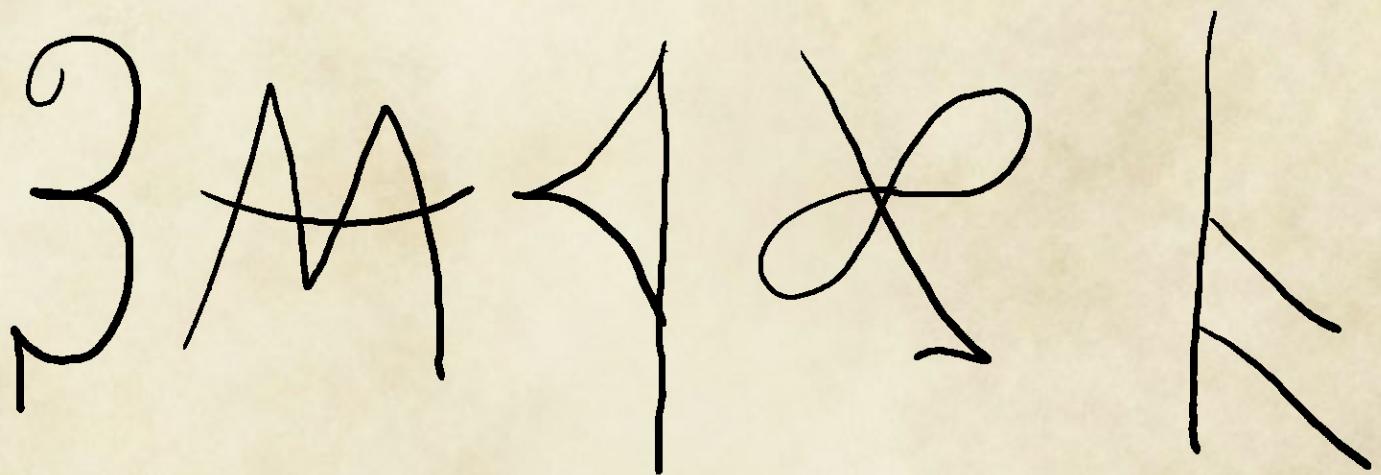
Chaos

Religious Site

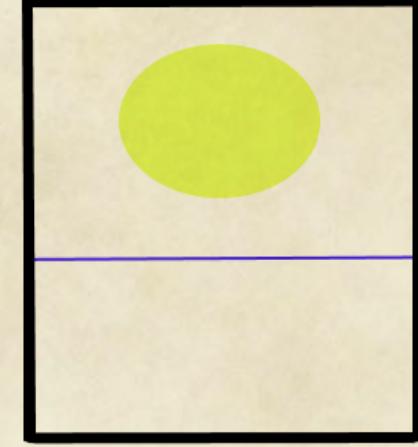
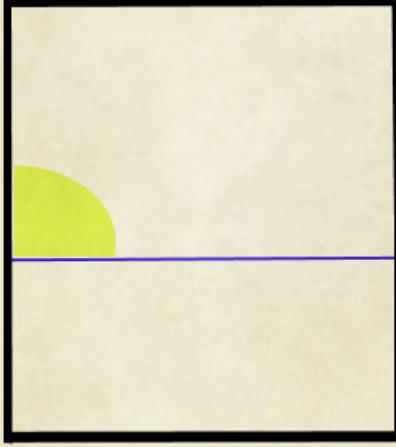
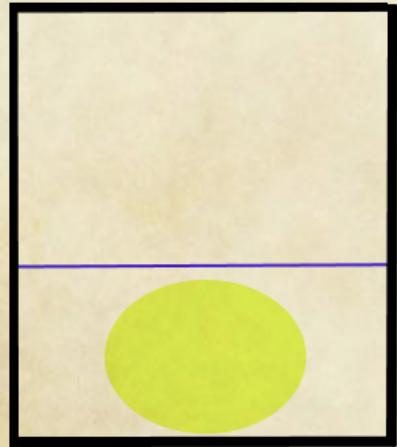
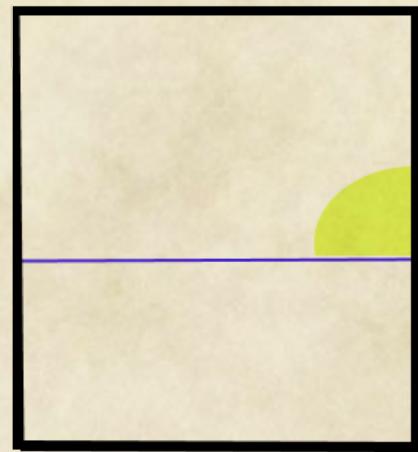
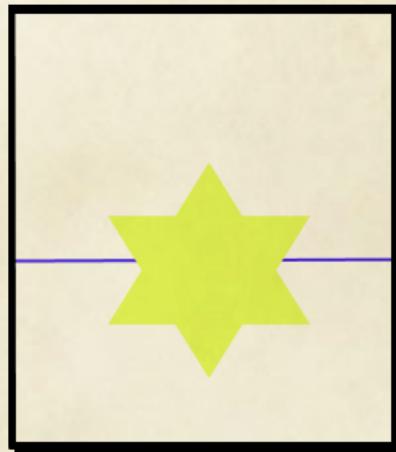
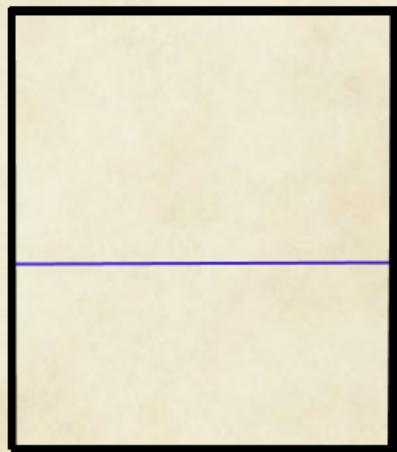
The Water



APPENDIX D: SAND SCULPTURE SYMBOLS

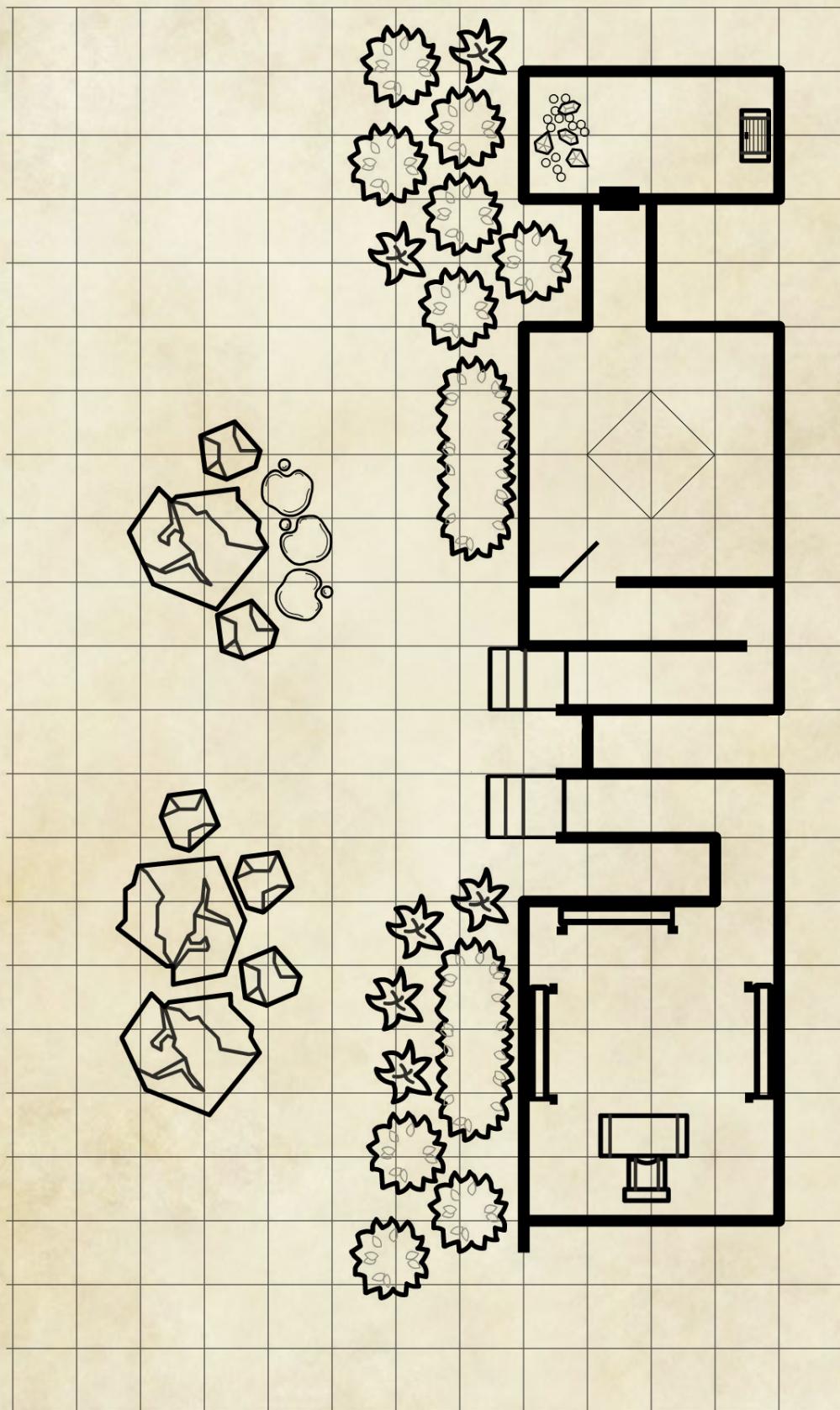


APPENDIX E: CHAIN HANDLE DESIGNS



APPENDIX F: MAPS

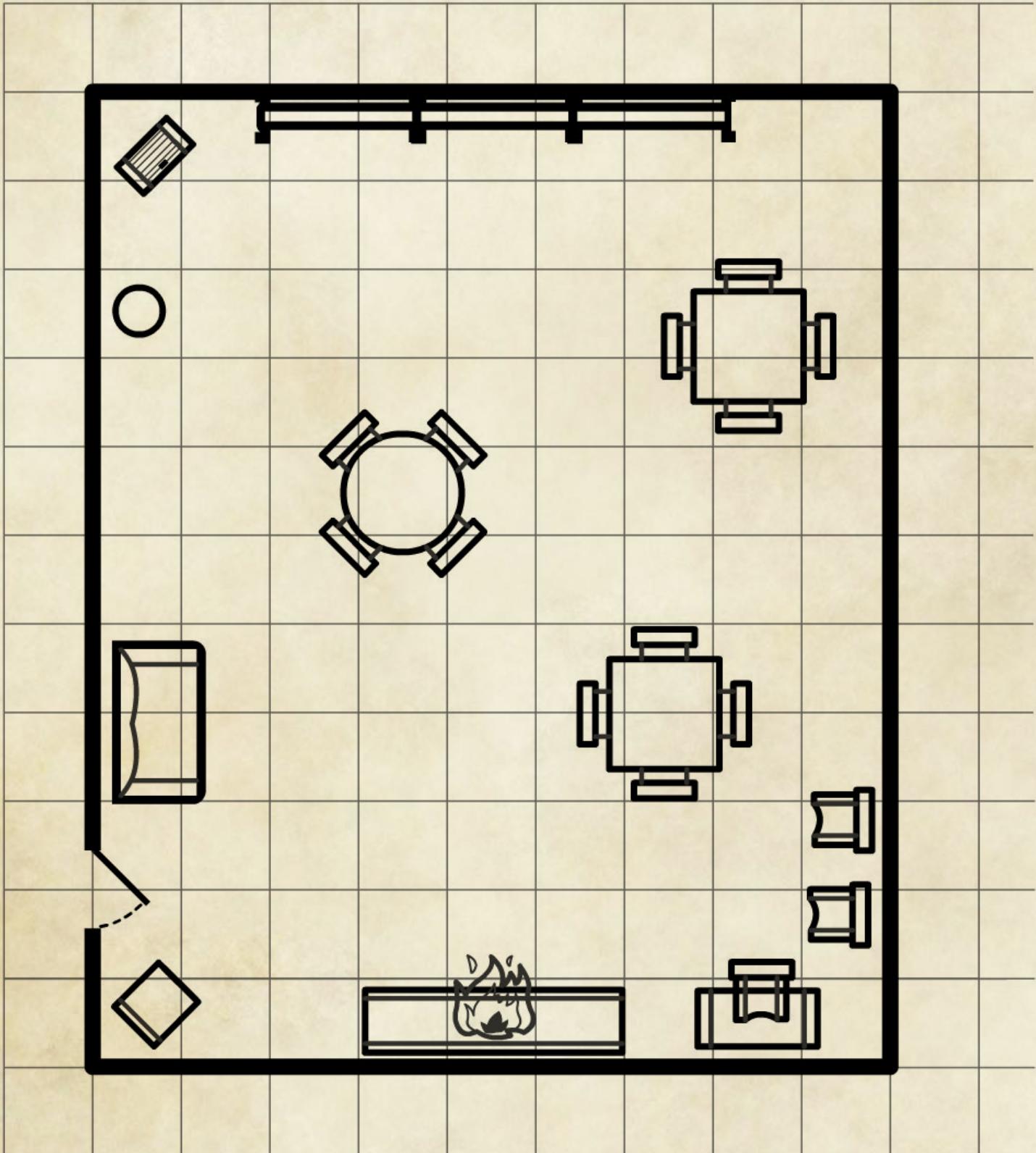
UNDER PRESSURE



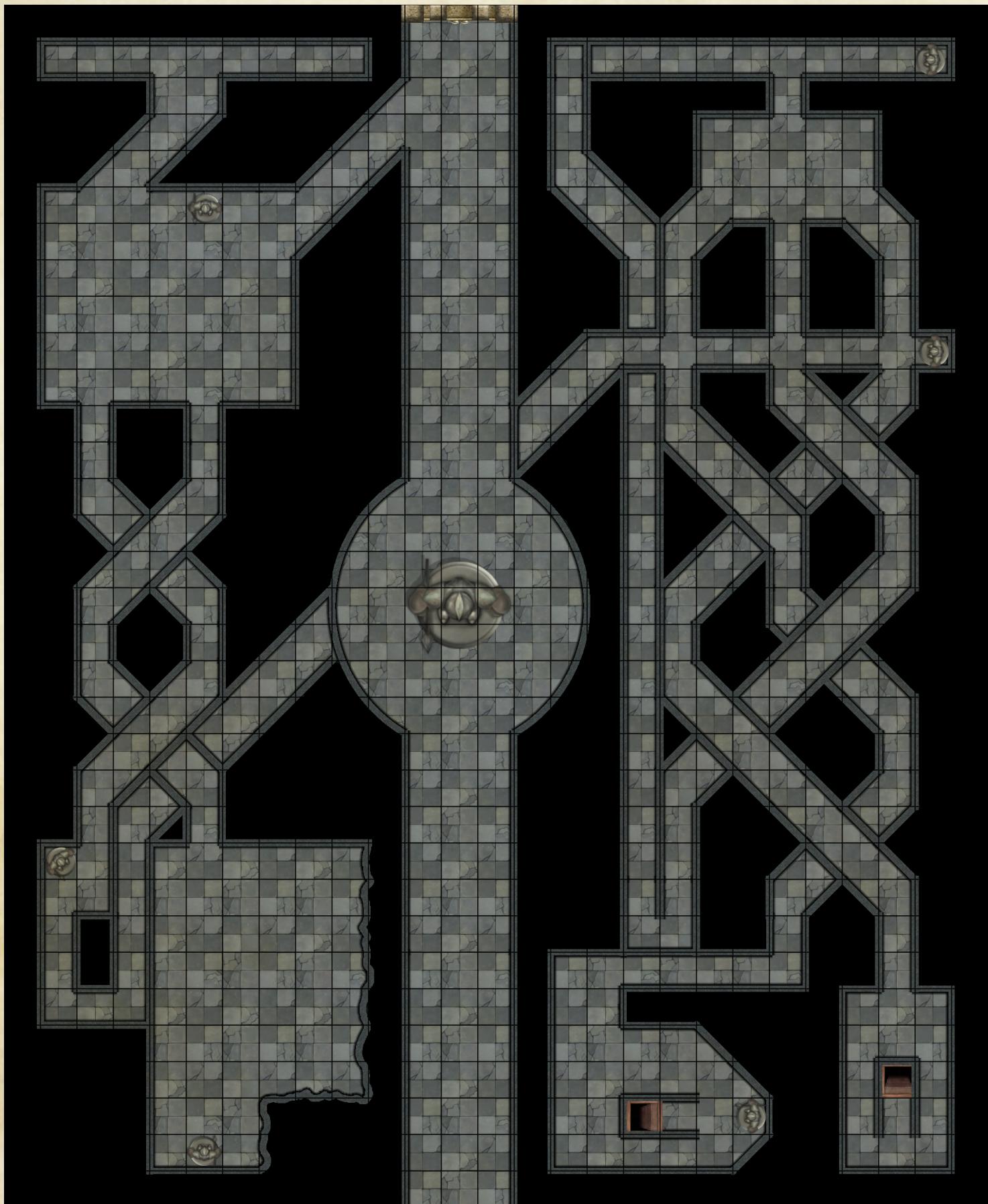
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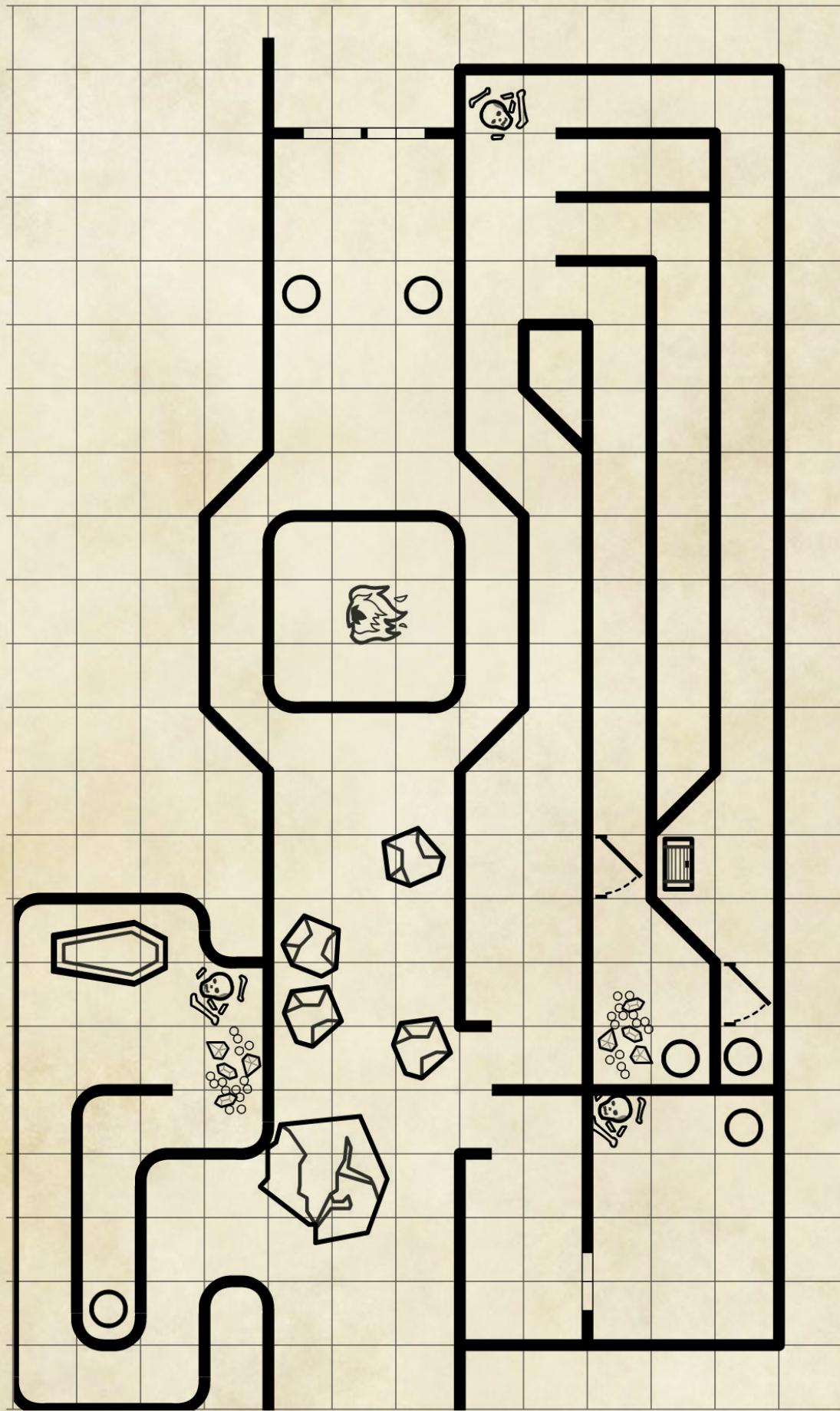
MIRROR, MIRROR B



KEY WORDS A



KEY WORDS B



A CHALLENGE OF WITS AND REASON

Adventurers need much more than just brute force, magical powers, and nimble moves in order to survive the dangers that await them. A sharp mind is just as important as a sharp sword. When faced with a challenging puzzle, finding the solution can be the difference between victory and defeat.

Puzzles, Predicaments, and Perplexities contains a collection of logic puzzles, brain teasers, and encoded sequences intended to test the problem solving and deductive reasoning of characters and players. These puzzles are designed to be easily placed into any adventure with no additional work, yet also provide guidance on how Dungeon Masters can customize the details to best fit into their own campaigns.

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