

2015 Dodecahedron Cartographic Review

Writing, Layout, Cartography, Cover Design and all that other stuff
DYSON LOGOS

This represents a curated collection of the maps posted to my blog, Dyson's Dodecahedron, over 2015. In the curating process I spent a lot of time hemming and hawing over what maps would make the cut. In the end I don't think I cut any maps from the collection - I even included the Return to the Lair of the Frogs map which I think is particularly weak and unbecoming for this collection.

The only maps that I drew and put on the blog in 2015 that didn't make it into this book are the maps from the Dyson MegaDelve. Since the MegaDelve was spread over 2014 and 2015, and I still haven't drawn up the wandering monster tables for almost all of it, I figured I would hold off on its release until they are ready to go out the door as a complete set.

2015 was a year where I played with the idea of several releases, but in the end I put out nothing except many more maps. In all I drew around 120 maps in 2015 (some for commissions that didn't appear on the blog, some that just never made the cut to get scanned, and some that went out as gifts to friends without ever seeing the scanner).

The big story of 2015 was what made all these maps possible without a commercial release along the way - the Patreon campaign. Launched in late 2013, the Patreon campaign allows (encourages? begs?) fans and supporters of the Dodecahedron to throw a bit of money my way with each map released. The generosity of these patrons has allowed me the creative space to create at a level I've not had the option to work at before - dedicating a significant part of my time towards drawing and documenting these maps. It has also brought significant change to the mapping process for me - giving me the money to buy higher quality pens and papers and since I'm mapping at home instead of on the road all the time, the ability to work with larger media than the majority of my old maps which were drawn in a 4" x 6" cahier.

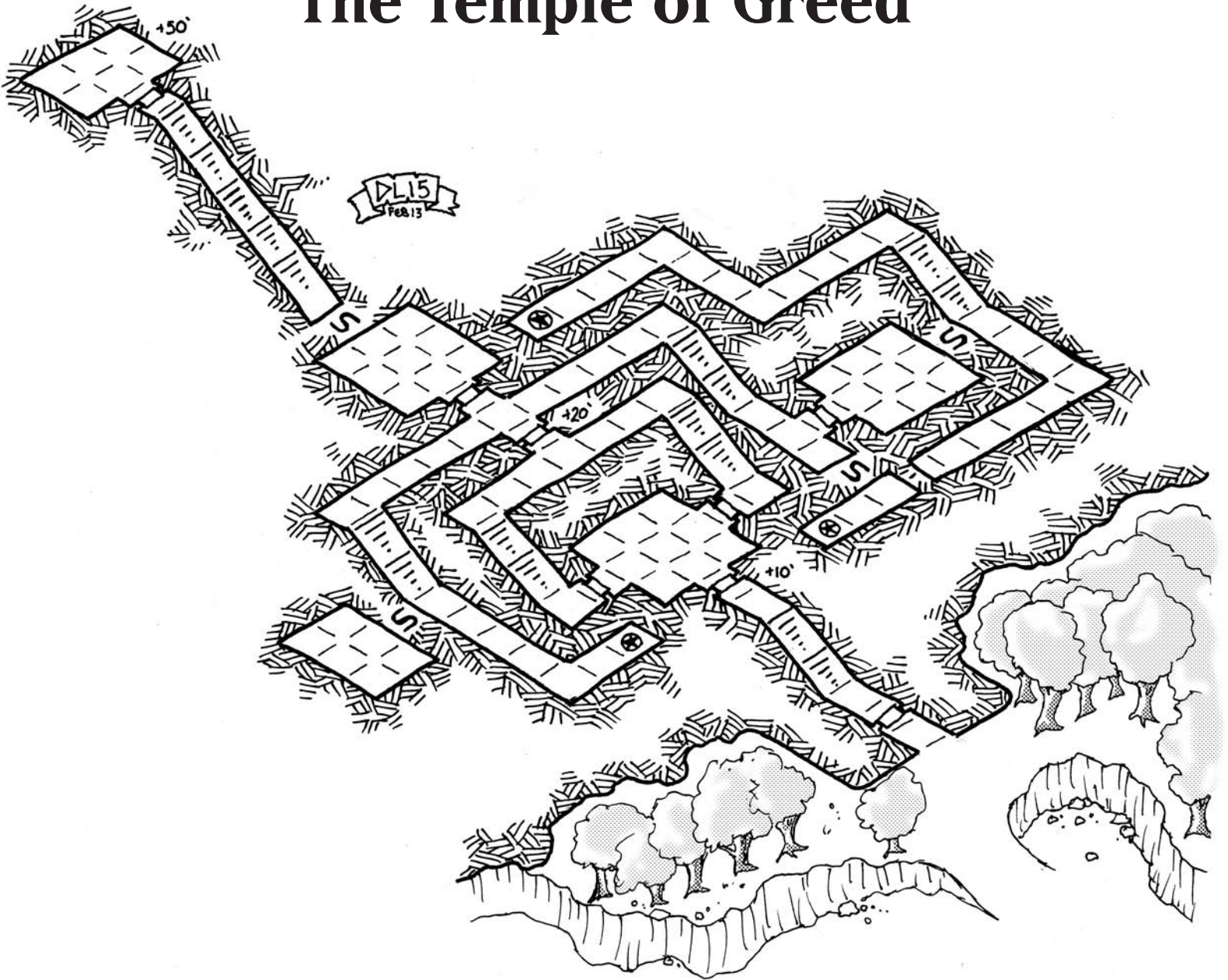
And these changes show up in the finished work. The works in this book are significantly more detailed, larger, and often tackle on bigger and weirder projects than I would have previously.

So thank you for supporting me into this new year.



DYSON LOGOS
Jan 04 2016

The Temple of Greed



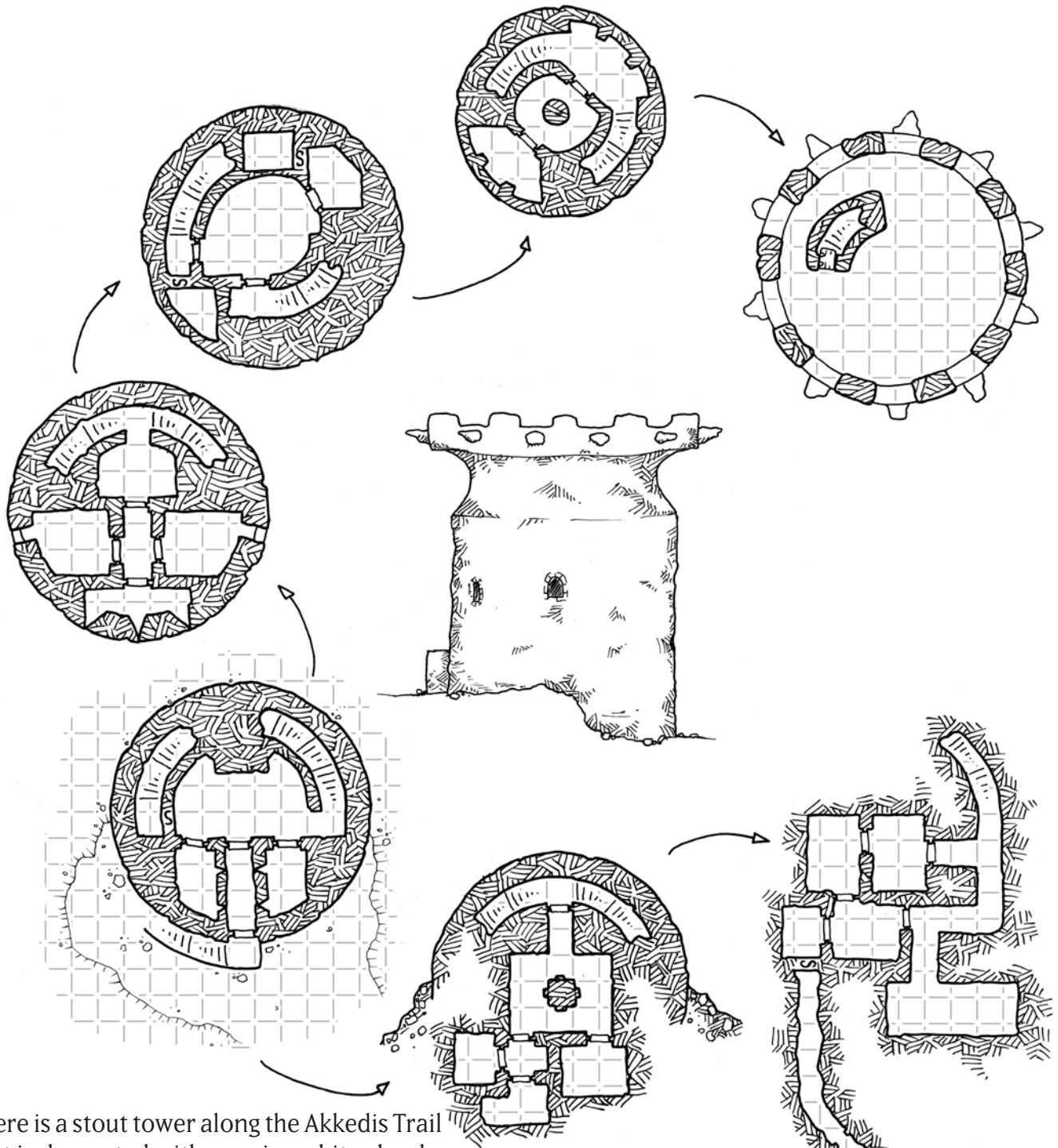
I received four pads of isometric graph paper from my girlfriend for Christmas (three letter-sized and one ledger – which is far too big for my scanner). Throughout 2015 I drew a number of maps using these pads that appear in this volume.

One important trick I've learned though is to avoid "overlap" between the areas on the map, which generally means making sure that stuff on the upper left is at higher or equal elevations to areas on the lower right.

Also, adding a grid is not as simple as with my regular maps. In the end I had to take the original map, draw the grid directly onto the temple floors, and then rescan it to get the version above.

This map was originally drawn for Daniel "Thaumi-el Nerub" Neffling's D-oom Products for his module "the Temple of Greed" - an adventure of tricks, traps and puzzles without any combat whatsoever.

Titan's Teeth



There is a stout tower along the Akkedis Trail that is decorated with massive white chunks of stone along its battlements. To those who pass through its shadow on the trail it has become known as either the Crown of Teeth, or the Titan's Teeth.

It is said that the "teeth" were pulled from the ancient corpse of a primordial titan of wind and sight. The same tales would claim that the teeth confer some of the titan's powers to those who stand atop the tower, granting the ability to see

incredible distances and to accurately shoot at twice or three times the normal range of a longbow.

The Titan's Teeth has four levels above ground (plus the battlements) one level half underground and a final "dungeon" level underground that contains a secret passage to the surface some distance away.



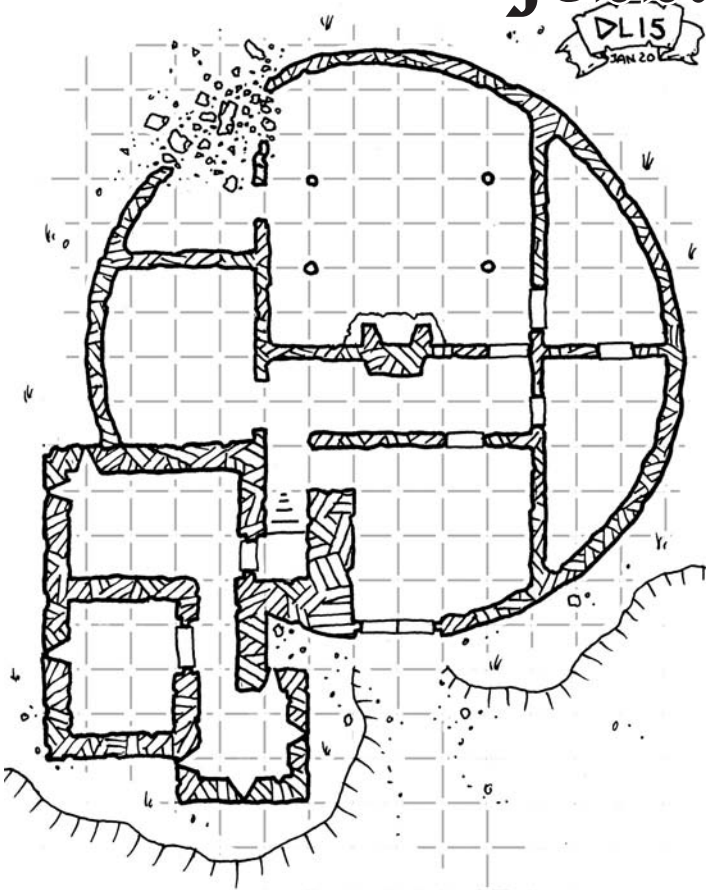
The Summoner's Lair

While there will always be wizards who are popular due to their fireworks and other magical manifestations, there are others who find no solace in civilized society. Necromancers, demonologists, witches and practitioners of foul arts.

This small hillside excavation is the lair of such a wizard, witch or warlock. One who keeps generally to themselves, along with perhaps an apprentice or a skilled swordsman along with a few additional toughs who can handle most problems should they arise.

This map was drawn using Sakura Micron pens (a 03 for the walls, a 01 for doors and crosshatching and such, and a 005 for fine detail work) in an A6 wi-ro-bound gamer's notebook from Squarehex (a really lovely and tough notebook perfect for carrying around and drawing in while at meetings, in waiting rooms and so on).

Jebbal's Tor

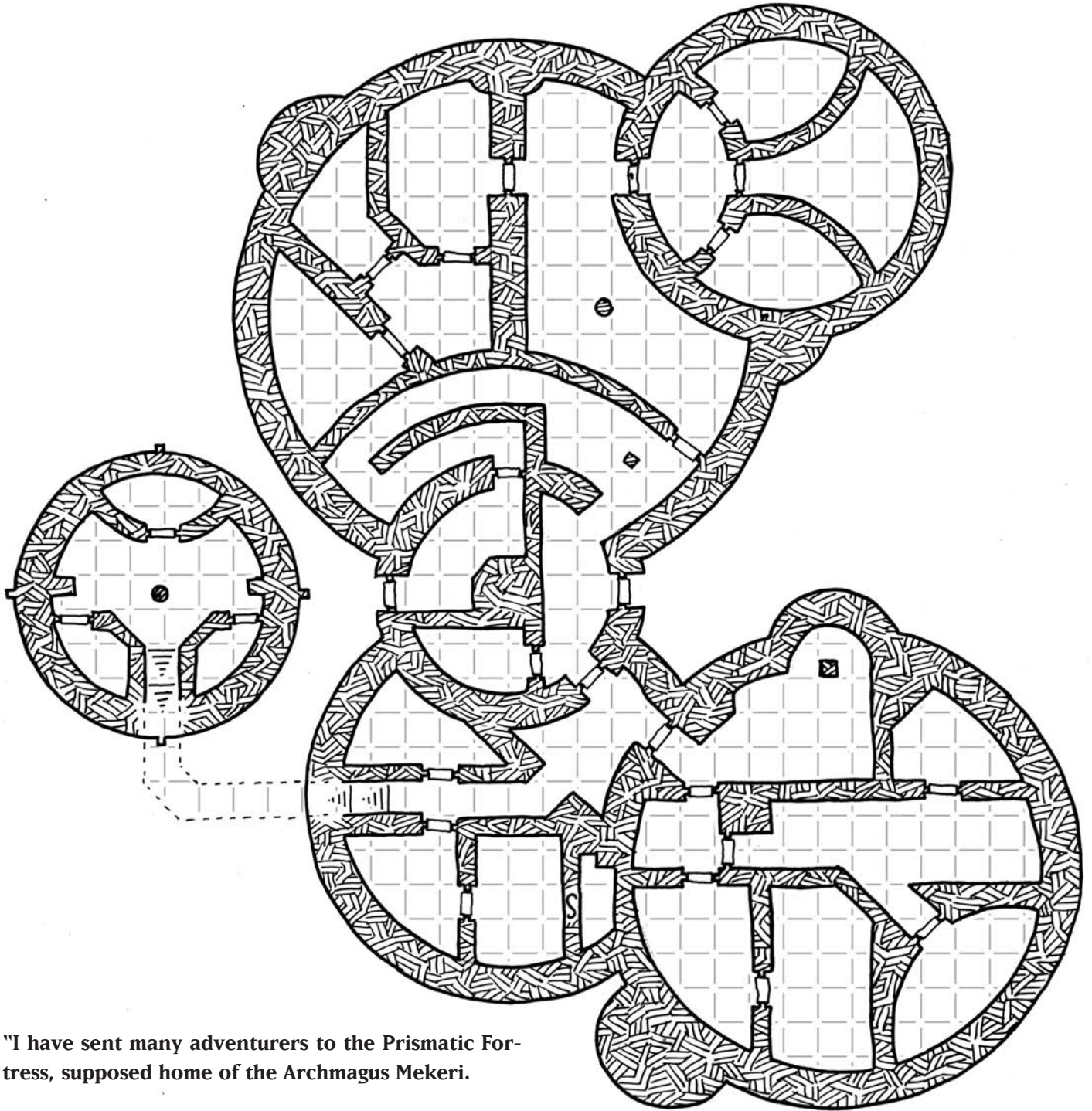


The nomad tribes are rarely united and even more rarely build anything resembling permanent constructions. The trade city at Leaping Falls, for instance, was entirely made of tents prior to foreign investment and construction in order to maintain trade alliances with the various tribes.

Thus Jebbal's Tor stands out on the plains, a small stone tower attached to a stone recreation of a traditional round house, both sitting on a low hill, squatting over miles of flat herdlands.

Jebbal's Tor was traditionally used when the soothsayers and priests of the tribes needed to confer on matters of great spiritual import for their peoples. Gatherings were recorded here after the starfall in the Year of Mad Horses, and when the priests gathered together to usurp the power of Dorreth the Demon Caller who was intimidating the tribal leaders into line with his foul sorceries.

The Prismatic Fortress



"I have sent many adventurers to the Prismatic Fortress, supposed home of the Archmagus Mekeru.

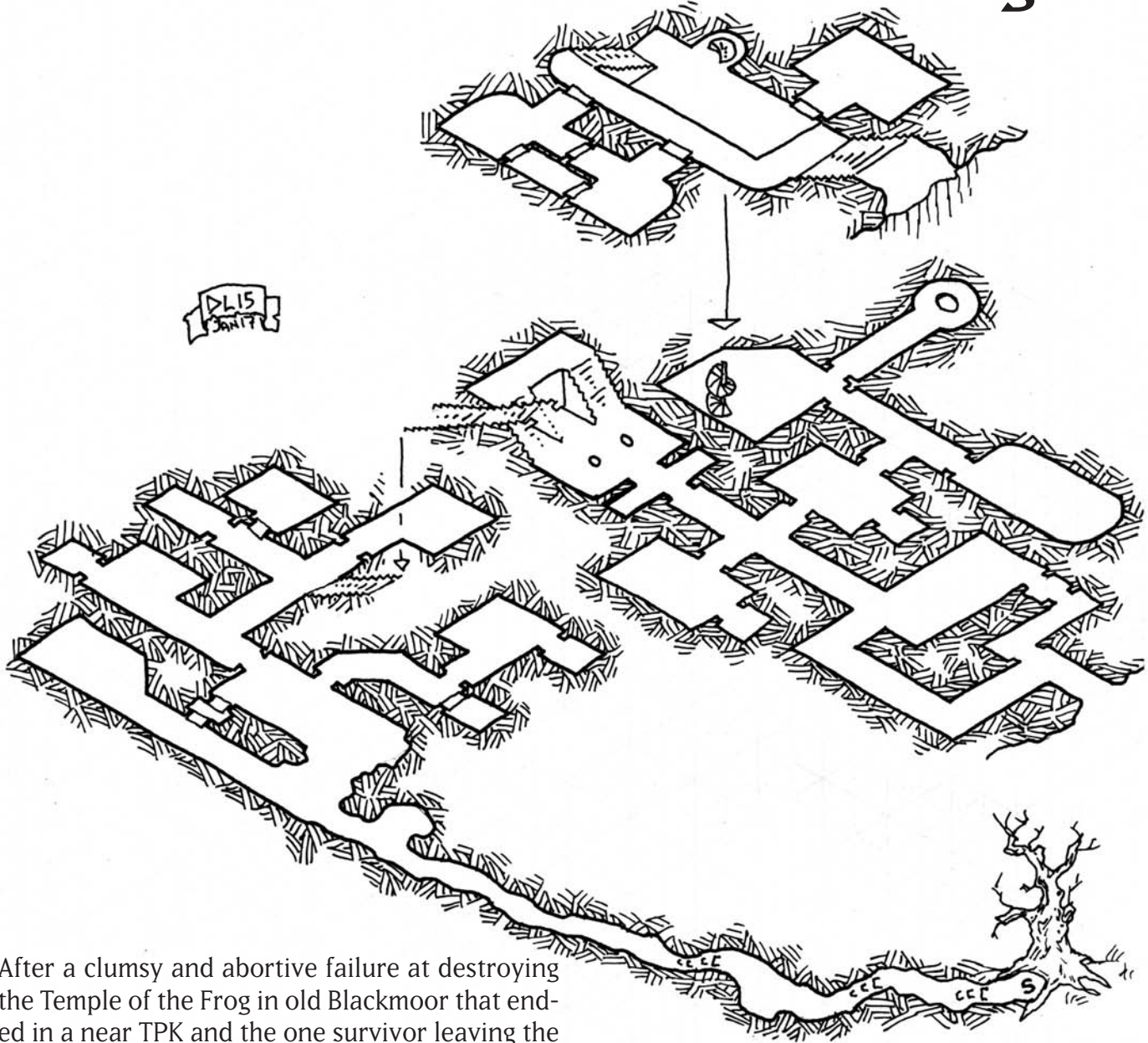
While some have returned, even bearing the partially completed map shown below, none can even explain the contents of even the first chamber of their explorations... It is as if the fortress defends itself not with traps or guards, but by attacking the minds and memories of those who breach its walls."

I drew this map just as I was finishing up the various dwarven city maps for the Dyson Mega Delve. I was in a deep need for something to rebel against

the heavy square grid-based architecture of those levels, so I pulled out a compass and started working on this map.

I envision it as a series of strange bubbles of shiny crystalline stone. Not quite perfectly spherical, as if it was grown or bubbled up from the ground instead of having been constructed in more traditional means.

Return to the Lair of the Frogs



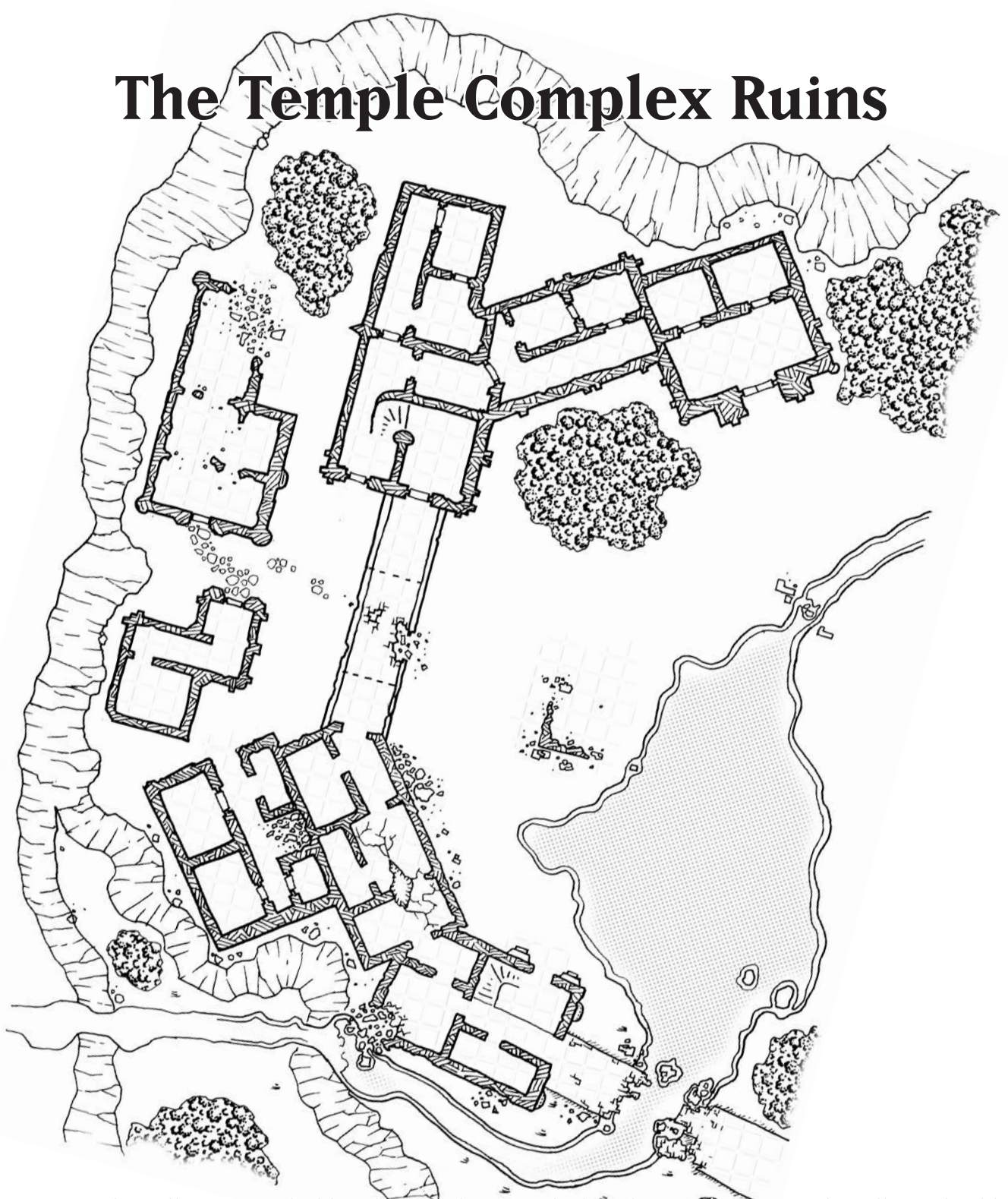
After a clumsy and abortive failure at destroying the Temple of the Frog in old Blackmoor that ended in a near TPK and the one survivor leaving the region to find work as a short-order cook (seriously!), the frog-like humanoids and their giant frog companions became something of a nuisance critter in one campaign.

The Lair of the Frogs was a low-level adventure to launch a new campaign for those same players that flubbed the Temple of the Frog. It's an old hill fortress and temple that has been long abandoned and now taken over by the frogs. The upper level is mostly abandoned, even by the frogs, except as a guard post (most of the guards end up being more concerned with catching flies and entertaining themselves than actually watching for people approaching the main entrance to the temple.

The main level of the temple is lived in by the lowest-ranking of the frogs. It's the lower level, accessible through the main level or through the secret entrance in the roots of a rotted-out tree in the swamp that contains a majority of the frogs. The lower level is very damp and nasty, and the doors have either rotted away or are stuck so firmly that the frogs can't be bothered to open them.

In the original adventure here, the frogs were keeping their prisoners on the ground level of the temple (near the well room in the North West corner of that level), so the party didn't have to go into the heart of the frog-infested basement.

The Temple Complex Ruins



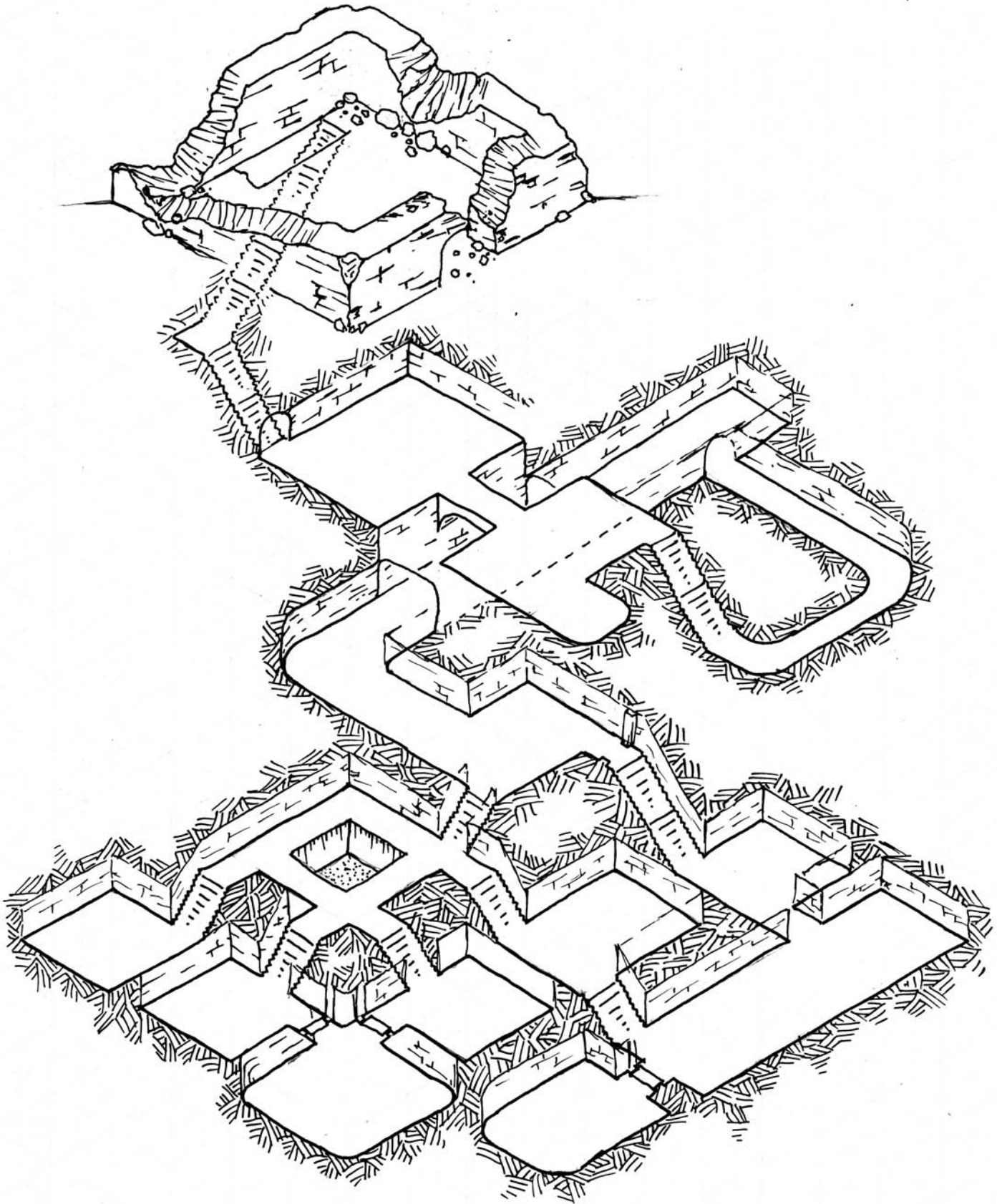
Ancient temples fallen to ruin hidden deep in the jungle. Sounds like the setup for any number of pulp adventures and one I haven't drawn nearly enough of (although I've run a fair number of adventures over the years with this exact premise... or the "twist" of it being an ancient palace instead of a temple).

I'm not sure how well I got my mental image across in this map in the end. The idea is that the front-most two buildings on the left are two stories tall

with their lower stories mostly collapsed rubble, and the central piece being a second-story bridge that connects the two sides. But regardless of the success or failure of getting that multi-level vision across, the final map is still one I quite like and look forward to using in a game...

Perhaps the more intact structures on the right are intact because they are not only away from the water, but they are riddled with traps and magics that keep local looters away.

Beneath Crovet's Tower



Not much is left of Crovet's Tower. But the stairwell to the dungeons beneath was cleared of rubble by holy templars of the church seeking stolen

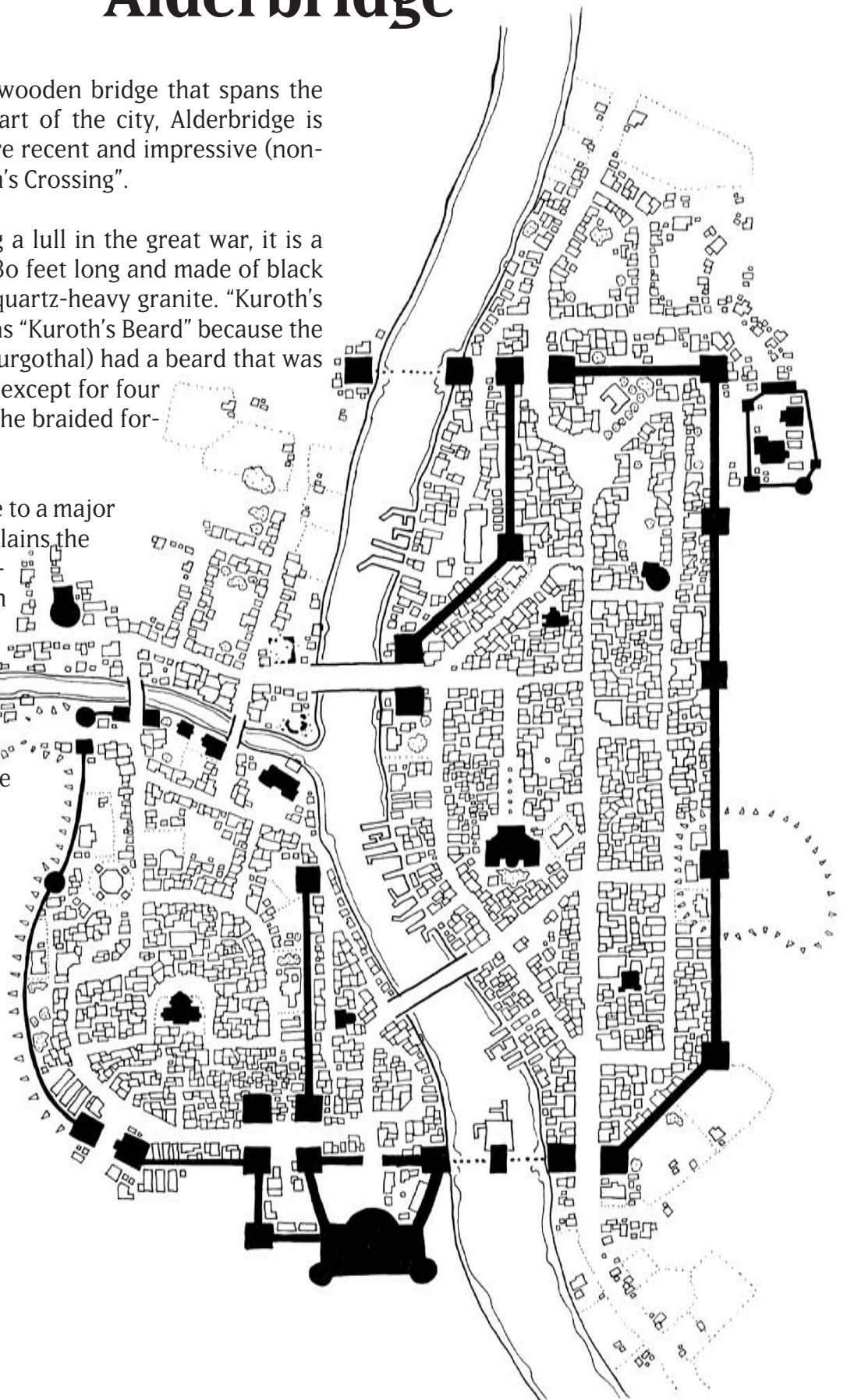
relics a decade ago, and since then who knows what strange beasts (or worse – human cultists!) may have turned this into their home?

Alderbridge

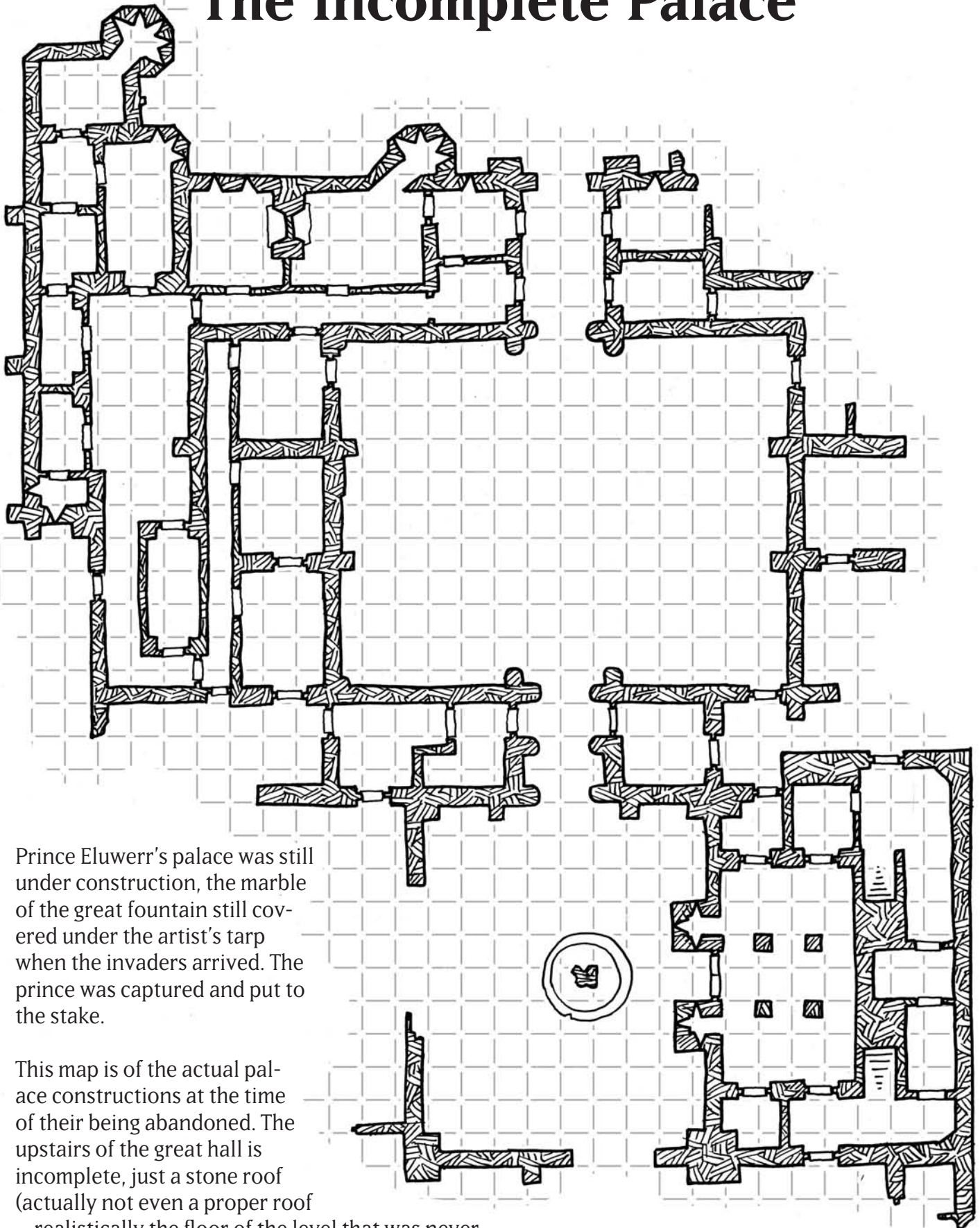
Named for the massive wooden bridge that spans the Merrow River in the heart of the city, Alderbridge is better known for its more recent and impressive (non-wooden) span – “Kurroth’s Crossing”.

Made by dwarves during a lull in the great war, it is a good 60 feet wide and 180 feet long and made of black metal and nearly white quartz-heavy granite. “Kuroth’s Crossing” is also known as “Kuroth’s Beard” because the head engineer (Kuroth Burgothal) had a beard that was almost as white as snow except for four long bands of black that he braided forward prominently.

Alderbridge is quite close to a major granite quarry which explains the number of fortified structures in the city (drawn in black). It is further fortified by the small enclave to the south of the city proper. This sub-fortress is the Alderbridge Scholastica – a school of wizardry, magics and astrology.



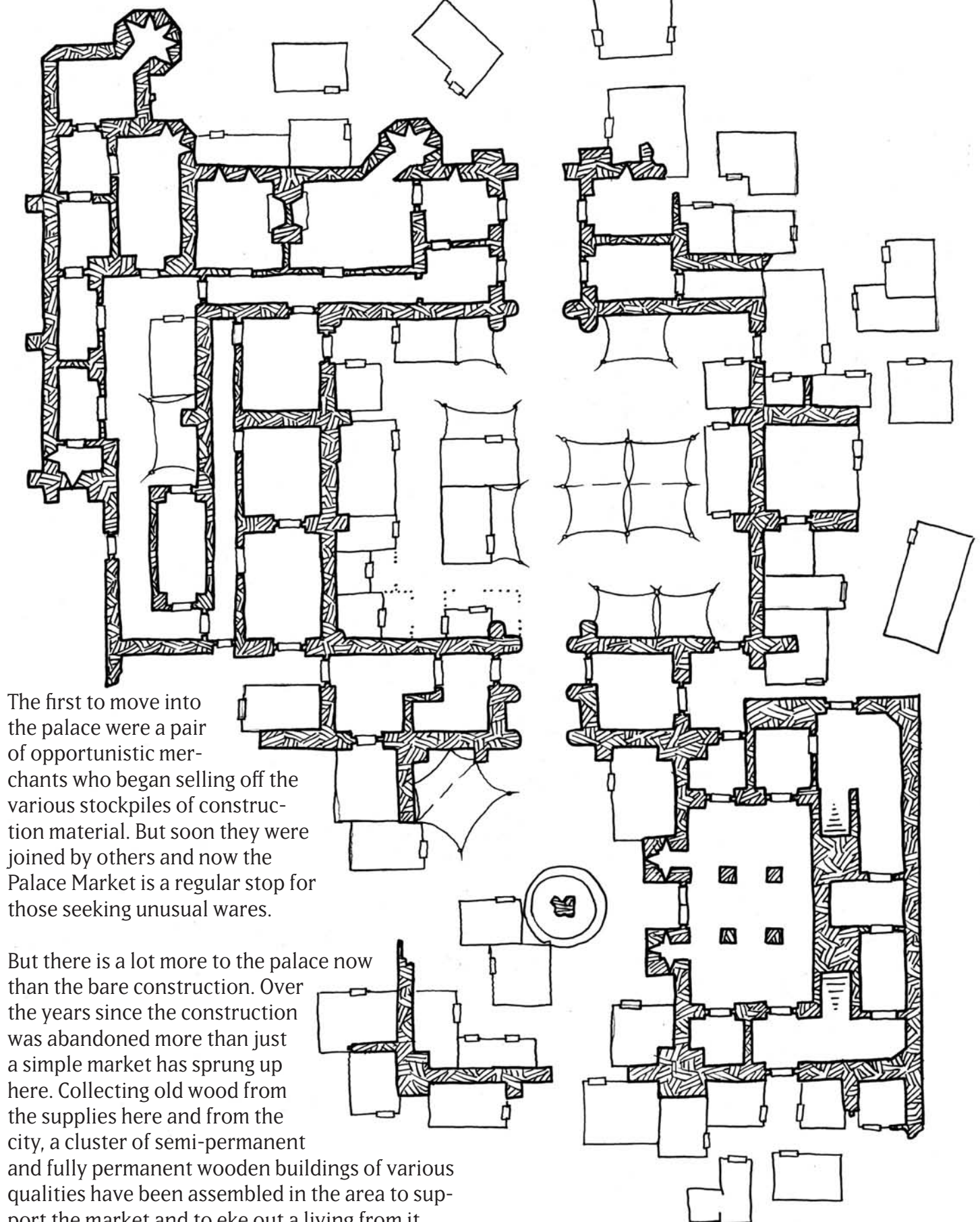
The Incomplete Palace



Prince Eluwerr's palace was still under construction, the marble of the great fountain still covered under the artist's tarp when the invaders arrived. The prince was captured and put to the stake.

This map is of the actual palace constructions at the time of their being abandoned. The upstairs of the great hall is incomplete, just a stone roof (actually not even a proper roof – realistically the floor of the level that was never built) that collects bird shit and rain year-round.

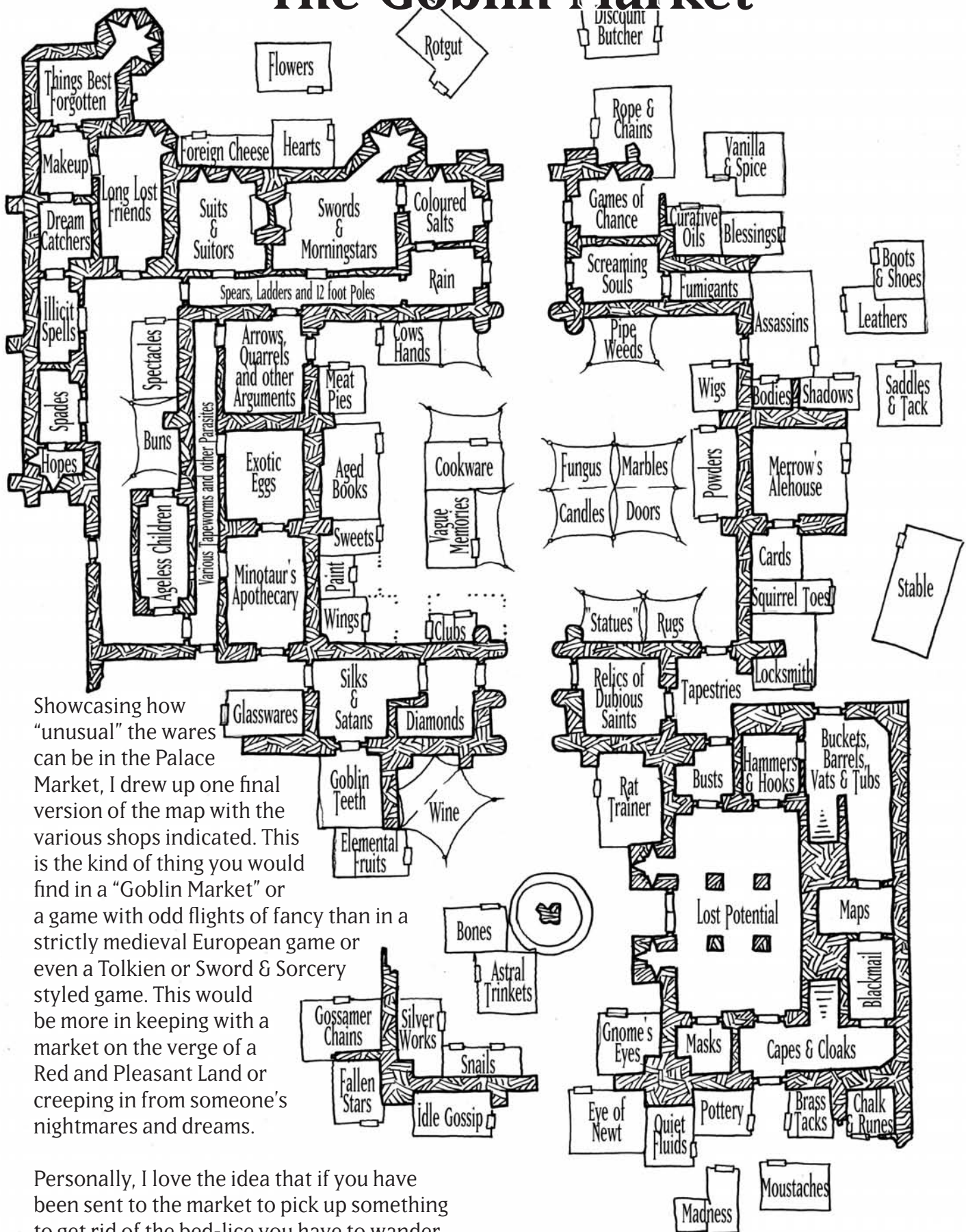
The Palace Market



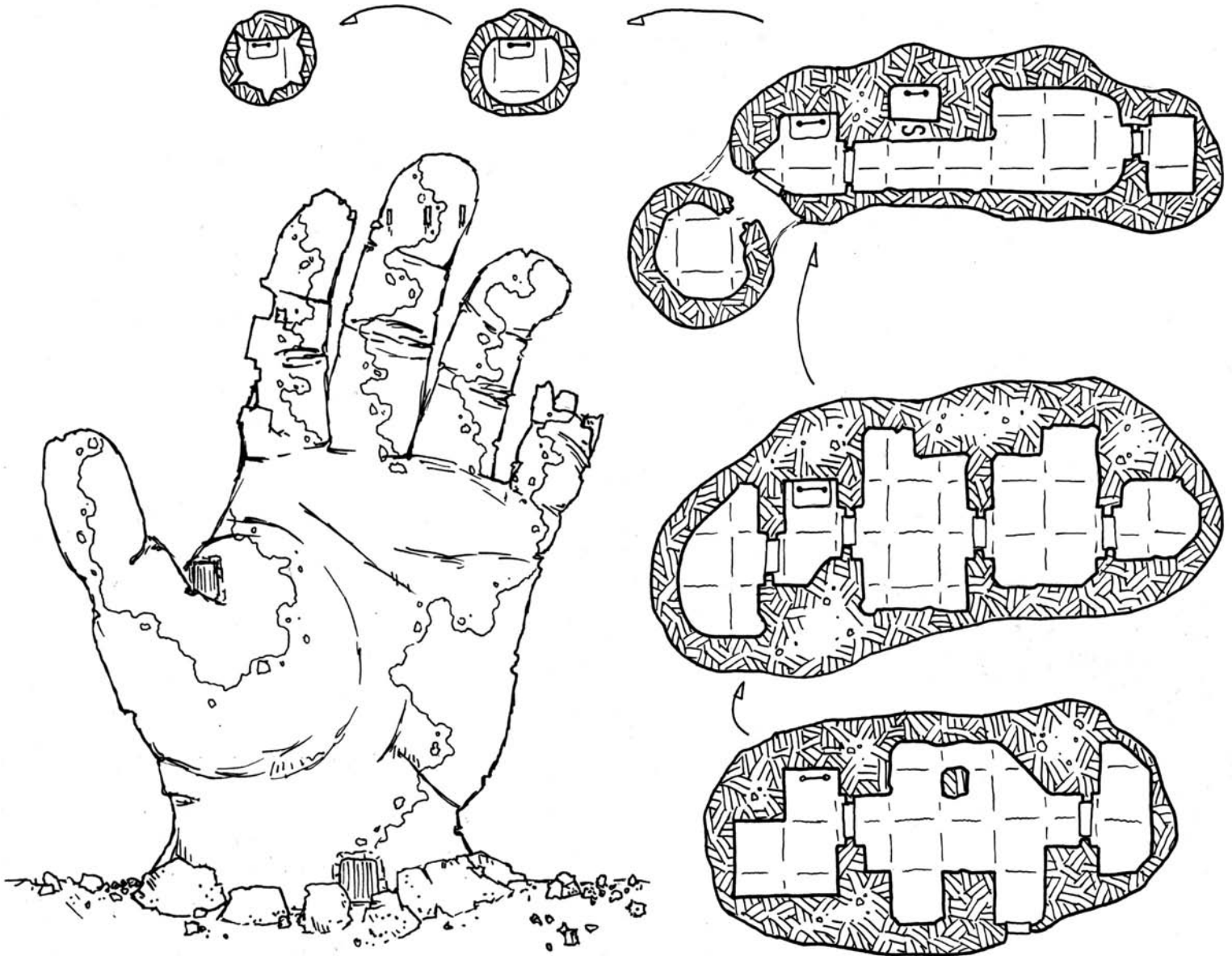
The first to move into the palace were a pair of opportunistic merchants who began selling off the various stockpiles of construction material. But soon they were joined by others and now the Palace Market is a regular stop for those seeking unusual wares.

But there is a lot more to the palace now than the bare construction. Over the years since the construction was abandoned more than just a simple market has sprung up here. Collecting old wood from the supplies here and from the city, a cluster of semi-permanent and fully permanent wooden buildings of various qualities have been assembled in the area to support the market and to eke out a living from it.

The Goblin Market



The Stone Sinister



Every now and again I go to my patrons at the \$2.50 level and up and ask for ideas for upcoming maps. I don't guarantee that they will get done or even incorporated into a map, but sometimes one just jumps out and grabs my imagination like a great big hand.

Like this great big hand.

A massive stone hand of a nigh-unbelievable scale, the Stone Sinister appears to be the grasping hand of some massive giant pushing out of the ground. Maybe the result of strange magics (or a titan fumbling a saving throw against a cockatrice), or just

as likely a piece of obscure architecture, the Sinister is partially hollow with multiple levels linked together by a ladder that runs up along the inside of the back of the hand in line with the pointer finger.

Only the pinky, thumb and middle fingers have been hollowed out. The thumb is seldom used for anything, and the pinky collapsed opening the chamber beneath it to the elements. The middle finger, however, has its own secret ladder that leads up to two levels within it, the top having a series of narrow windows or arrow slits built into it as an observation turret.

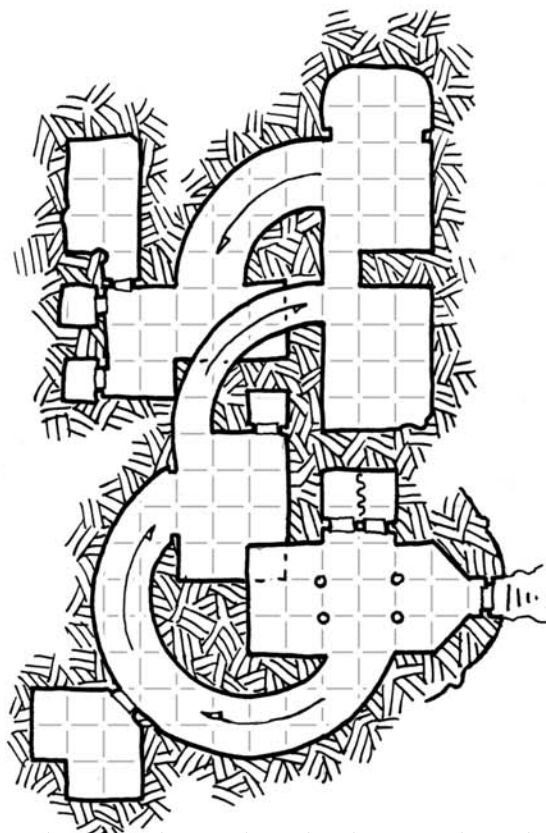
Dark Spire through Salted Lands



Cratered plains of salt cover the land to the alkali-seas, pierced like nipples by spikes of basalt, obsidian and glasslike metamorphic rock. The craters collect the rains and are home to base creatures and the snail lords. Sorcerer kings of the crater states, the snail lords watch over the salt flats, occasionally reaching out to extend their crater state's power, or their own.

Scholars write about civilizations that came before, but who would believe that any others than the mighty snail lords have ever ruled over these expanses of salt. The crater states claim thousands of years of rule over the dessication, unsullied, uncontested. Quiet. Interrupted only when one crater state raises shell against another in a slow motion struggle for resources, fine salts, slaves, or base desire.

The snail lords rule by arcane right. They bear the weight of millennia of pacts with strange outsiders and precursors that grant them their magic. They bear arms with skill and are born to armour. They decorate their shells with the sigils of unspeakable oaths, other worlds, and lost languages. They have

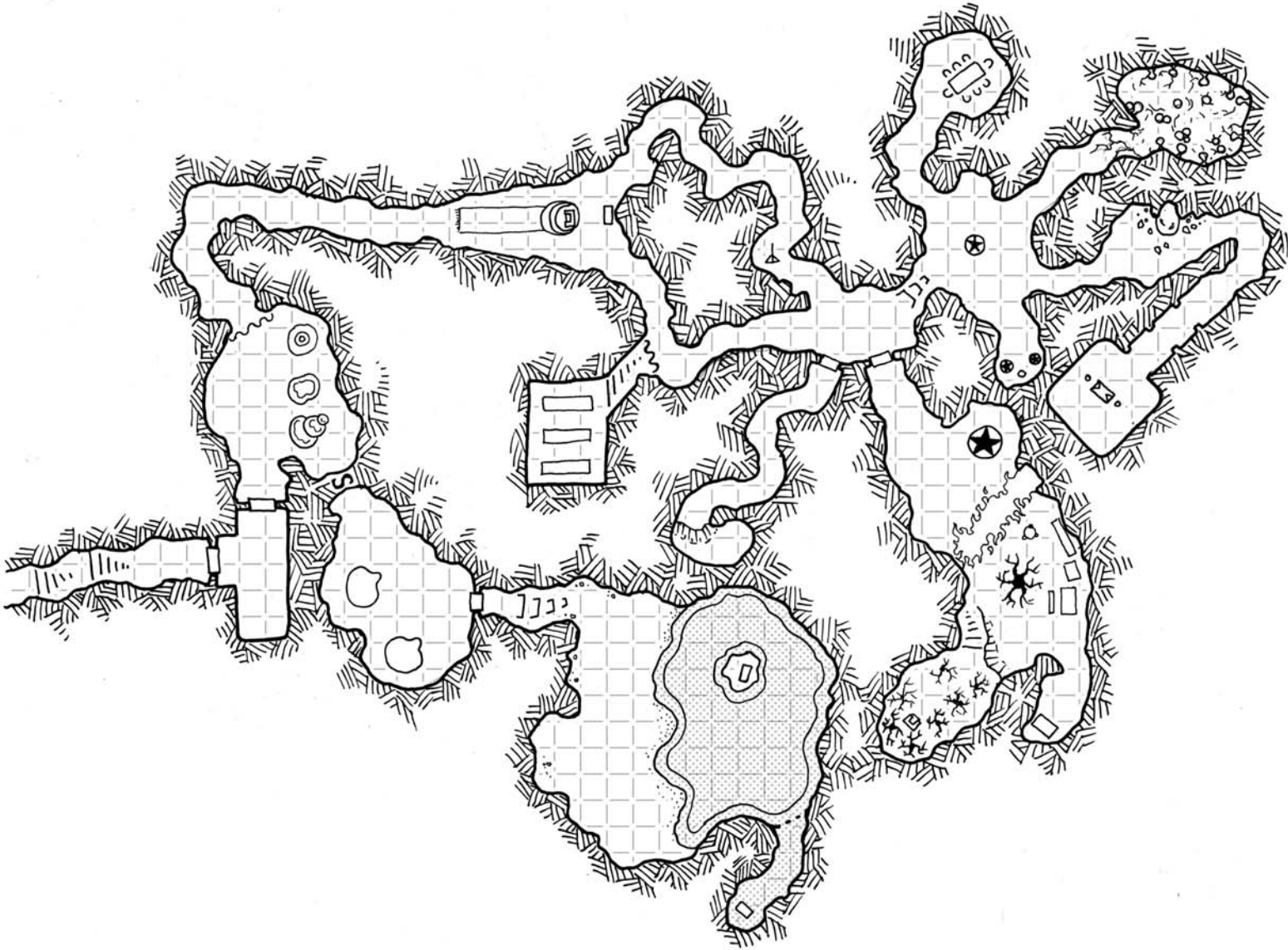


patience that can last a hundred years, but their toils are ceaseless. They rule over the base creatures of the crater states for without their rule, the wretches would not survive upon the flats. Together with their thralls they build great sloping towers out of bonded sand and crystals and reinforce the walls of their craters to defend their domains.

Other races live within their domains, not as thralls to the snail lords but neither with dominion over the base creatures of the crater states. Creatures alien-seeming even to the snail lords – floating sheets of sentient cloth, pillars of light, hovering crystals and sadistic toad women among them.

This spire, jammed up through the salts is home to one of those other races, known as “The Embodiments of Faith in Lost Ideals”. They appear as pillars of light and would best be described as “paladins” of this age of salt. This particular spire has had a structure built into it, descending beneath the salt flats in through the solid basalt below where the Embodiments meditate and dream about the thoughts and beliefs of others.

The Redoubt



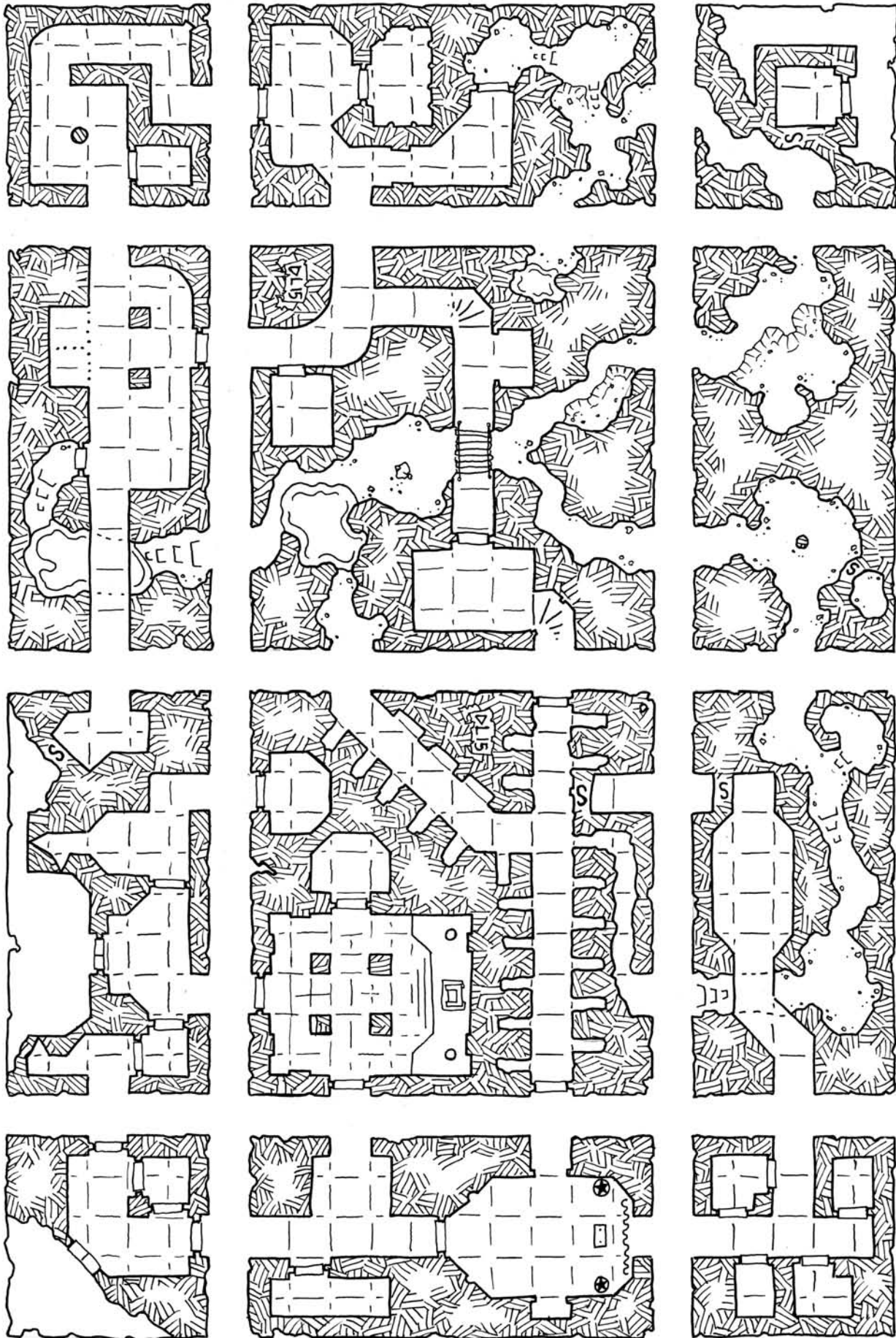
I drew this weird little cave/dungeon for Joe Johnston for his adventure module "Tranzar's Redoubt". I think the best comment on it during production is that it looks like entrails splattered on the ground, ready to be read by some crazy old coot.

It works for me because it feels like a classic D&D game — it has a secret underground lake with a small island in the middle, as well as a secret underwater tunnel. It has a room with three pools / fountains. There's weirdness and oddities including a cascading wall of fire blocking access to the far side of the "last room" of the dungeon, and even underground trees — because who doesn't love underground trees?

I think, if you really wanted to make this cover all the tropes of bizarre D&D dungeons, it would need:

- A magic throne that does weird shit (random table of weird shit?) when you sit on it.
- Trees that grow weird fruit that also produce weird effects when eaten.
- Something tentacular in the lake
- A prisoner locked up in one of the dead end areas who is either a medusa or a minor goddess or something similar (a dryad / nymph of one of the strange trees?)

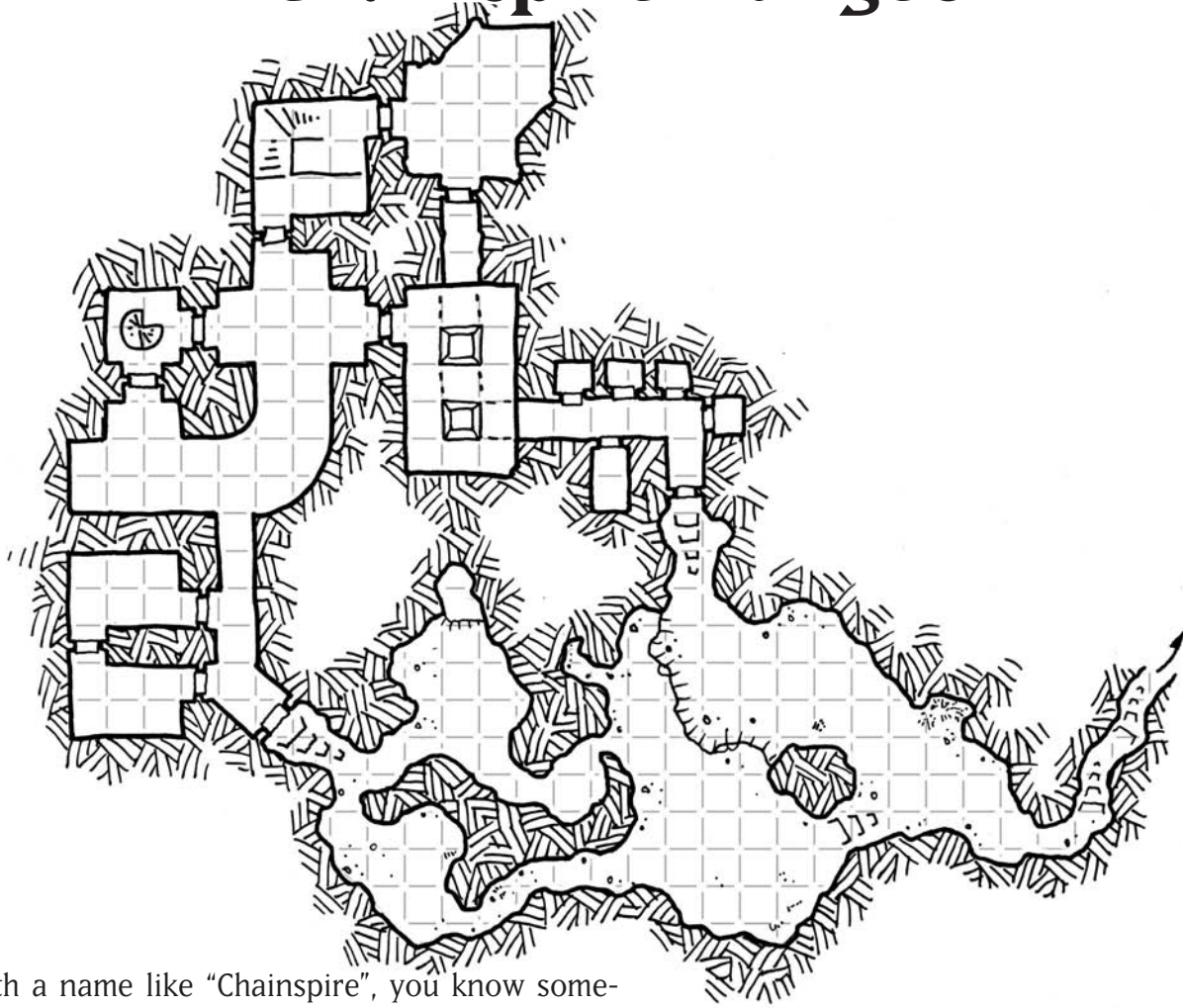
A Dungeon in 12 Parts



Chamspine Fortress

The map depicts Chamspine Fortress, a complex stone structure with multiple towers, battlements, and internal courtyards. The fortress is surrounded by a rough, irregular border representing the landscape. Key features include a large central courtyard, several smaller courtyards, and various defensive structures like towers and gates. The map is labeled with "Chamspine Fortress" at the top.

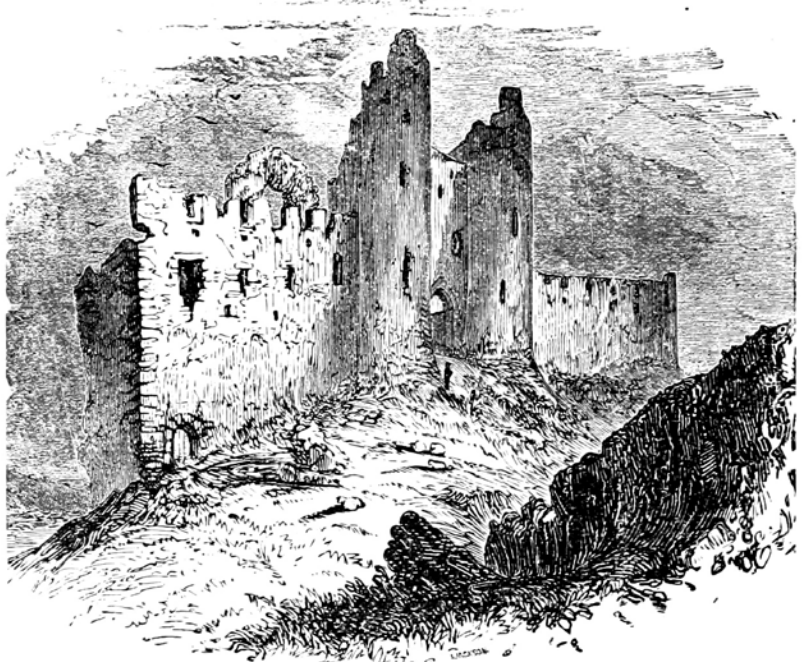
Chainspire Dungeon



With a name like “Chainspire”, you know something dark and evil has made its home here.

Chainspire Fortress was built nine hundred years ago by a tyrannical elven prince from which to watch over his holdings. It changed hands a few times since in conflict and in peacetime, and the upper walls and towers were heavily damaged during the great war. However, the majority of the structure is still sound, if not well equipped for military defense anymore. Various owners have tried renaming it, but the old name has stuck in the imaginations and memories of the populace – local and regional.

Somewhere in Chainspire Fortress is a single secret trap door not marked on any map. Beneath that trap door are the old castle dungeons and interrogation rooms. Further there are rumoured to be deeper caves that lead down and eventually out. But these places are never sought out because of the ferocious beasts that live there. Prisoners with no further value in the dungeons were typically



forced from their cells and into the old catacombs and caverns where they were promptly (and occasionally not-so-promptly) devoured.

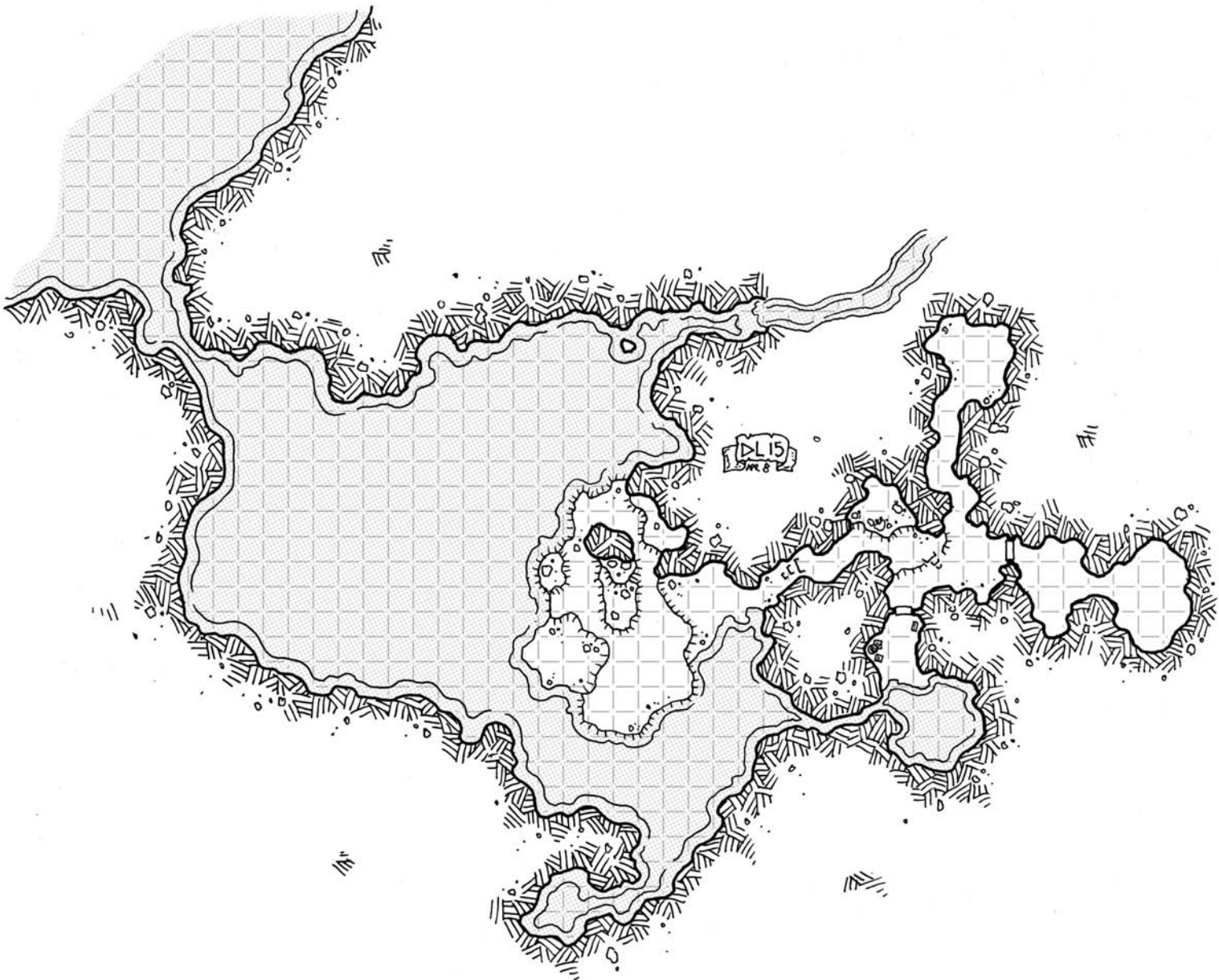
Still Grotto

From the picture I imagined a pirate boat heading into the grotto in order to unload secret treasure, a prisoner, or perhaps to pick something up. It could also make an interesting place to maroon someone who isn't a strong swimmer. Fresh water coming in from nearby falls into the ocean water on the north side of the grotto, and used to flow in through what has become the small cave complex on the east before cutting a new route.

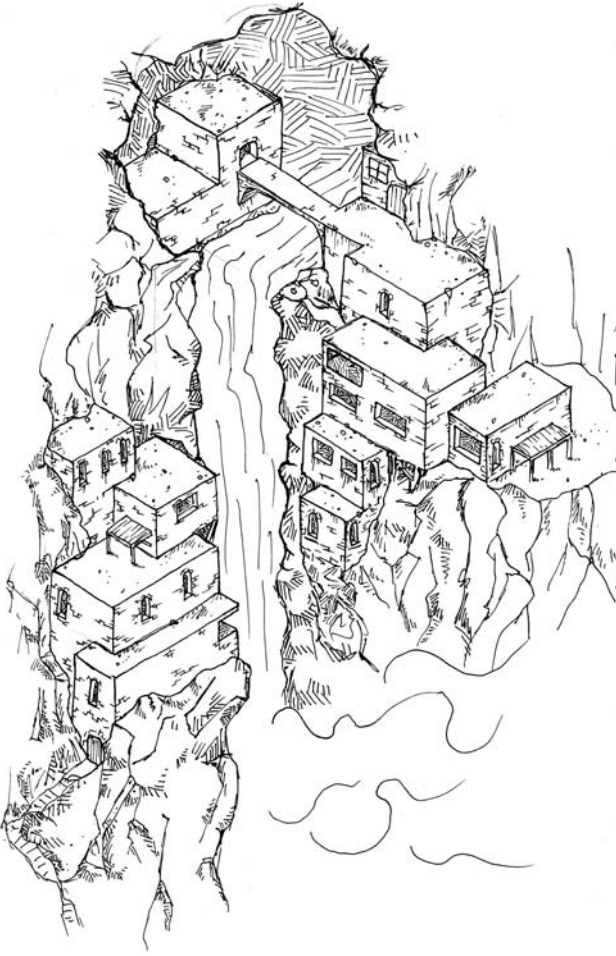
But where I think it will finally turn up in one of my games is the summer lair of a dragon trying to "escape the heat" figuratively and literally. A dragon that perhaps hatched here or used this as a lair in its youth and has retreated here after its regular lair (more suited to its larger size) was ransacked



by adventurers and dragon hunters, trying to recover and keep its head low until autumn when it plans to search out a better lair, further away, and preferably with something tastier than fish to hunt.



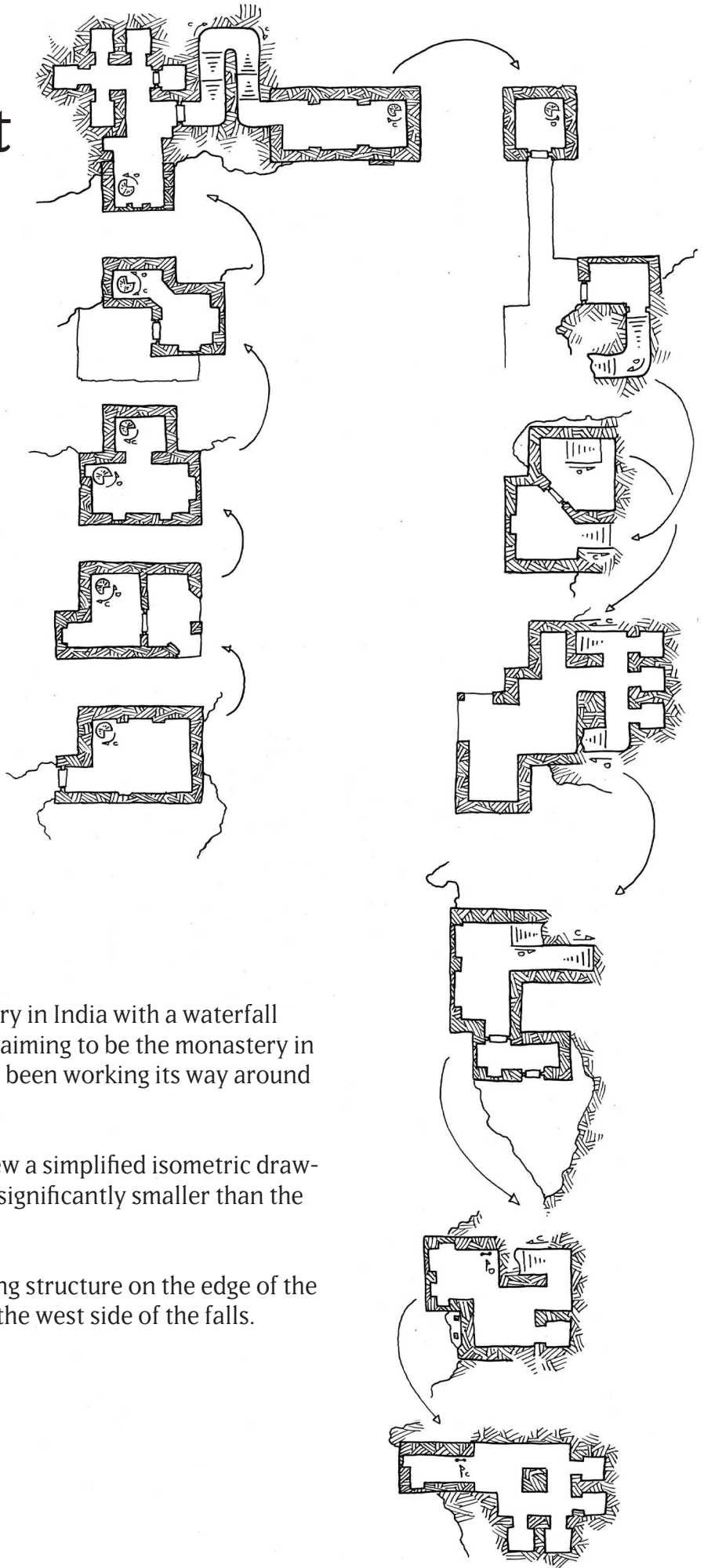
Kabus' Retreat



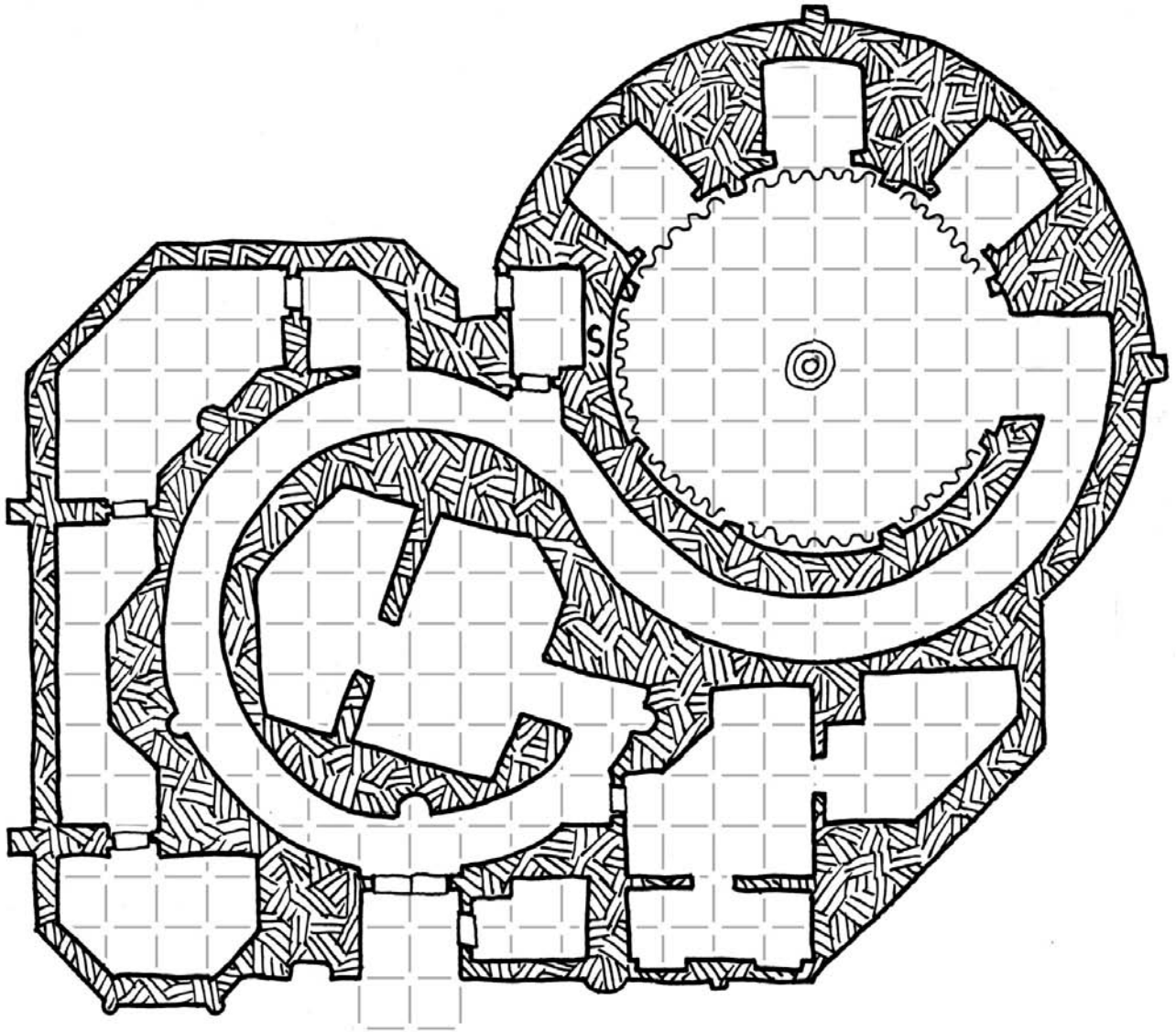
A bad photoshop of the Phuktal Monastery in India with a waterfall added to it to ridiculous effect (usually claiming to be the monastery in question during the typhoon season) has been working its way around the internet for a couple of years.

Based on that photoshopped image, I drew a simplified isometric drawing of the structures (on the left) - albeit significantly smaller than the actual monastery.

The only entrance to this strange teetering structure on the edge of the falls is a doorway on the lowest level on the west side of the falls.



The Spiral Temple



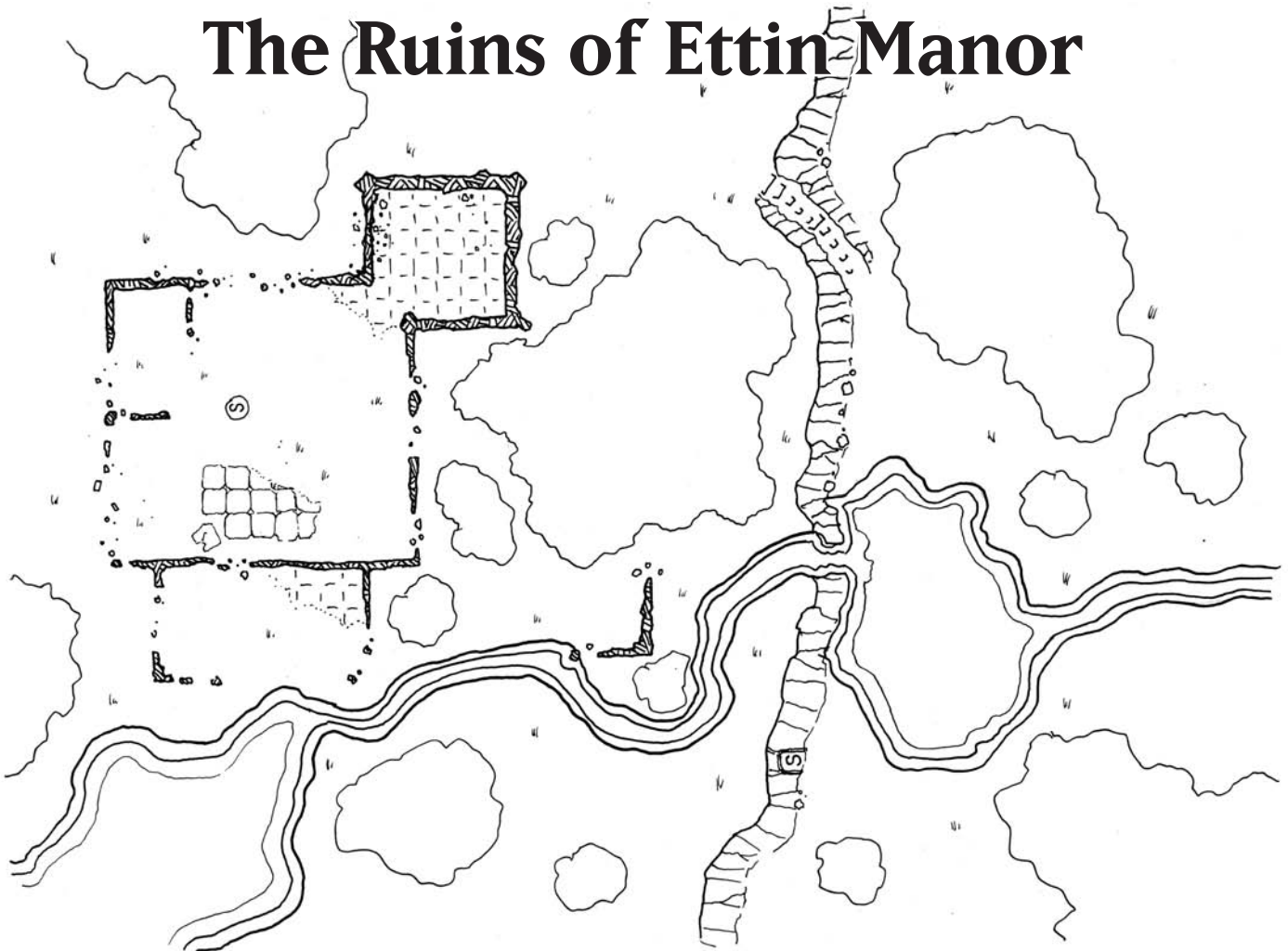
Inspired by some recent dungeon designs and geomorphs by Nate McD over on Google+ along with some of the odd-shaped buildings on the original map from the AD&D Lankhmar supplement, I present the Spiral Temple.

But that's a pretty boring name. It's probably the temple of Scrovet the Orange, the patron of quests, journeys and riverbeds. Or something like that. But from the outside it is recognizable due to the two intersecting domes that sit above the unusually shaped structure, and from within the immediate reminder of where you are is the long twisting hallway from the front door to the main temple dome.

Like most temples, it is a mix of worship space and administrative chambers where the temple elders and clerical staff work. Not being a particularly large temple with a huge congregation, there aren't much more than a half-dozen rooms dedicated to staff and operations.

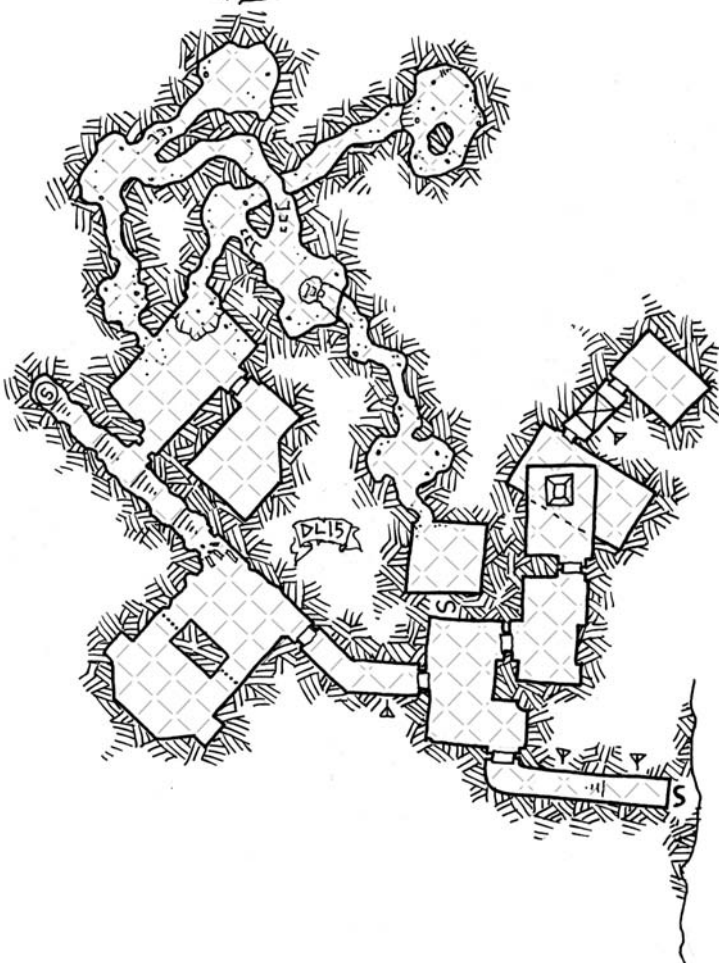
The clerics of Scrovet the Orange offer blessings to those who are leaving on long trips, perilous quests, and those who work the winding rivers that thread through the nearby hills.

The Ruins of Ettin Manor

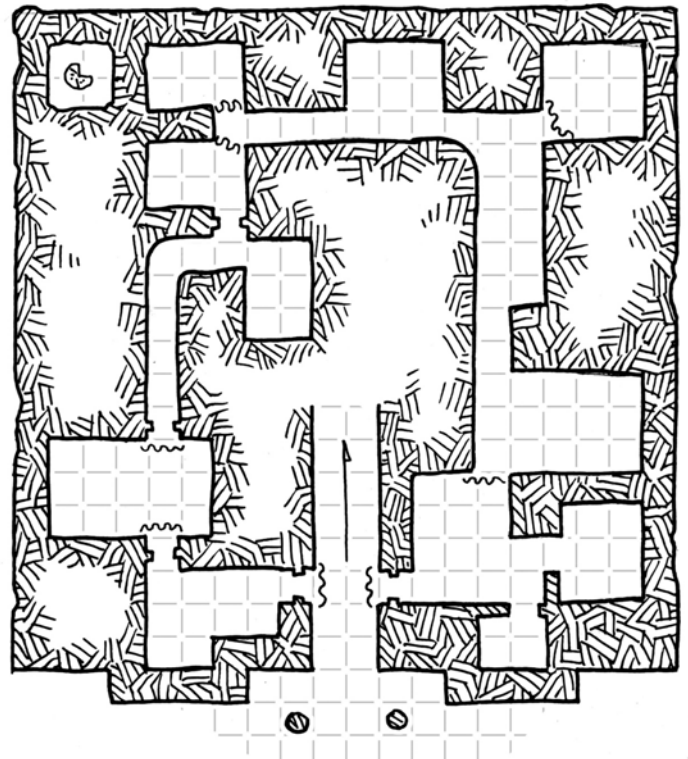
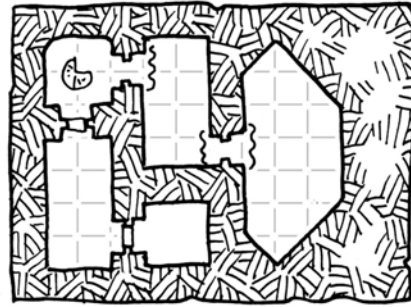
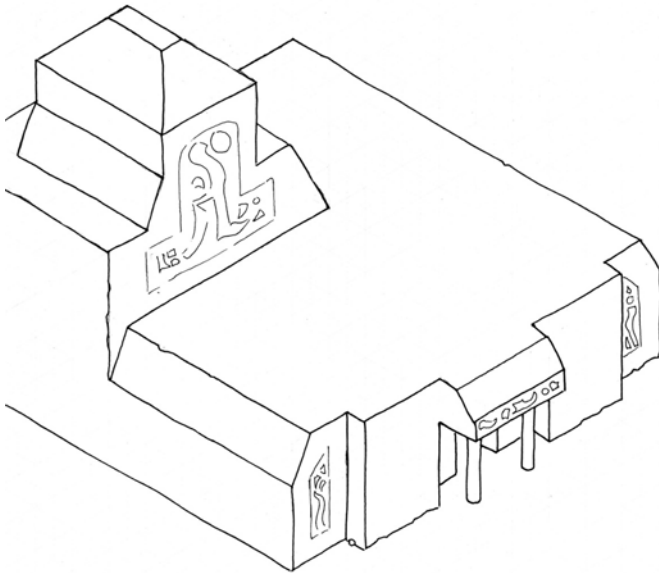


The overlord (now long deposed and deceased) of Ettin Manor kept his most precious of treasures down in the secret chambers underneath the manor. Further, he defended these treasure chambers with traps and intricate secret doors. While his defenses have never yet been entirely breached, some looters have broken into one treasure chamber and looted it before being stopped by a solid stone door with a lock beyond their skills. More disturbing is that one of the ancient treasures appears to have... hatched... in the interim and a series of tunnels and chambers have been dug out from one particularly secret chamber. It leaves you to wonder what sort of creature would dig through so much earth and stone and yet never dig to the surface...

The most difficult chambers to get to are a pair of chambers at the bottom of a seventy foot shaft in the furthest room from the entrances to the dungeon.



The Asymmetric Temple



Since the beginning of March I've been playing in an Empire of the Petal Throne campaign using the classic 1975 rules set. At one point some drawings of temples were shown, and one player pointed out that the temples to one of the death gods of the setting are typically asymmetric.

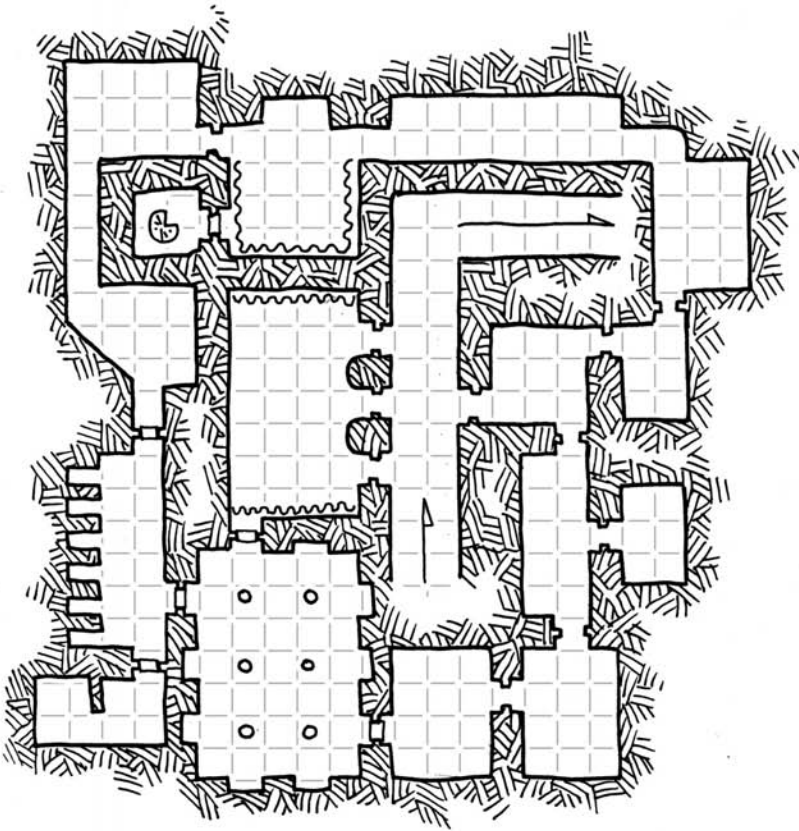
Combined with the majority of the temple being underground in our adventures in Tekumel, I started drawing up this temple which I'm finally posting today.

The main level is waiting rooms, conference rooms, minor shrines for sacrifices and worship and so on. Right in the front entrance, however, is a ramp leading down under the temple to where the main

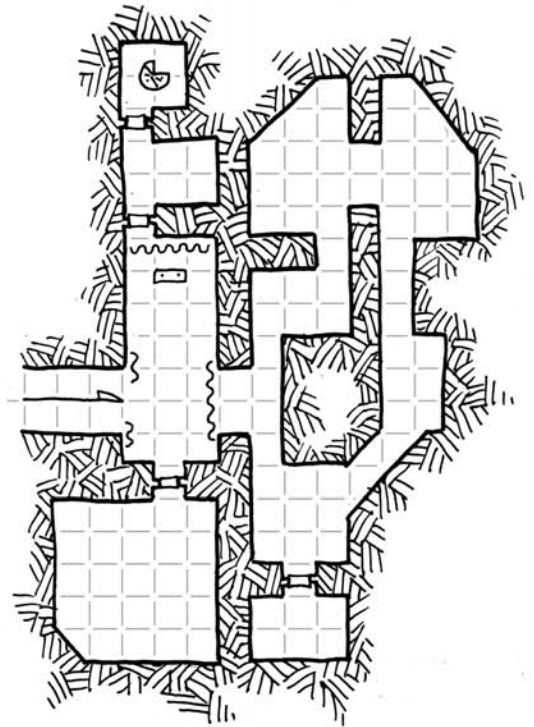
activities of the church take place. There are very few doors in the temple in order to encourage air flow and to get the most benefit from the cool air of the lower levels.

The upper level of the temple isn't accessible from this area and is generally thought of as being a large ornamental chunk of rock by most who are unaware of the stairwell that leads between it and the basement of the temple. There is a small chamber here for keeping important prisoners or refugees away from the general populace of the temple, as well as a large chamber that works as a combination of shrine and library where the rarer books of the temple are kept.

Under the Asymmetric Temple



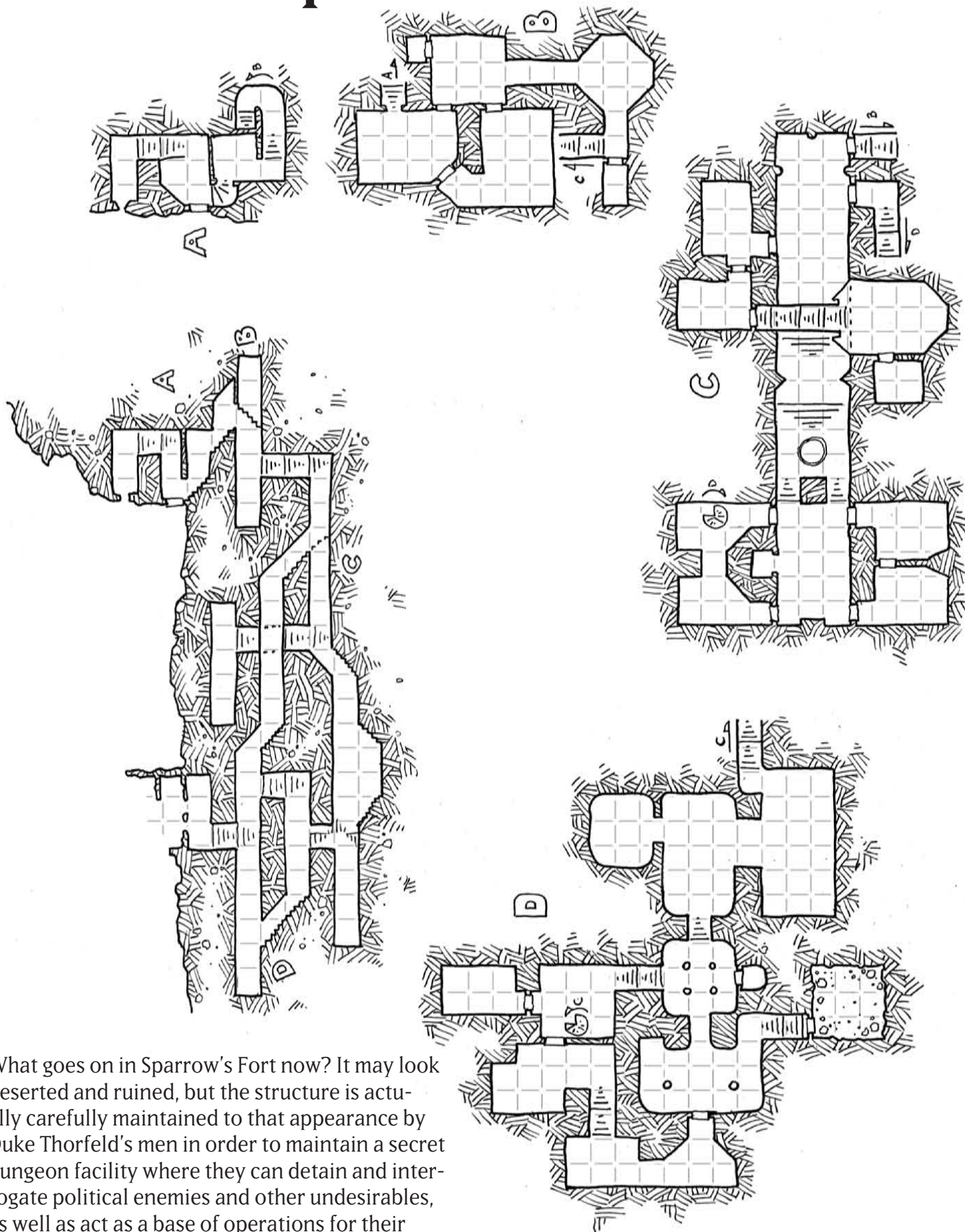
Part two of the Asymmetric Temple map, these are the two underground levels of the temple where most of the actual service work of the temple takes place. At the bottom of the main ramp is the main service area on the left which is used for funerary rites and other obeisances to the death god (with the morgue just to the south of it, and the chief embalmer's quarters on the lower left of the map just south of the temporary crypts). The right hand side of this level is mostly scribes and archives. The boring stuff that keeps a temple operational from day to day. The long 20' wide room on the north side is a dormitory for apprentices and some guards who don't have homes in the city next to a room used for quiet contemplation of death (and



a concealed door behind the tapestries opening to the stairs that lead up to the upper level of the temple).

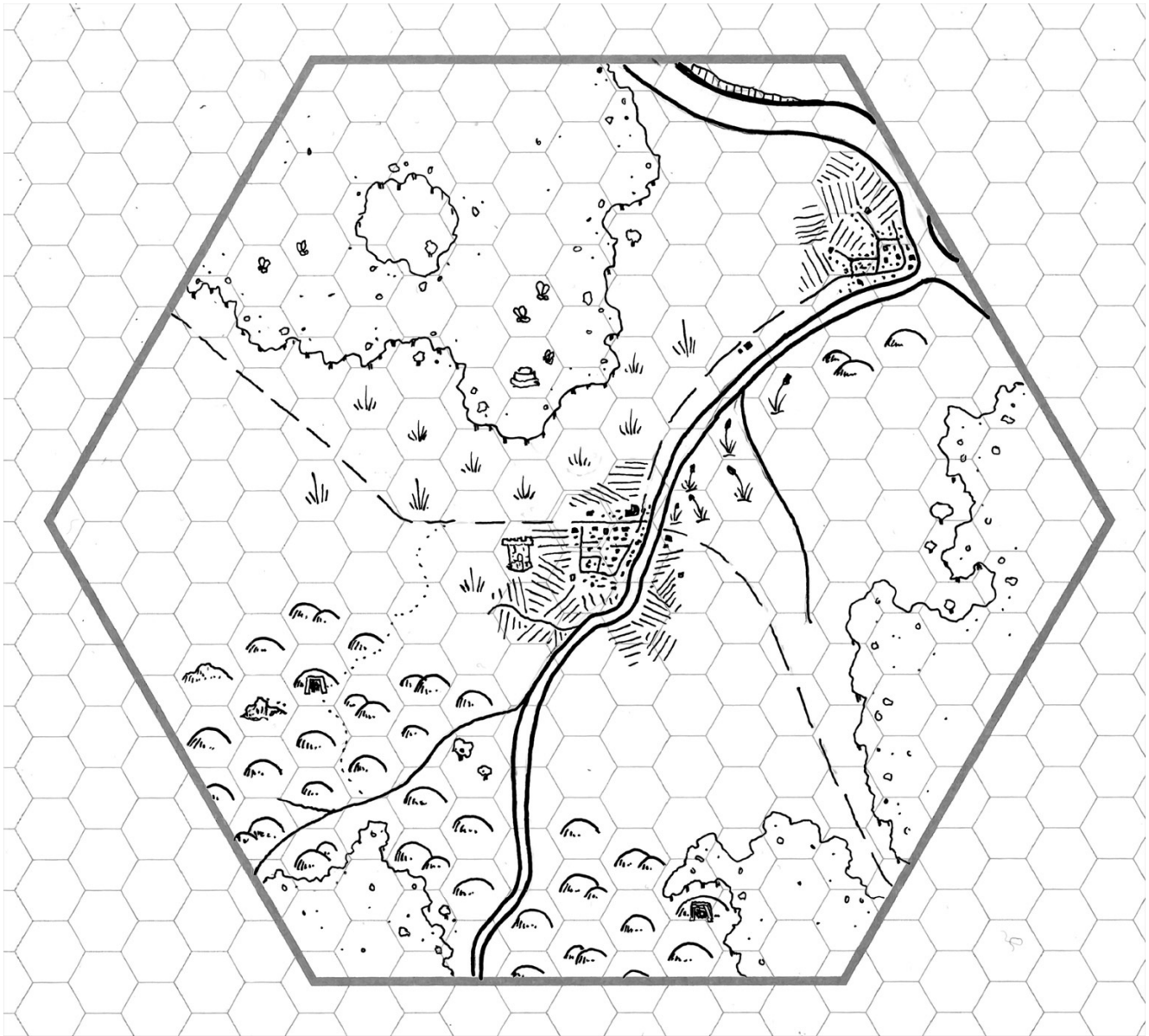
The lowest level of the temple opens with a chapel behind which is a small store room with a small locked door that leads to another stairwell that leads up to a secret door in a small shrine just outside of the temple compound. But of course, the whole complex could be something completely different – this is just what I was picturing as I drew the various areas.

Sparrow's Fort



What goes on in Sparrow's Fort now? It may look deserted and ruined, but the structure is actually carefully maintained to that appearance by Duke Thorfeld's men in order to maintain a secret dungeon facility where they can detain and interrogate political enemies and other undesirables, as well as act as a base of operations for their clerical inquisition teams.

Baraloba & Environs



Baraloba is actually two mid-sized towns — New Baraloba and Upper Baraloba (at one time they were just Baraloba and New Baraloba, but New Baraloba's trade road location has meant that it has more traffic and growth than the original town, and is well on the way to fully eclipsing it).

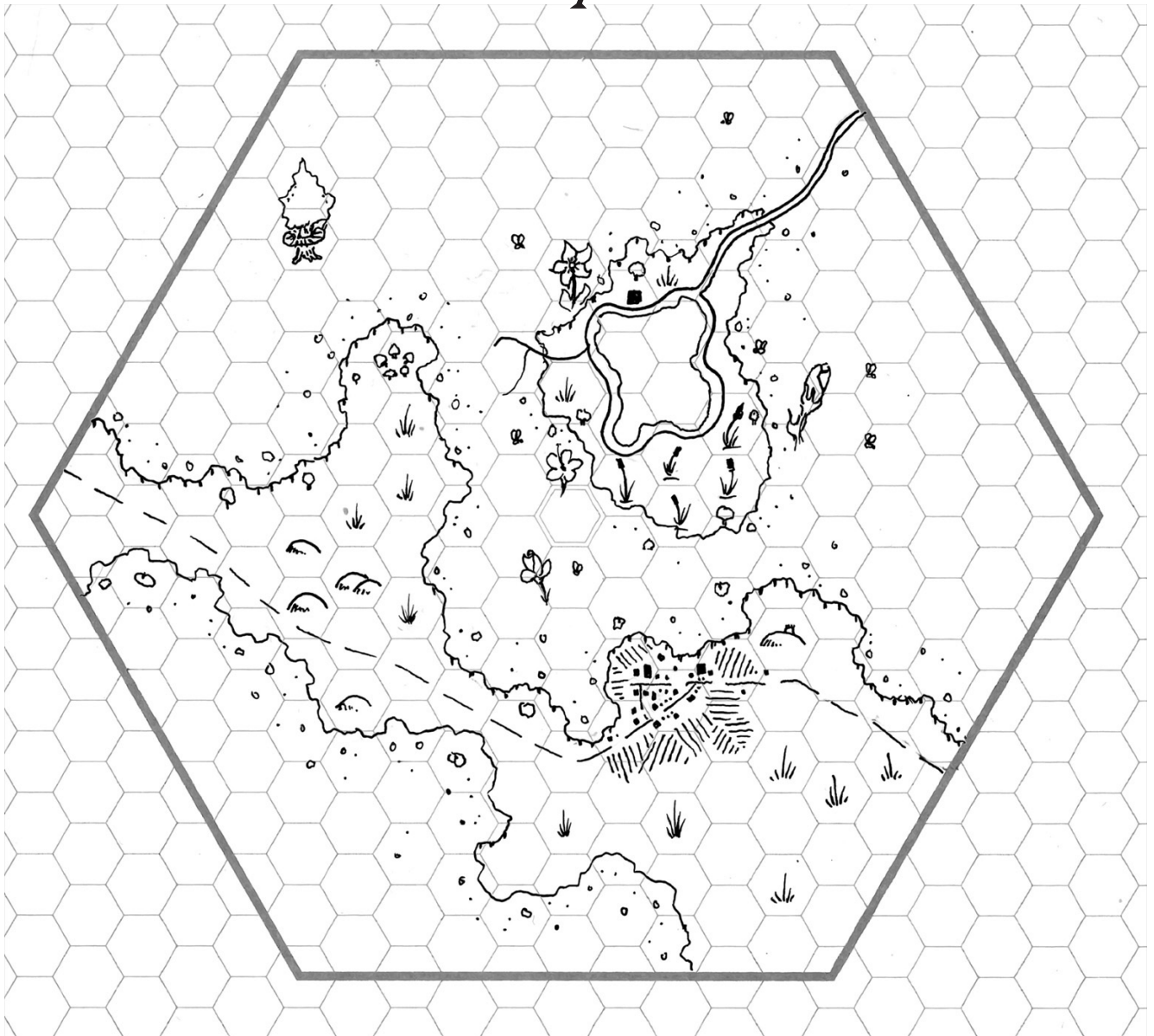
Upper Baraloba is a fishing and farming village that sees occasional river trade along the Hewbank river where it joins with a tributary that runs past New Baraloba after coming down from the Eagle Hills.

New Baraloba is also a farming community with a few more options for trade because of their posi-

tion on the ford of the local trade road. Looming behind the town, seemingly half sunken into a farmer's fields, is an old watch tower of immense size, built by hill giants several hundred years ago and now more a curiosity and waypoint than a fortification. It was used for years to mark where to leave the trade road to find the mines in the Eagle Hills.

Northwest of both villages is the Honeyed Forest — a forest known for the masses of bees that live within it and the giant flowers that are said to grow there a few hours walk deeper into the trees from the villages.

The Honeyed Forest



This six mile hex connects sits to the northwest of the Baraloba map.

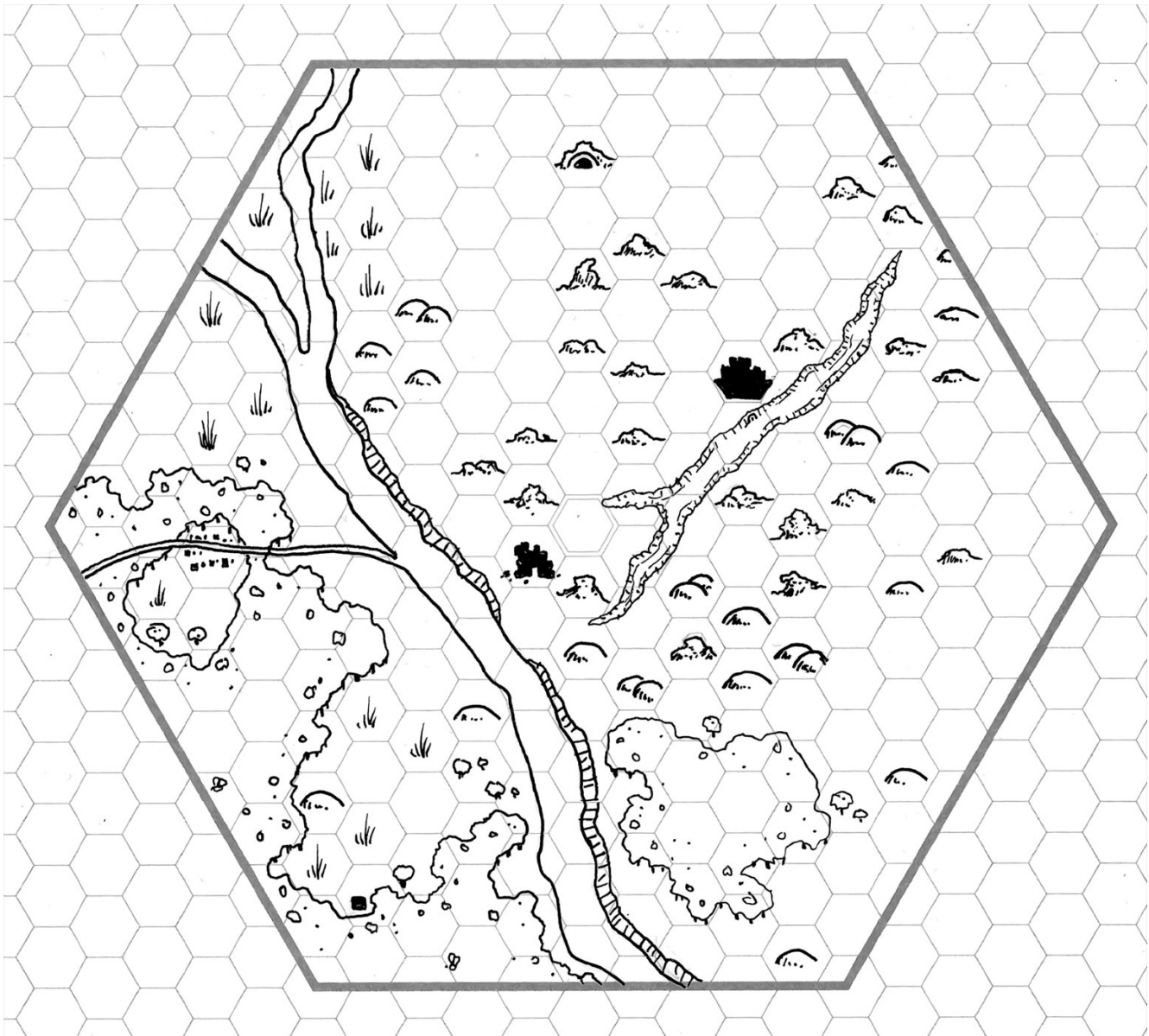
This hex is home to the small village of Meadgrove – known for it's apiaries and honey mead. Which should come as little surprise as the forest here is seemingly overflowing with flowers, most significantly larger than normal. As one adventures deeper into the forest the flowers continue to get bigger until sixty foot rose bushes and 80 foot lilies become the norm in what resembles a giant's overgrown flower garden.

And of course, where there are giant flowers, there are giant bees.

Northeast of Meadgrove is a small watchtower on a lone hill. Originally this was the site where Meadgrove was expected to be built, but the farmland that was cleared from the as forestry continued into the honeyed forest proved to be excellent and the village ended up growing where the forest once stood.

On the upper left of the map is an experiment in drawing an "elven treehouse" that didn't really work out. Which is fine with me since I don't like my elves living in trees anyways. So this phanton fortress sits quietly in the honeyed forest, with some of the braver phantons having learned how to train giant bees to be used as occasional mounts to oversee the area.

The Badlands of Slate



The badlands lurch up above the river, and show the signs of having once been lush forest and river lands themselves. Now dry and shattered, they are known to be home to a few minor tribes of goblinoids who generally war among themselves instead of bringing their trouble to Baraloba and the area. Few know that only a few miles from the river a black citadel has been built up from the slate wastelands – a marshaling point for the goblinoids under their new leadership.

On the north edge of the hex is the cave home of a small tribe of hill giants who once hunted the goblins of the area but who now work among them.

On the southern edge of the map is a small fort built into the edges of the Honeyed Forest by an enterprising knight who is working to tame both the badlands and the forest (but who is actually working for the same master as the goblinoids and who often hides goblinoid scouts and assassins within his walls).

Finally, a small hamlet continues its sleepy existence on the banks of the Golden River in a clearing in the Honeyed Forest, generally unaware of the world around it.

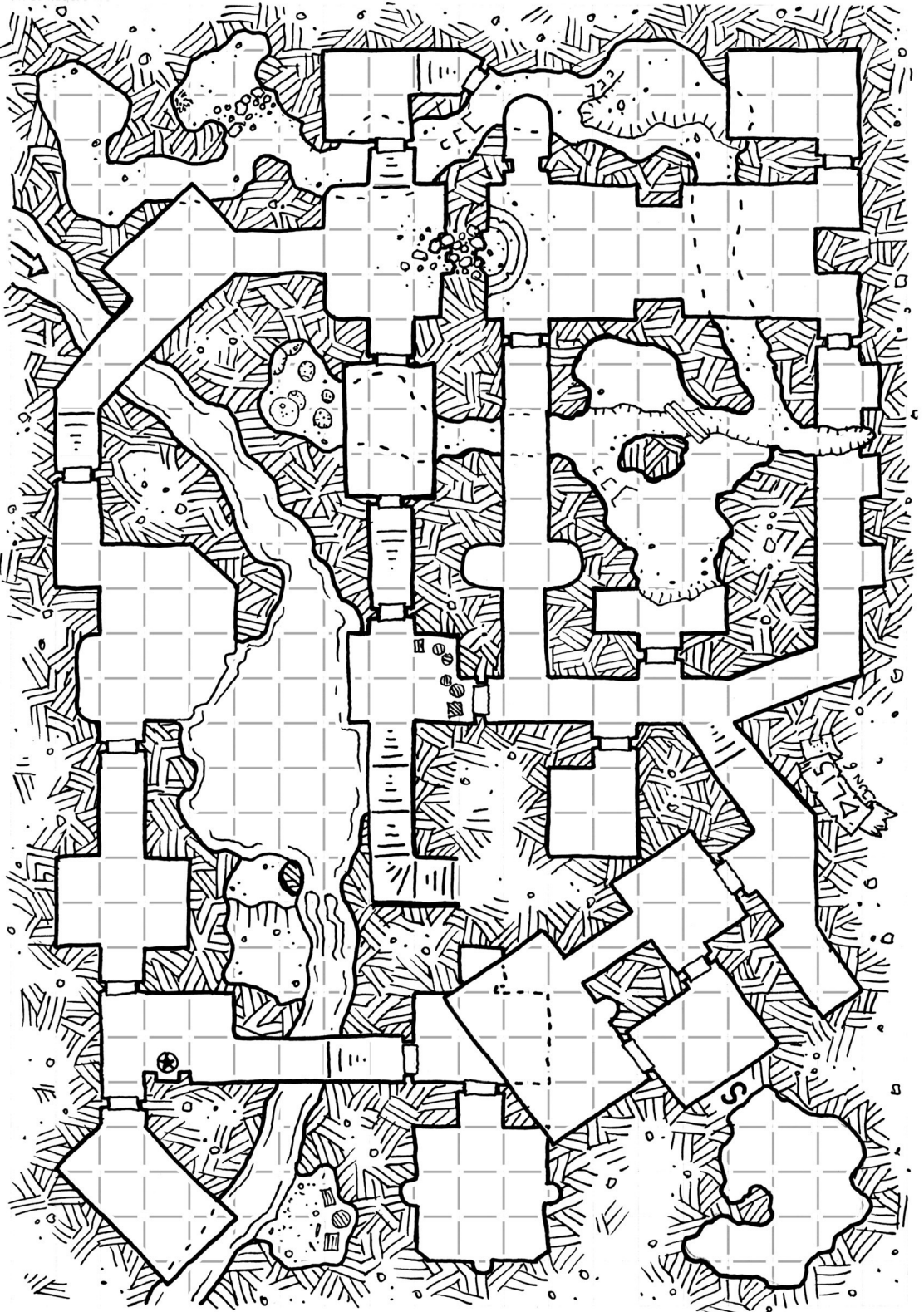
This hex sits above the first hex (Baraloba) and to the northeast of the second hex (the Honeyed Forest).

Hamel's Well

Many parts of the city are built up over the ruins of civilizations that claimed these lands in ages past. While some forget the roots of the city, others are forced to confront them on a daily basis.

Forty feet below street level in one of the poorer districts of the city, the stairs to Hamel's Well open up to an underground stream and pool bordered by ancient rooms made of fine stonework. Both doors out of the well room are locked at almost all times, but the southern door shows signs of frequent usage.

A gang of thieves (Toren's Crew) operates out of the deeper ruins on the south side, but avoiding the natural caves down below. Both the members of Toren's Crew and some of the townfolk who are down at the well most often have seen movement and the glitter of light from the north side structures. Most picture the northern area to be home to a lone hermit or perhaps a few shuffling undead – remnants of those who built these chambers in the shadowy past.



The Dellorfano Protocols

Stacy Dellorfano of ConTessa (who also happens to be one of my very generous Patreon supporters) posted a set of random dungeon generation procedures that I went on to dub "The Dellorfano Protocols".

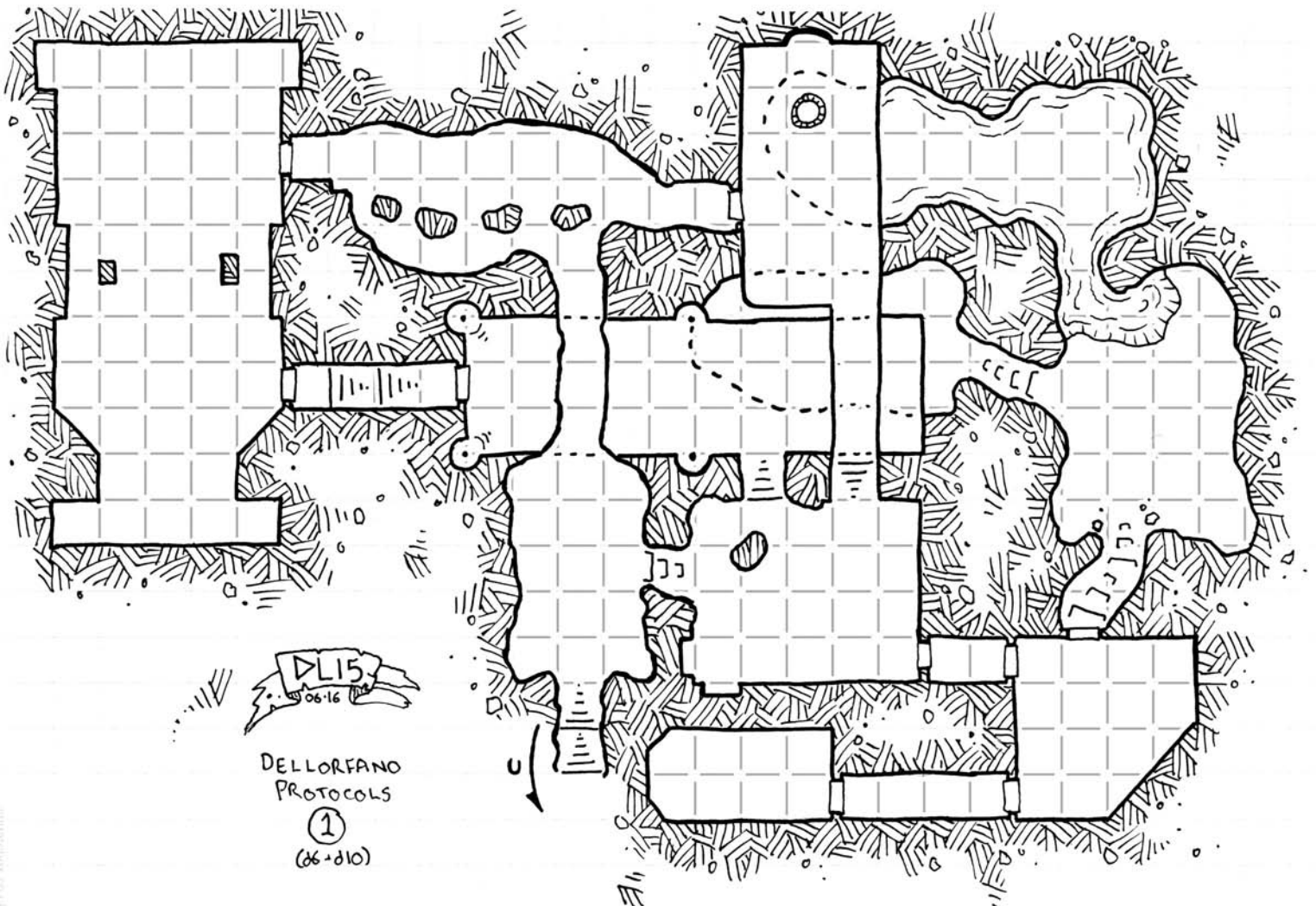
1. Start somewhere on the page.
2. Roll two dice (d6 & d8 in this case)
3. Whichever die lands above is the vertical line length.
4. Whichever die lands below is the horizontal line length.
(Or figure out your own way of picking which is which).
5. Roll a die for each wall to see if there's a door.
 - 5a. If there's no space for a door, don't roll that wall.
 - 5b. Create connections to other rooms when it makes sense.
 - 5c. Always have a 'no door on this wall' option.

In my case for this one, I rolled a d6 & d8, took whichever die landed on the table above the other as the vertical, and the remaining die as the horizontal.

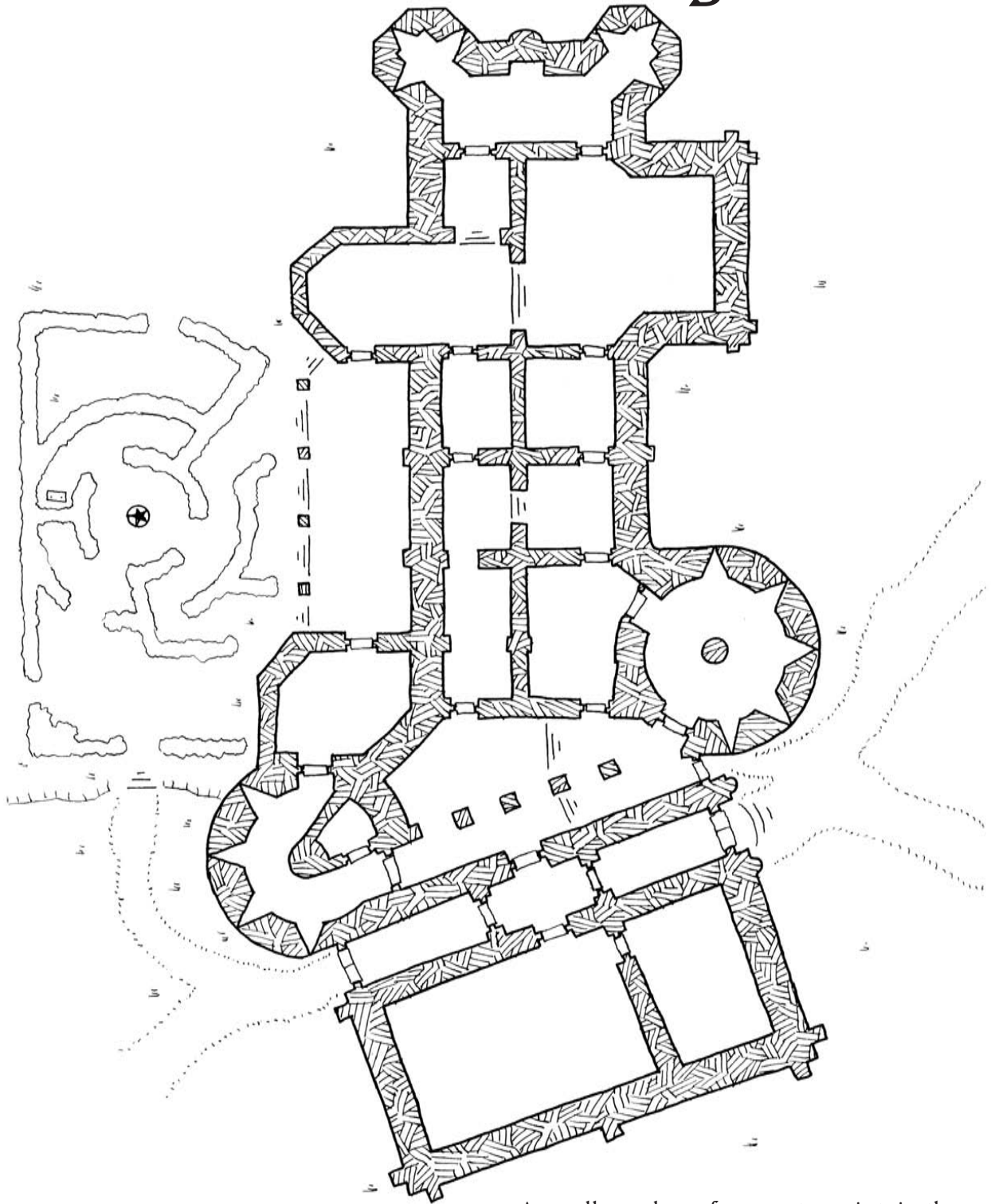
To prevent long, narrow rooms I doubled or re-rolled 1s, 2s, and 3s unless it was towards the end of the page or somewhere where that made sense.

Then, I chose each wall of the room and rolled a d6. If the number was a 5 or a 6 there was no door. Any of the other numbers indicated the number of tiles the hallway should be.

I chose the width of the hallways and their placement on the walls on my own whim or if it made sense to connect to another room, I ignored the die roll and did that.



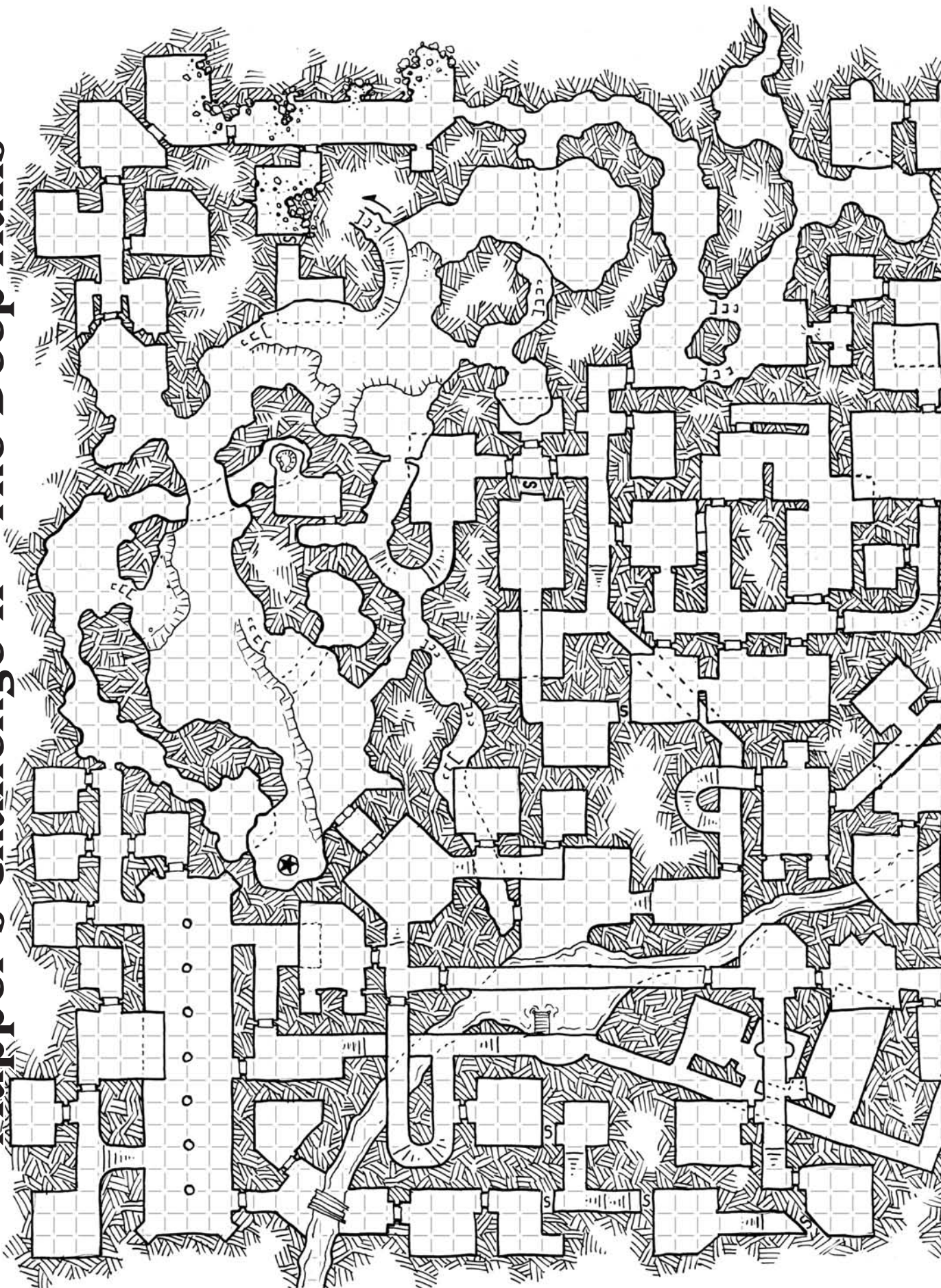
Chateau D'Aubergine



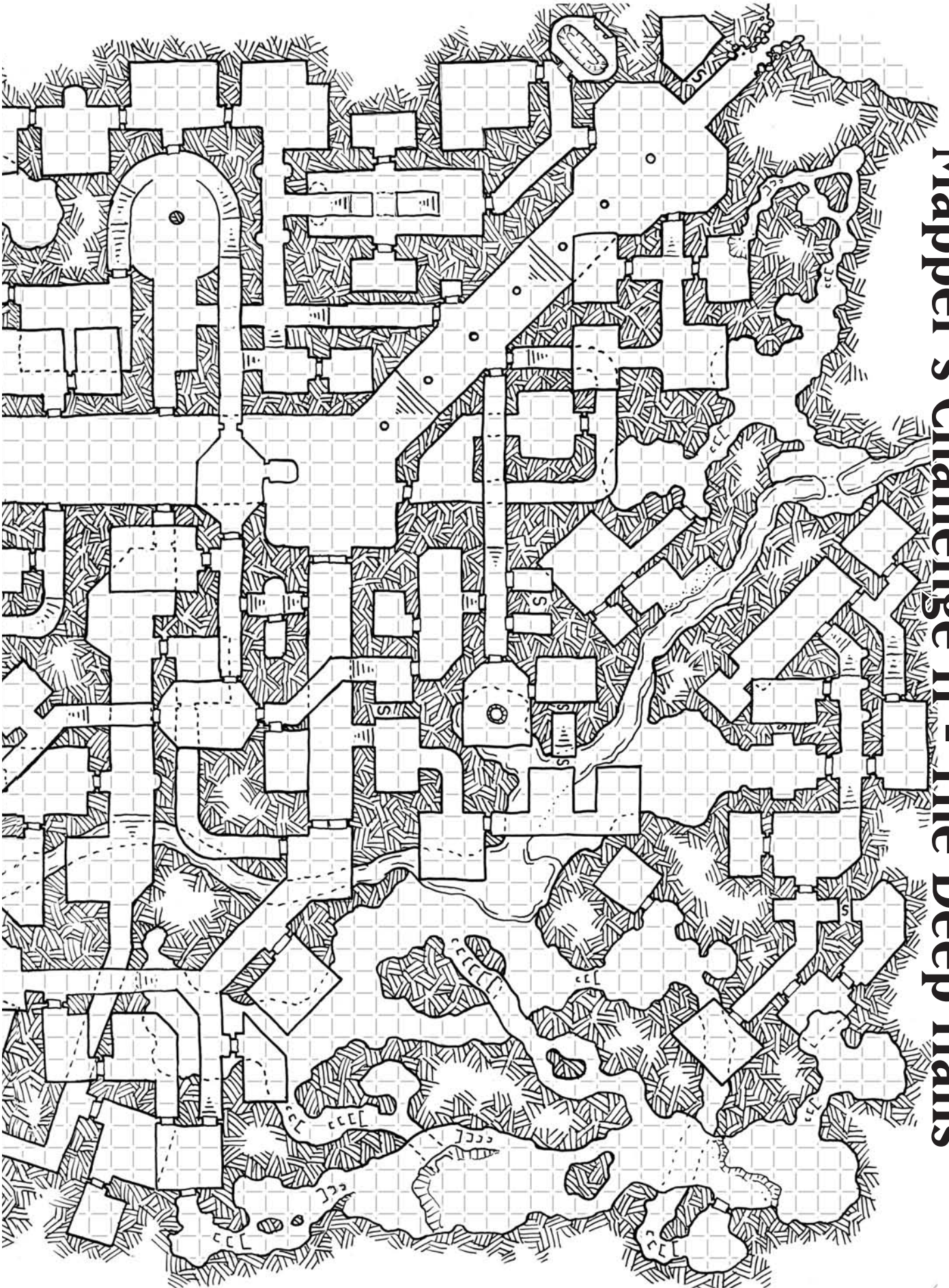
A small and lightly fortified castle, Chateau d'Aubergine is home of Madame d'Aubergine and her children – a clan of noble sorcerers of ancient elven blood. The matron of the family dominates all affairs at the Chateau, with her offspring rarely seen (and never heard) in the background.

A small number of servants maintain the grounds and the hedge maze garden, but are only seen outdoors at night as they are all morlocks – accordingly the garden's flowers are an odd assortment who's colours are far from complimentary (as they are never seen in bloom by the gardeners). Inside the castle the thin albino morlocks serve as maids, butlers, chefs and manservants for the d'Aubergine clan.

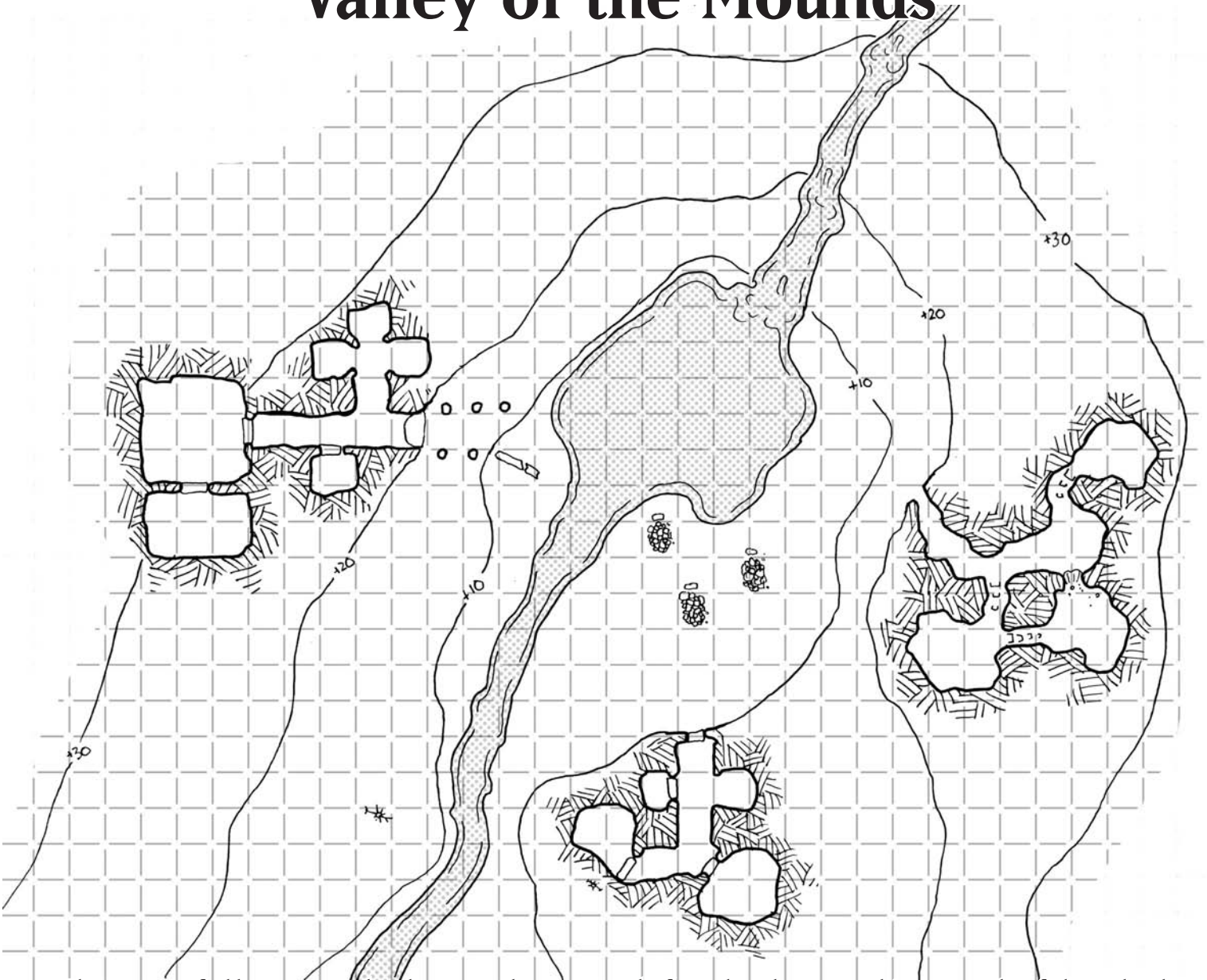
Mapper's Challenge II - The Deep Halls



Mapper's Challenge II - The Deep Halls



Valley of the Mounds

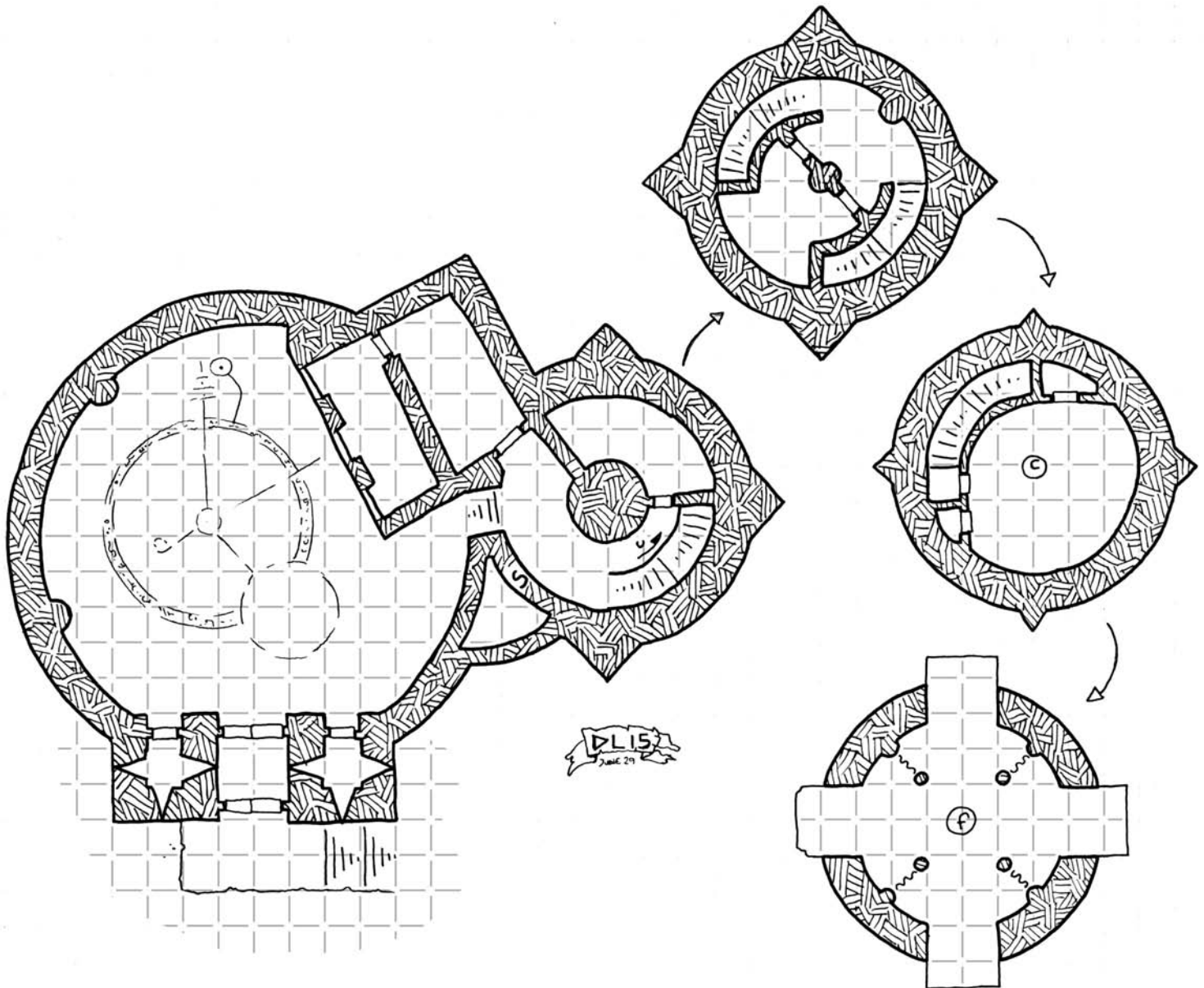


This stream-fed box canyon has been used as a sacred burial site of the Coalfoot Troglodyte clan for as long as they have recorded their history on their clay tablets. At the narrowest point before reaching the pool at the end of the canyon (at the south edge of the map), troglodyte mystics and young warriors are tasked with maintaining a number of small totems to ward off intruders and to mark the area as sacred tribal land.

Within the box canyon are a number of burial sites (and probably many more that are lost but could be found with appropriate research and a lot of digging). The oldest is on the east wall of the canyon, a small natural cave where a small river once flowed into the canyon. These small caves have been used as crypts for the Coalfoot elders since

before they began making records of their dead. The southern burial mound is very old and completely covered in grass and undergrowth. Given another few decades, the barrows within will be completely sealed off by dirt and plants and lost to time. The western burial site is the most recent of the barrows, cut into the side of the canyon proper by slave labour during the height of the era of Coalfoot supremacy over the creatures of the area. It is apparent though that this age has passed, as the structure is not well maintained and the fallen pillar in front of the entrance has not been replaced. In fact, the most current great heroes of the Coalfoot Troglodytes have not been buried in a barrow, but entombed in plain stone cairns along the bank of the pool at the bottom of the box canyon.

Mad Warlock's Dome & Tower



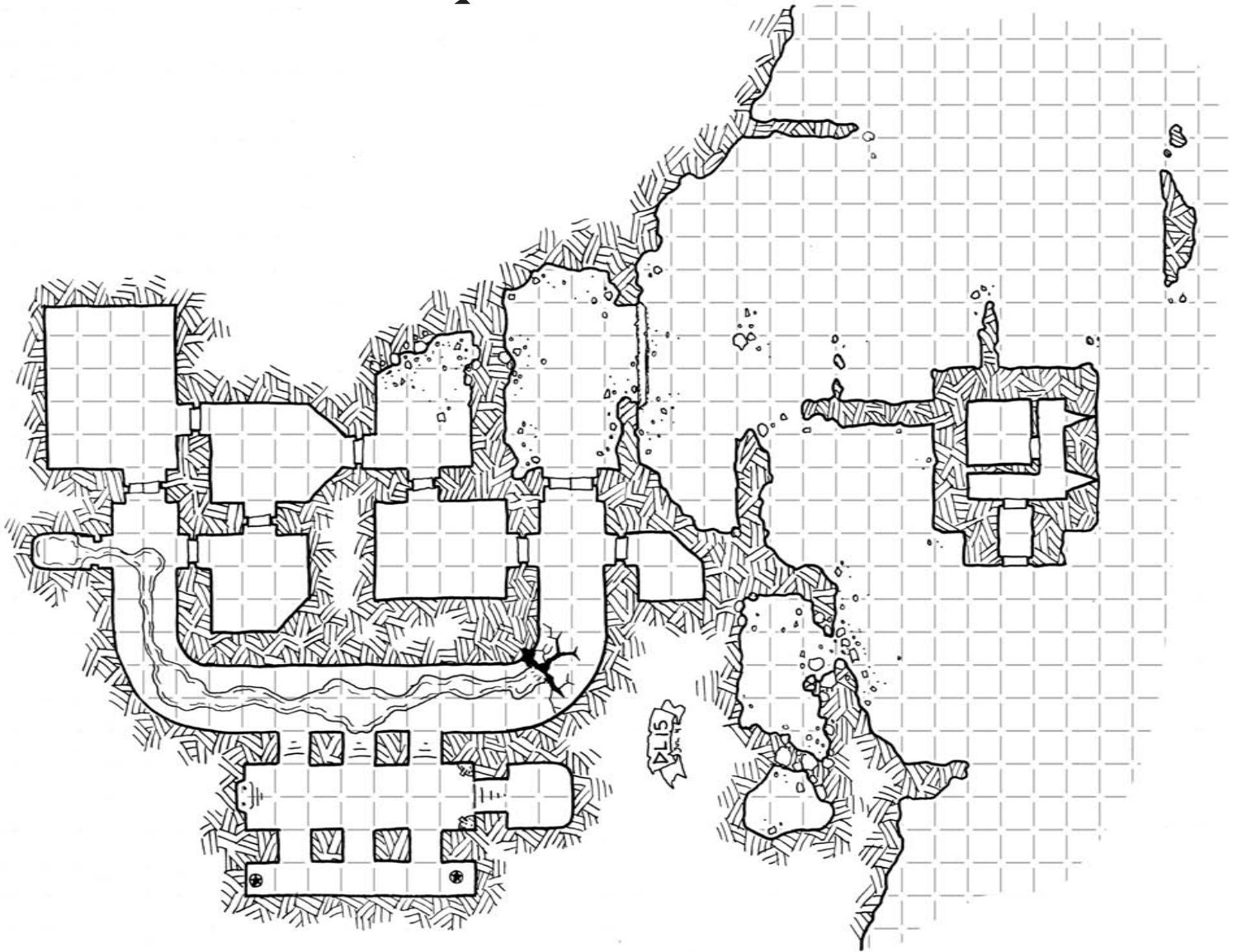
This map was 100% inspired by playing Fallout: New Vegas' Old World Blues DLC again. I wanted an experimental area with an office that oversees what's going on in it. So this map is of a largish dome structure where the eponymous Mad Warlock conducts (or conducted) his arcane experiments, attached to a four-story tower that protrudes above it from one side.

The ground floor is the experimental area, the oversight chamber and office, a store room in the tower, and a secret chamber where the Mad Warlock keeps his more secret and expensive experimental equipment.

The second floor of the tower has a single chamber that is used as a sleeping area for the staff employed here.

The third floor is the home of the Mad Warlock himself with two closets and a retractable ladder leading up to the top level of the structure. The top level is mostly open to the elements (although still roofed), with four balconies / lookouts that look over the area.

Lady White's Ruins



Known as Lady White's Ruins, the old structure and dug-in passages in the hillside have been home to several sightings of a supernatural ghostly woman nicknamed "Lady White".

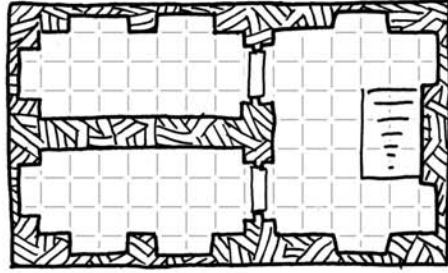
There is still a "solid enough" base of a tower standing in the old ruins, although the upper levels are long fallen and the remaining rooms (except for the entrance passage) are open to the elements.

Beyond are two entrances cut into the hillside. Both lead to half-collapsed chambers full of natural debris and ruined stonework. Warded portals lead further into the ruins from the larger of these two chambers, to a long passage where water flows from the old well down to a massive crack in the floor where the marching forest cracked the

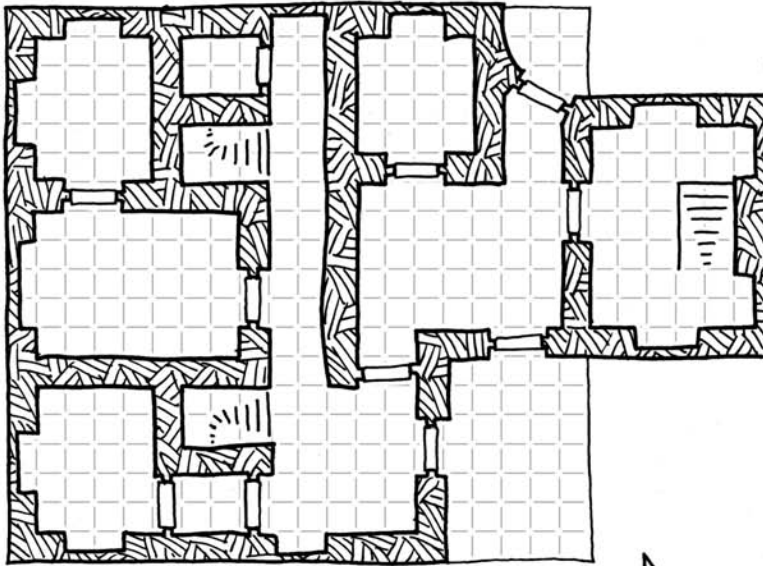
very ground of the ruins with their roots and entish might.

"Lady White" herself is rumoured to be the half-elven lady of the manor when it was crushed by the marching forest, seeking revenge against all who would defile her home. But she is actually the spectre of another woman – a foul-mouthed and unpleasant adventurer who was pushed into the massive crack where the stream now flows by her adventuring companions when they decided they didn't want to split their treasure with her any more. If somehow pacified, she knows the locations of several other treasure troves in the region where her companions hid their loot or were unable to defeat the local guardians.

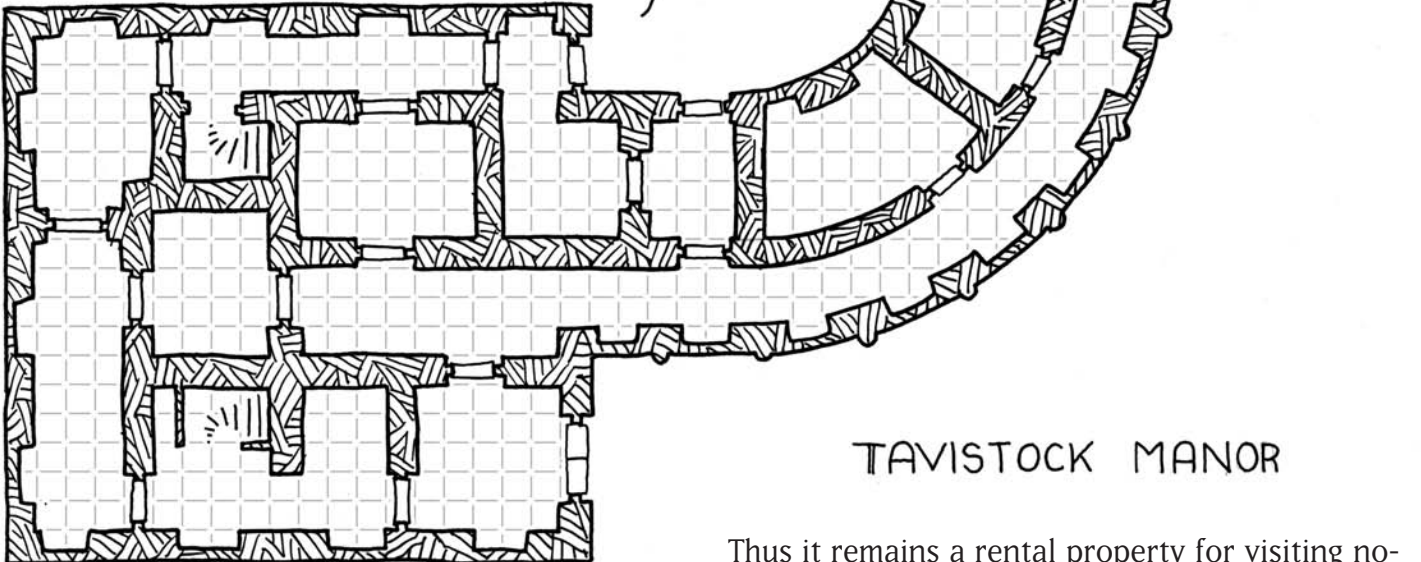
Tavistock Manor



Again with the compass-derived maps this year, I bring you Tavistock Manor. A three-story manor house that seems perpetually for rent on the north side of the city.



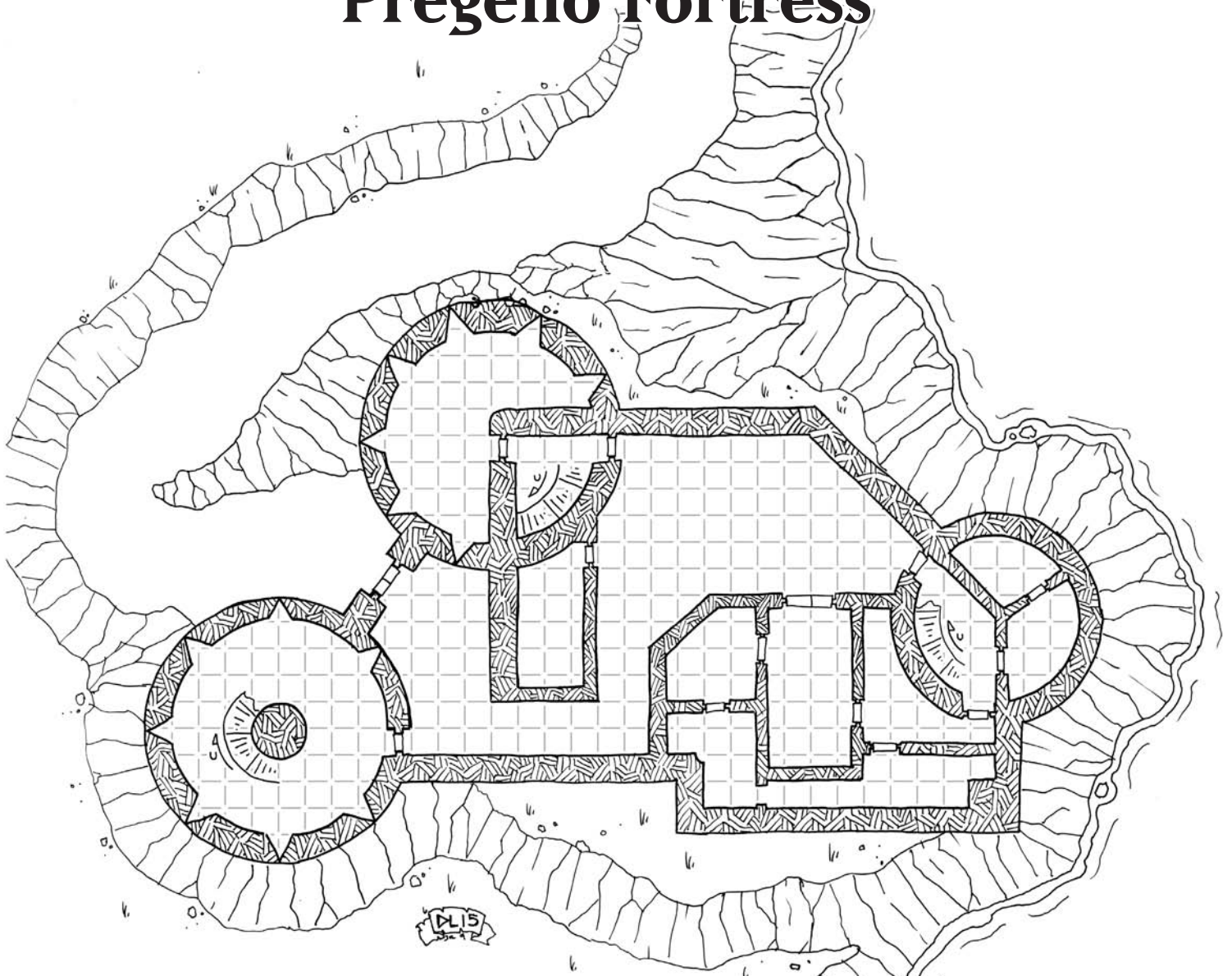
Tavistock Manor is settled into a lovely huge estate for a rental property, requiring a fair staff of gardeners and groundskeepers to keep it looking decent. Thus the property seems to have waves of excellence and decrepitude, depending on finances of the owner and renters. The property as a whole is generally too big for anyone but the richest noble to purchase, and unfortunately its reputation as a rental property makes it unpalatable for most who are concerned about their long term social standing in the region.



TAVISTOCK MANOR

Thus it remains a rental property for visiting nobles, adventurers and merchants on the up-and-up, and strange visitors with more money than sense.

Pregello Fortress



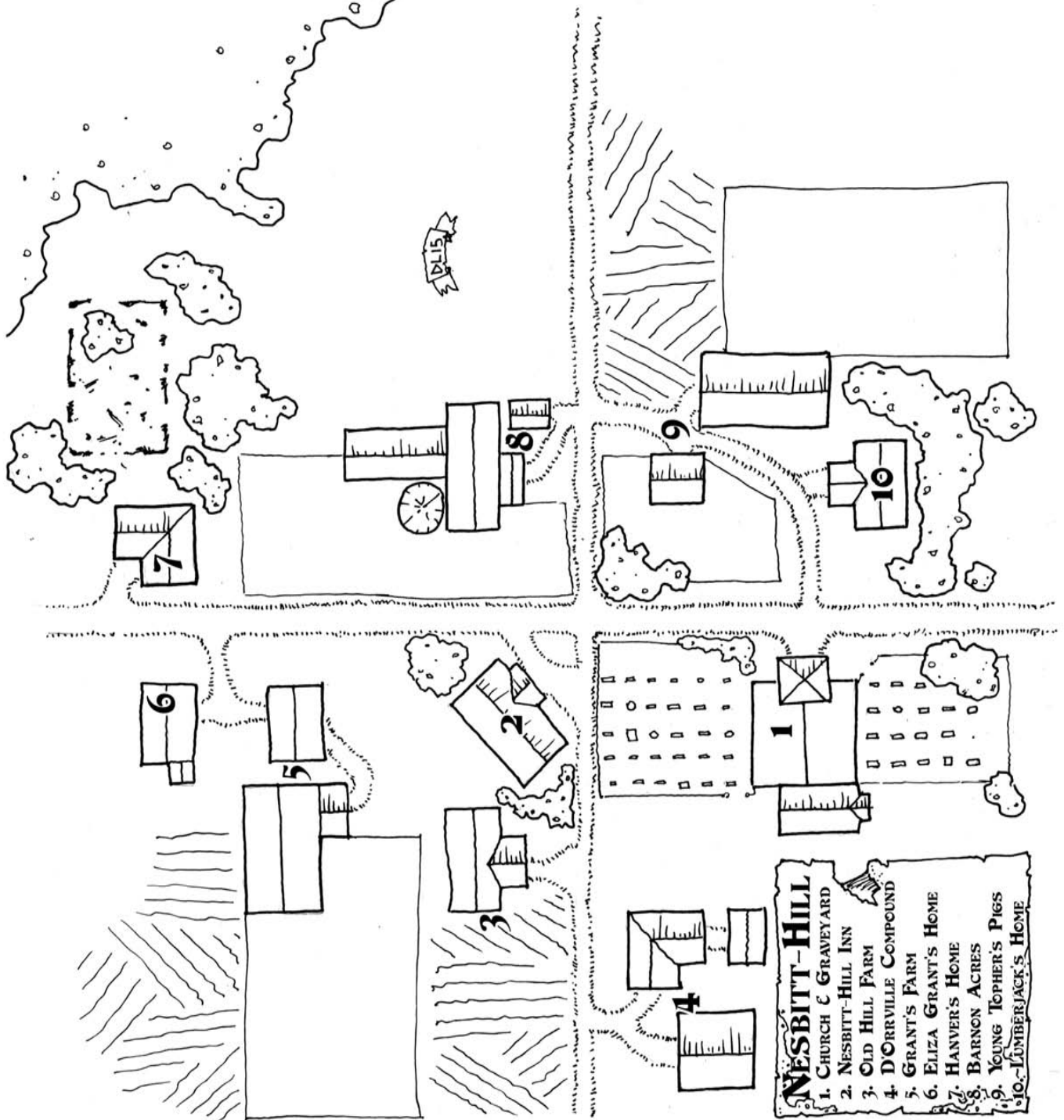
Along the wide banks of the Onur River are a number of small fortifications dating back to various Kale city states that were once the backbone of trade and travel along the river and the badlands to the east.

Originally a trio of towers, Pregello Fortress was constructed by Ezwer the Long on the ruins of older Kale structures. Pregello is a small fortress built up around two squat towers and a single towering spire that stands out over the Onur like a spike driven into the stony riverbanks. Now the property of Ezwer the Hunter, great-granddaughter of Ezwer the Long, it is maintained but rarely home to any of her kin as she spends most of her time at her primary residence in Kalis where she attends to the politics of the new noble class with ardor and intensity.

But of course, a quiet fortress maintained by a skeleton staff on a river does not make for much of an adventure (unless you are seeking specific styles of furniture manufactured by the local half-ling populace around 75 years ago).

Lately those local halflings have started wondering what is going on up at the fortress. Word is that Ezwer the Slight has moved in along with a few less savoury companions. Certainly the staff of the fortress have been buying a lot more food and drink in town recently. And then in the last week strange wolf-like things have been tracked in the nearby forests and occasionally through farmers' fields... Some believe that these beasts are foul servants of Ezwer the Slight, others postulate that these creatures hunt for the young man and his companions.

Nesbitt-Hill

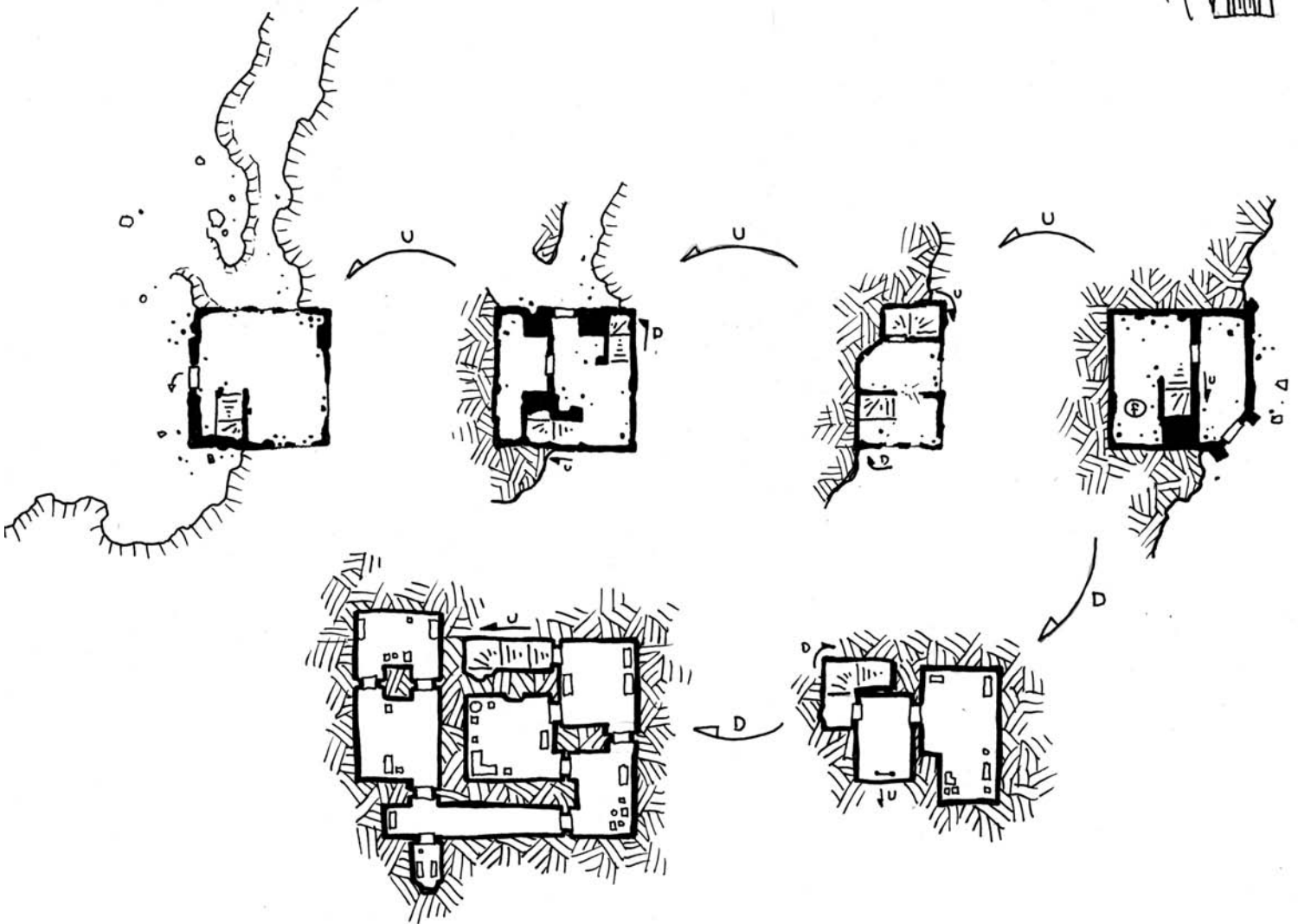
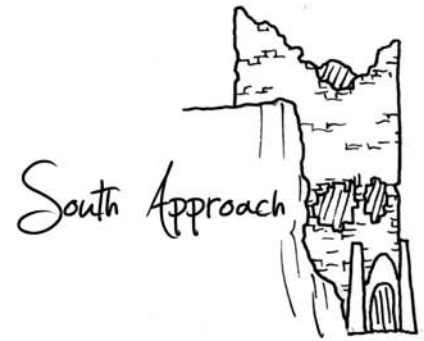


When noted on a map, most would expect the tiny village of Nesbitt-Hill to... well... be on a hill. In fact, the land around village is uniformly flat and hill-free. The small town was built up around an inn at the intersection of two trade roads – an inn established by Burgen Nesbitt-Hill and his family.

Nesbitt-Hill is a very small farming community with only two stone structures – the inn proper and the church just to the south – which are used

as shelters in times of trouble. The other notable home in town is the Hanver house, which is slowly sliding into decrepitude (while the rest of the property is already well beyond that, with the old barn collapsed behind the house and new forest growing up where gardens and livestock were a generation ago). The current owner of Hanver house was a fairly successful adventurer who moved back home after finding more than enough money to keep him comfortable for the rest of his life.

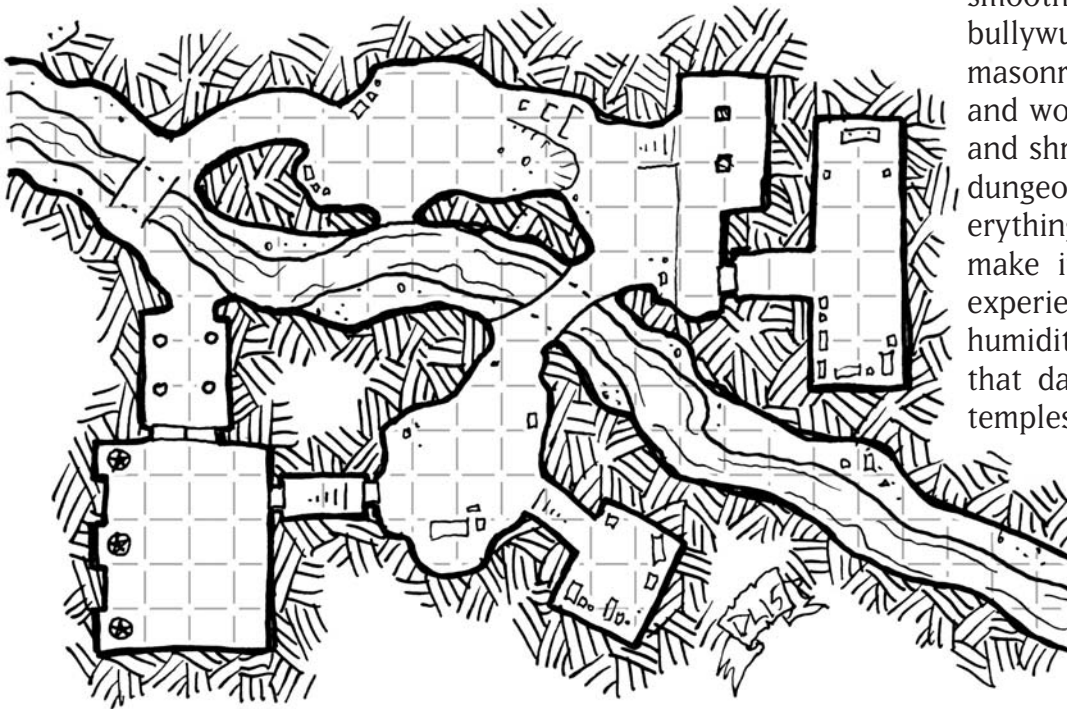
The Ledge Tower



When it was built, it probably bore some fancy elven name that translated into "Spire that reaches from the soil to the stars" or similar nonsense, today this tower on a hard stone escarpment is merely known as the Ledge Tower.

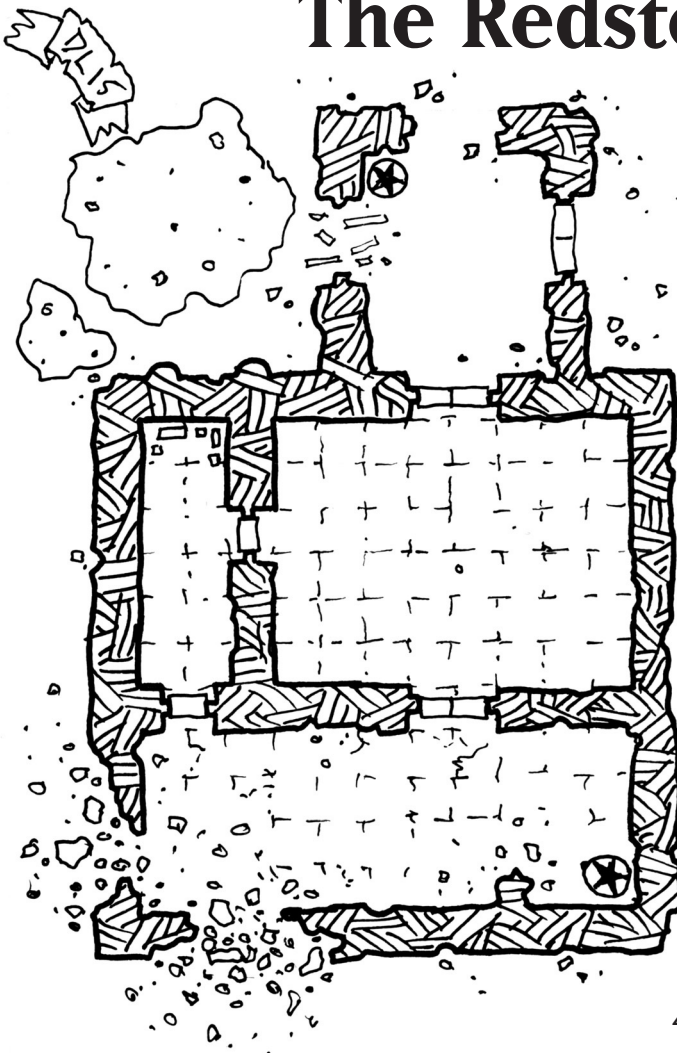
Not a strongly defensible position, the tower has three distinct entrances as well as those created by siege and nature in the centuries since its construction. At one point the tower was probably at least sixty feet taller than it is now, but all that remains is a small ruin that sticks out above the mesa into which it is built.

The Dawnflow Bridges



A mix of caves that have been smoothed out by years of bullywug infestation and old masonry maintained by priests and worshipers at the temples and shrines within – this little dungeon environment has everything but ruined areas to make it a complete dungeon experience – a river, high humidity, dank darkness (or is that dark dankness?), strange temples, weird frog-like creatures and even a pair of bridges to fight across.

The Redstone Shrine

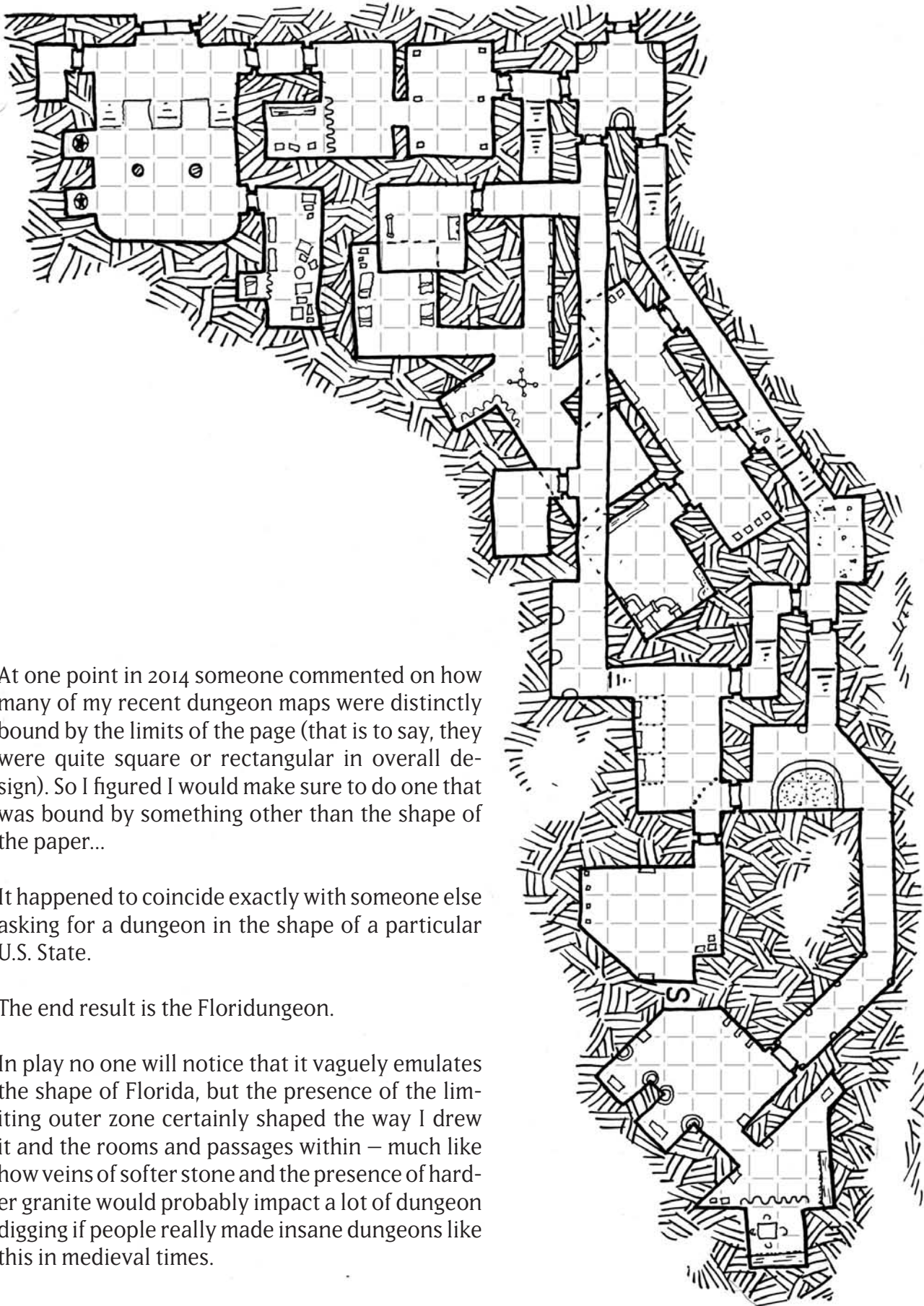


One thing with running the classic “Dwellers of the Forbidden City” module – there’s a lot of opportunity to draw up ruined and partially ruined temples and other buildings to scatter throughout the area as most of it is presented from above at a scale of 50 feet per square.

And since I’m running that module currently, I’ve started drawing up some of the buildings that I expect to have turn up during play. This one is a small shrine where the floors and interior surfaces are made of red granite blocks. It was a shrine to one of the forgotten gods of the Forbidden City, but if we knew to whom exactly, it wouldn’t be much of a forgotten god, right?

Late at night a few mongrelmen sneak out to the shrine (outside of their traditional territory) to engage in quiet contemplation and make offerings of food and herbs. They believe that the shrine was a birthing place of their race.

Floridungeon



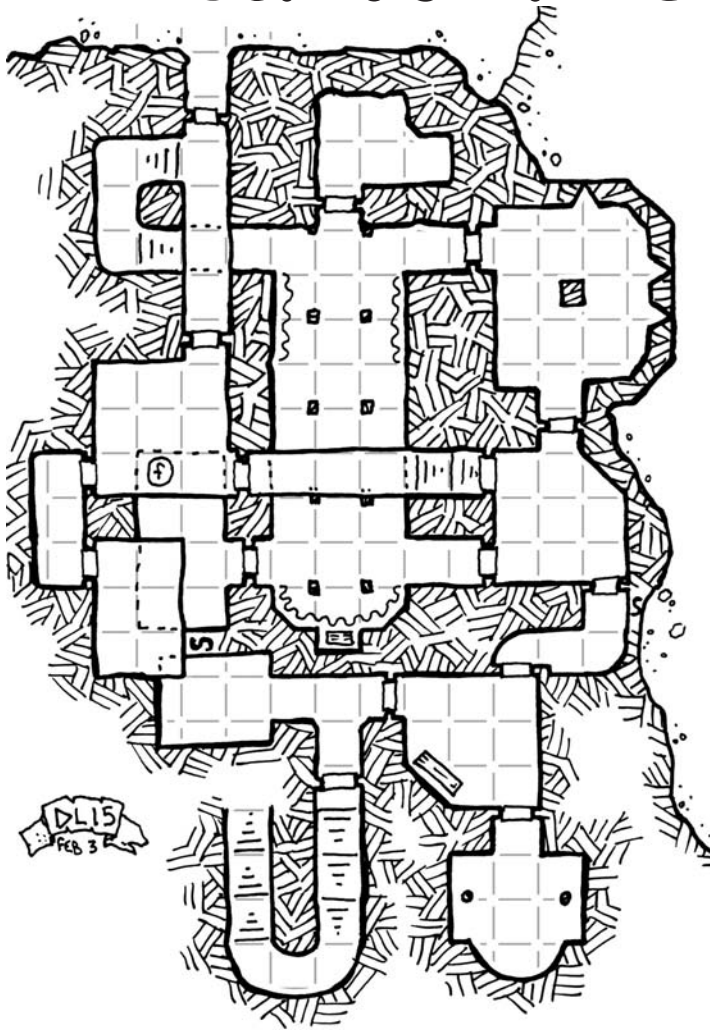
At one point in 2014 someone commented on how many of my recent dungeon maps were distinctly bound by the limits of the page (that is to say, they were quite square or rectangular in overall design). So I figured I would make sure to do one that was bound by something other than the shape of the paper...

It happened to coincide exactly with someone else asking for a dungeon in the shape of a particular U.S. State.

The end result is the Floridungeon.

In play no one will notice that it vaguely emulates the shape of Florida, but the presence of the limiting outer zone certainly shaped the way I drew it and the rooms and passages within – much like how veins of softer stone and the presence of harder granite would probably impact a lot of dungeon digging if people really made insane dungeons like this in medieval times.

Scart's Hall & Scart's Descent



In a departure from the norms of dungeon development (where foul goblinoids and monsters invade the subterranean works of other races), Lord Scart of the Hemron Coalition took over a series of crudely-cut but extensive goblin warrens and spent twelve years with a large team of engineers and sappers to establish Scart's Hall.

A combination of masonry and finished raw stone gives Scart's Hall a finish similar to most surface castles, except (as most guards would point out) that it is even darker, colder and damper.

And far more confusing.

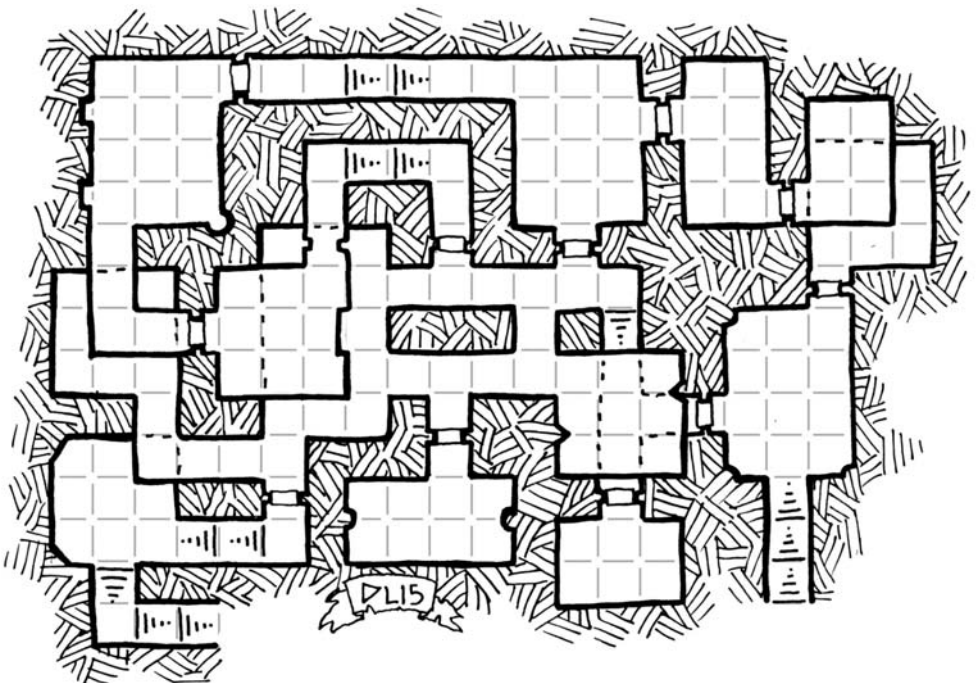
Being derived from a goblin warren, the structure twists and loops around itself and is split into multiple elevations, with a further winding stair leading down to a lower level of warrens and chambers.

A hundred and fifty feet beneath the meandering tunnels and chambers of the Hall are more warrens that were also converted into storage and barracks... and a descent into even deeper recesses under the earth.

Like Scart's Hall, the tunnels and chambers of the Descent are damp and confusing, but the temperature here is stable – unchanging from summer to winter. A stream of warm air constantly flows up from the lowest parts of the Descent, and while the door to

the final section of the descent is always guarded against encroachment from below, it is made of a stout iron grating instead of being a solid door in order to keep the air flowing.

Beneath the Descent there are unknown caverns and extended passages that the goblins who were here before would not enter. Scart and his companions explored the first few miles of these over the years as the hall was completed, but their experience only indicates that the depths continue on for untold miles and contain strange creatures and unexplained magical phenomenon.

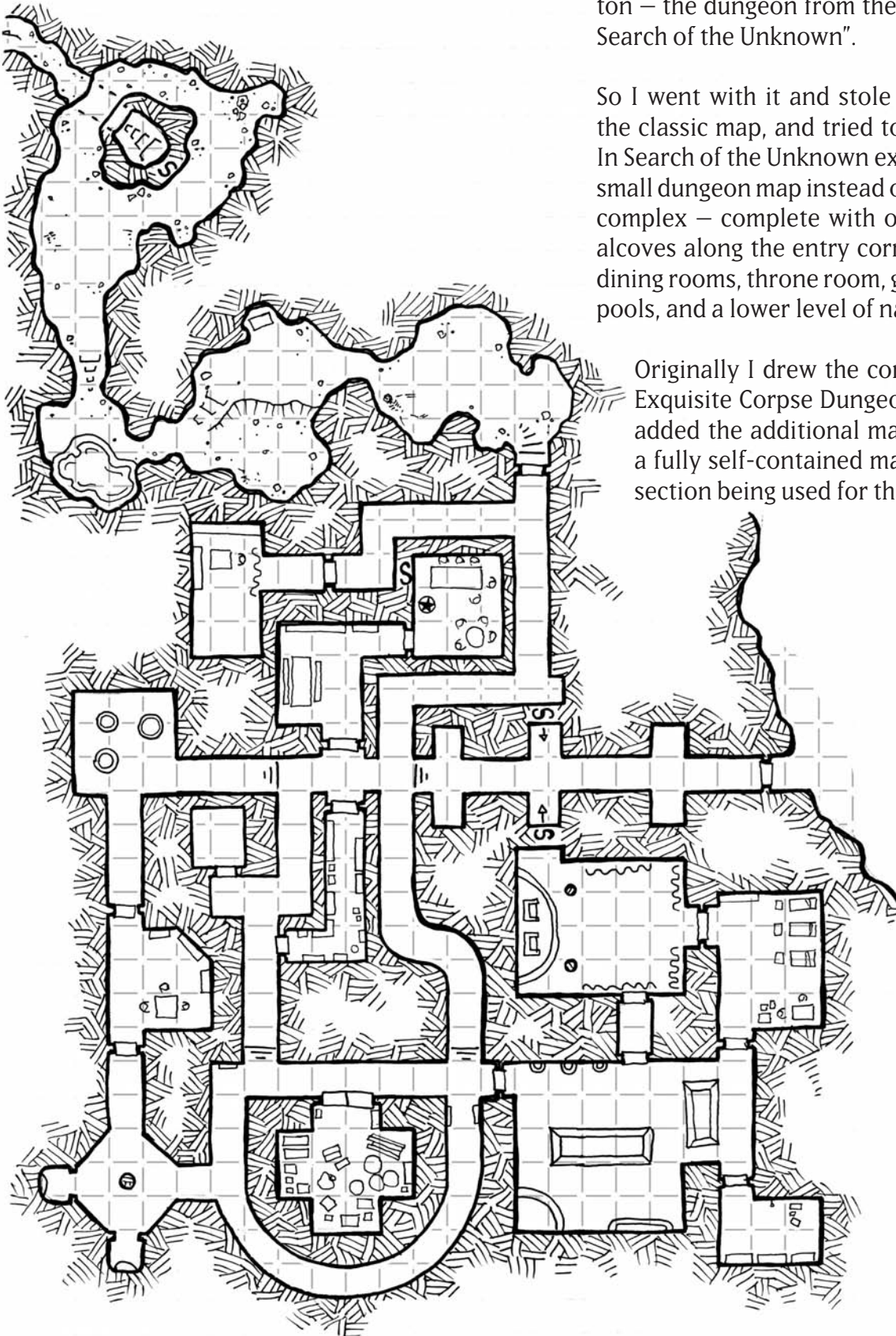


ReQuasqueton

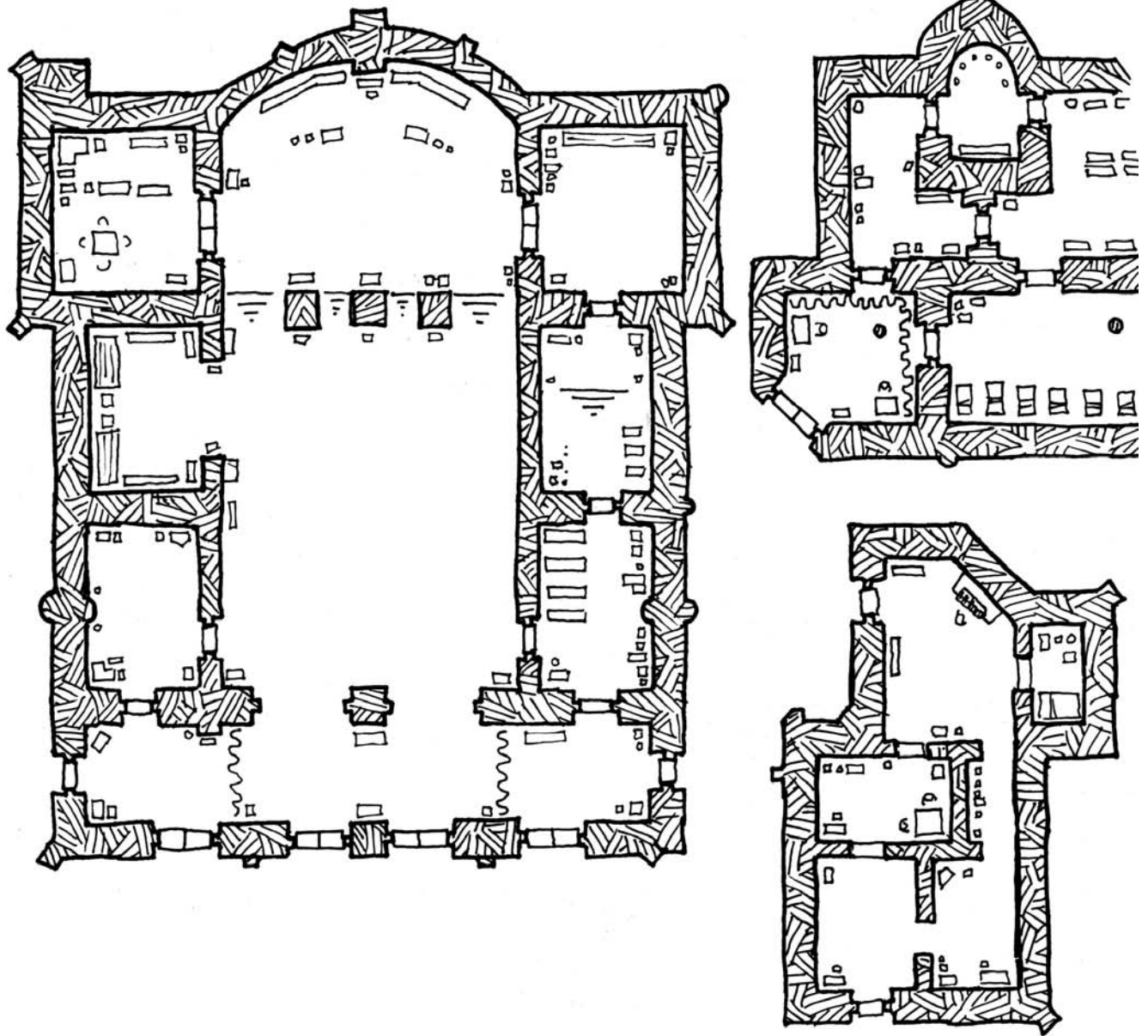
Sometimes you find inspiration in another map. Initially I started drawing this map based only on three corridors, and somewhere along the way I realized that it was starting to feel like Quasqueton – the dungeon from the classic module “B1 In Search of the Unknown”.

So I went with it and stole a few elements from the classic map, and tried to compress the whole In Search of the Unknown experience into a single small dungeon map instead of a massive sprawling complex – complete with one-way secret doors, alcoves along the entry corridor, the kitchen and dining rooms, throne room, garden, storage space, pools, and a lower level of natural caverns.

Originally I drew the core of this map for the Exquisite Corpse Dungeon 2 project, and then added the additional material to make it into a fully self-contained map once I scanned the section being used for the Exquisite Corpse.



The Temple of Marid Scurn



Temples, churches and religious structures tend to both be large (because they are built with the help of a whole community instead of a single person or family) and central to a lot of games (because in a world where gods have direct power over the world, it seems to make sense that their churches would wield significant power also).

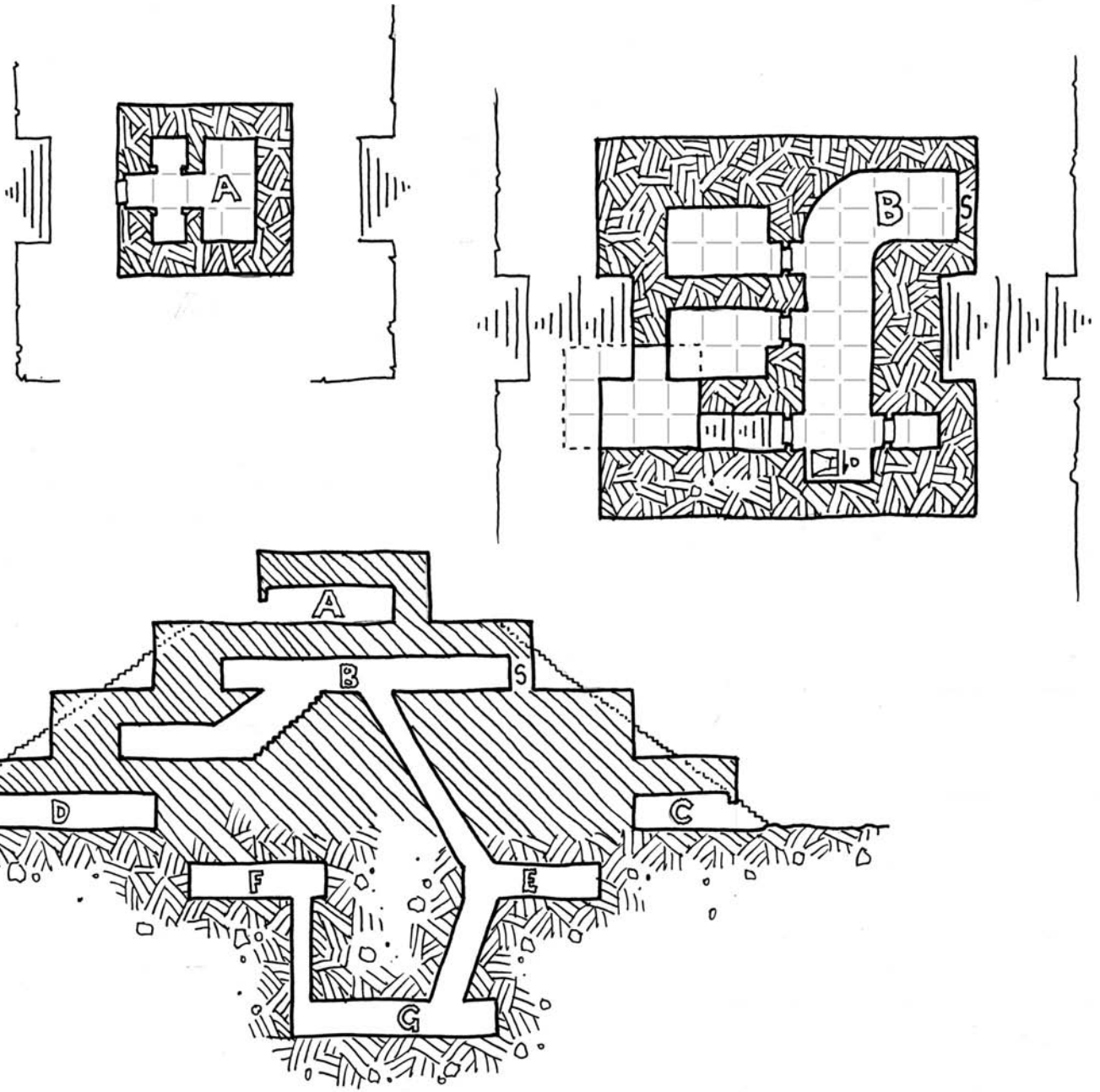
Thus they make great game fodder.

This map is of a church and two nearby structures (although the northern structure didn't quite fit on the page – you can assume the remainder is more dormitories and libraries).

The main structure is the temple proper, with some publicly accessible shelves of religious scrolls and similar on the right, a small chapel on the left, and various other chambers for priests, visitors and worshippers.

To the east of the temple are the office of the head of the temple and associates, and a dormitory for brothers in training, men at arms, and those loyal to the temple but too poor to offer more than their toil and bodies to the religion (and in some churches, a few paladins and low level clerics).

Dreaming Feather's Tomb



Dreaming Feather was one of the last rulers of the Dyonis Empire – shrugged off by most histories as a freak and sign of the end of the empire because she was a psionically gifted siamese twin who ruled for only nine years.

As one of the later rulers of the empire however, her tomb and temple remains in good shape to this day and the priesthood of the small city built up around it still conduct rituals and observances from the steps of the pyramid.

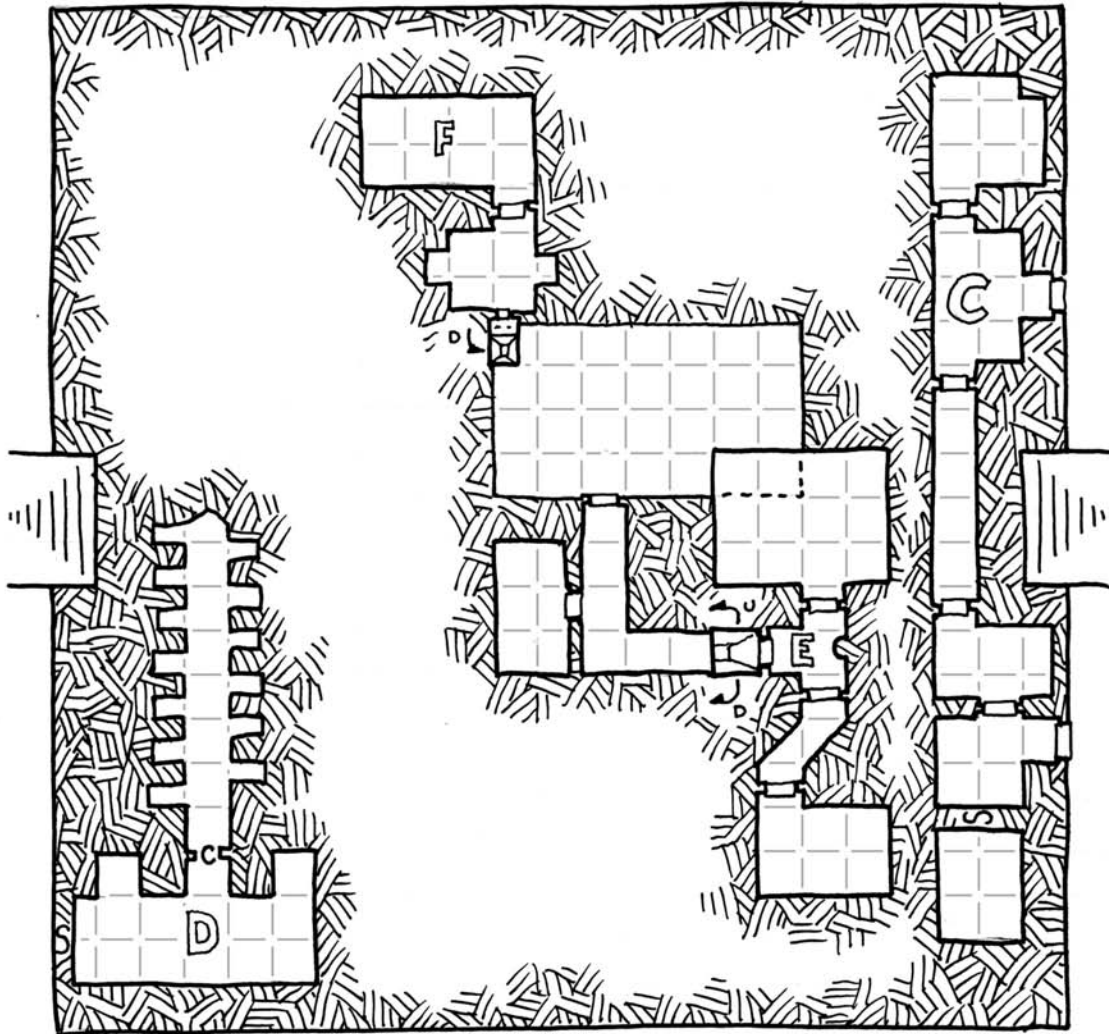
The pyramid has multiple entrances leading to different areas.

Area A is used for rituals and for private meetings with the faithful.

Area B is unknown to the priesthood and leads to the tombs and false tombs of the Dreaming Feather.

Area C is used as storage and emergency quarters for the priesthood and associates.

Dreaming Feather's Tomb



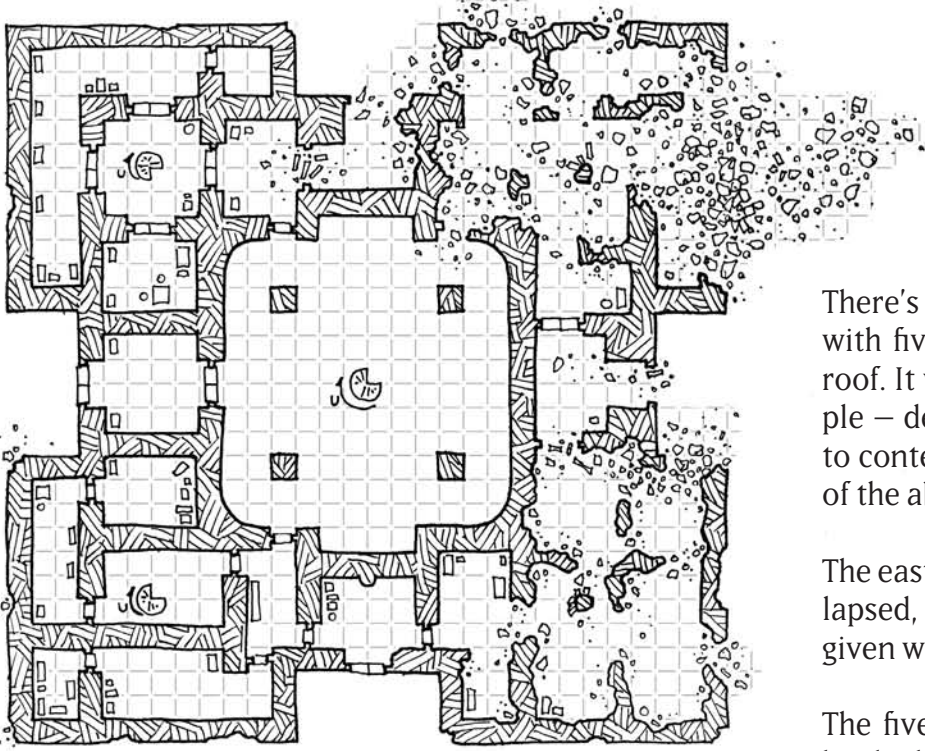
Area D is the crypts used by the priesthood. Originally the tombs of Dreaming Feather's top 3 priests, the central crypt is home to the remains of a priest who was reviled after her death and is presumed by many to have been her assassin. As such, the new priesthood had no problems desecrating his crypt and digging a new set of crypts for their own elders behind it.

Area E is only reachable by a shaft that leads down 60 feet from area B above, and then bends and continues down a further 40 feet to area G. Secured by a massive stone portal, this is the tomb of Dreaming Feather's chief adviser, and is well trapped and defended.

Area F is the actual tomb of Dreaming Feather, reached by a narrow chimney that climbs directly up 30 feet from the tombs below. The antechamber is still defended by a pair of psionic constructs.

Area G (which is shown on the sideview, but the overhead lacks the letter indicator – it's the rooms and passages between sections E and F) are the tombs of Dreaming Feather's various stuff. Baskets of food, boats, chariots, mummified horses, glorious peacocks, golden monkeys and more can be found down here.

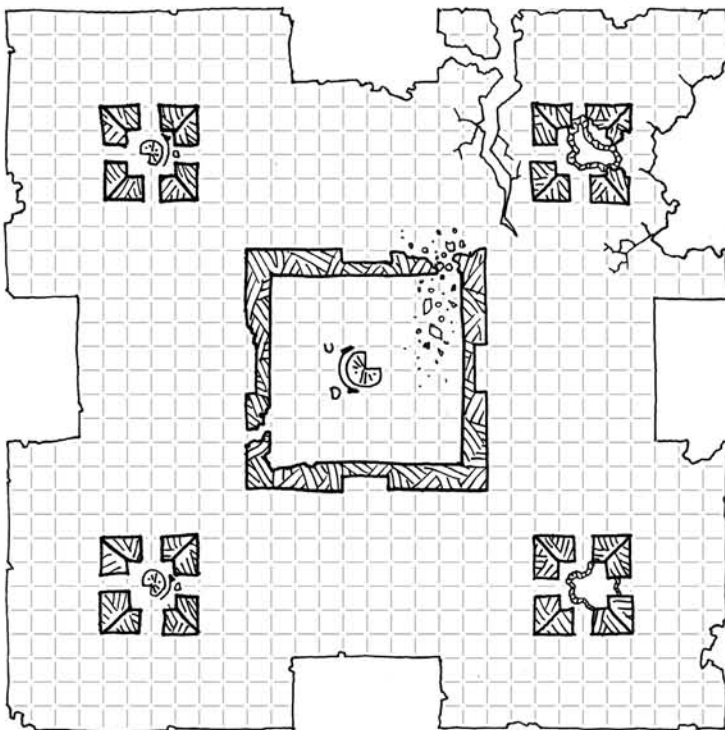
The Ruined Ha'Tak Temple



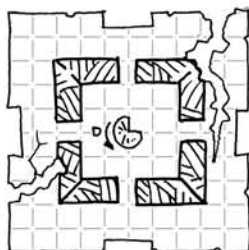
There's a structure in the Forbidden City with five small pyramids poking out of the roof. It was once either a museum or a temple – definitely a place where people came to contemplate (their history, their gods, all of the above?)

The east side of the structure is partially collapsed, with one wing having almost fully given way and crashed down into the street.

The five pyramids in turn were taken over by the local dwellers as nests for their giant wasps – each pyramid is now a mass of mud and paper that held a number of giant wasps before the area was contested by the newest dwellers in the city.



The most recent dwellers in the city are also the weakest, but proved that they are not to be underestimated. When harassed by the grippli upon their giant wasp mounts, the latest arrivals (bullywugs) began a guerrilla action to wipe out the wasp nests closest to their homes. These ruins were the scene of one of these actions, and the long-dead exoskeletons of poisoned wasps still litter the area.

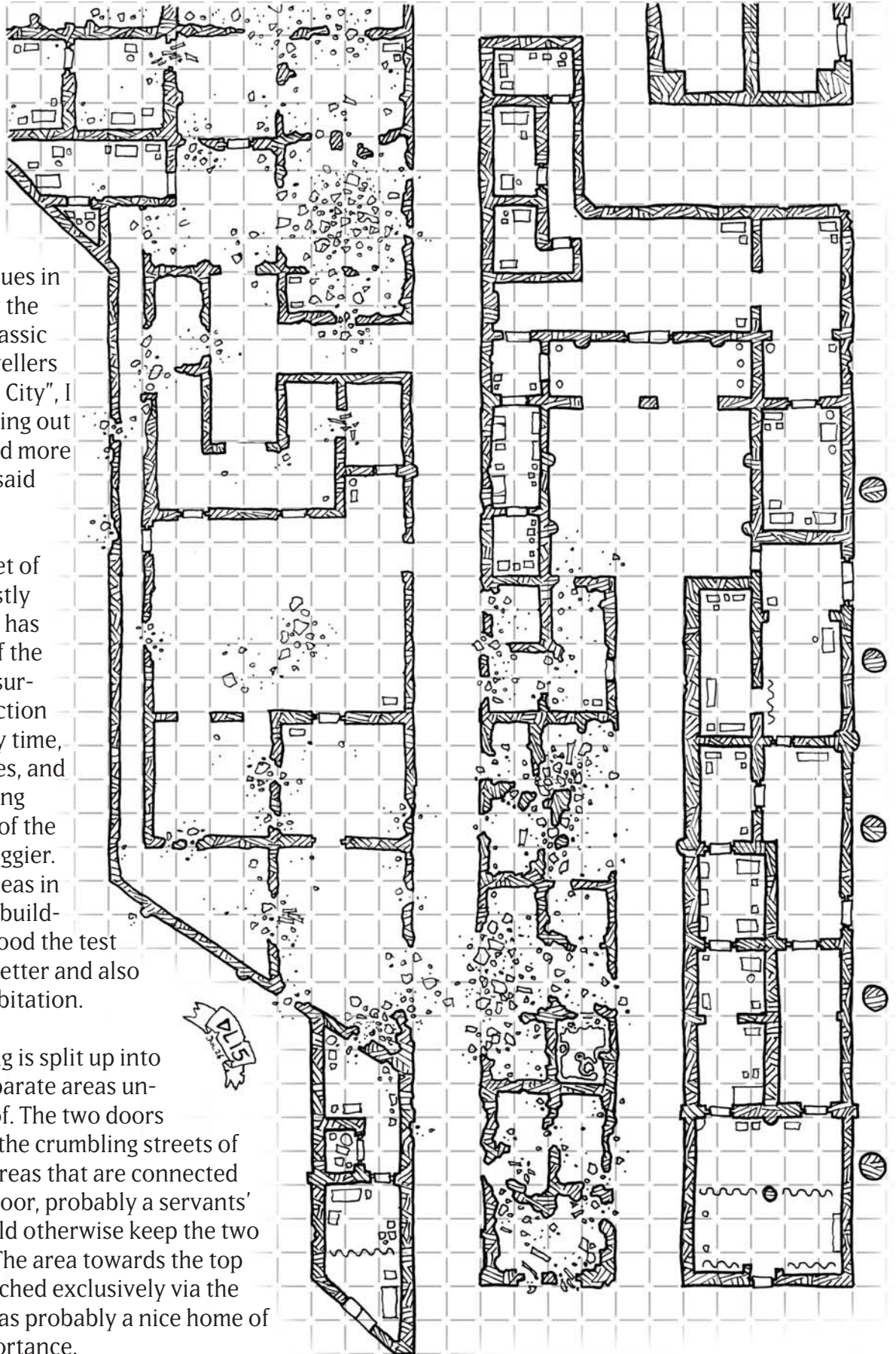


Ruins of the Forbidden City

As my D&D5e campaign continues in the titular city at the heart of the classic 1981 module "Dwellers of the Forbidden City", I find myself drawing out maps of more and more structures from said ruins.

This particular set of structures is mostly in ruins, but also has a large section of the temple that has survived the destruction brought about by time, ancient calamities, and the gradual sinking and liquifaction of the land as it gets boggier. There are also areas in the more ruined buildings that have stood the test of time slightly better and also show signs of habitation.

The main building is split up into two-to-three separate areas under the same roof. The two doors leading out into the crumbling streets of the city lead to areas that are connected by a very small door, probably a servants' door, which would otherwise keep the two areas separate. The area towards the top of the map is reached exclusively via the courtyard and was probably a nice home of someone of importance.

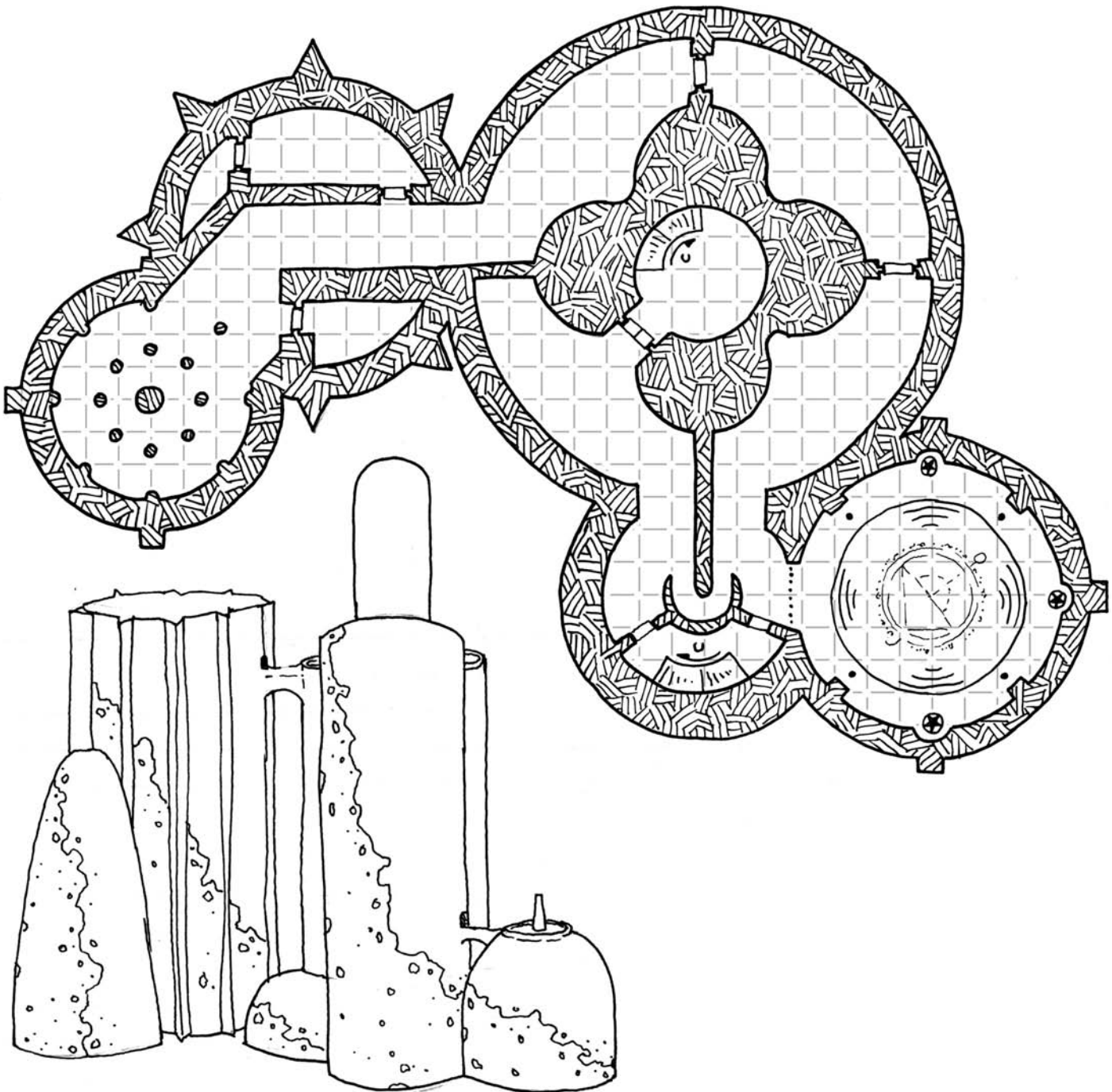


The Portal Nexus

Once again it is not much of a secret that I have a love for towers (and a recent love for drawing lots of circles on a piece of paper and calling it a map). For this one I wanted a set of towers with no obvious entry (at least at ground level).

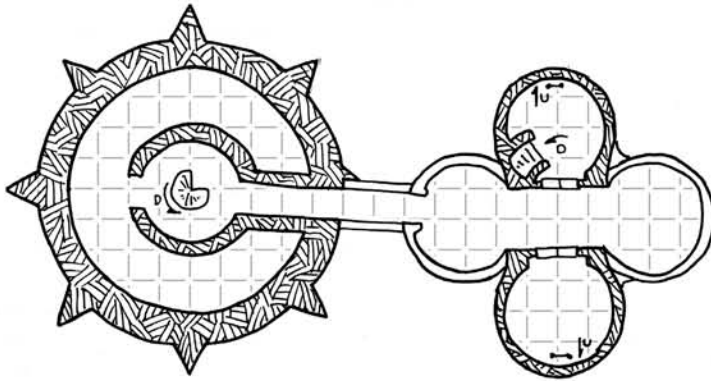
What it evolved into as I drew it is a cluster of interlinked towers that enclose a series of portals to other towers in other realms.

While the ground floor only has two portals at this point (the magic circles at the two end towers) and no entrances or egresses, the upper floors (to be posted on Friday) contain more portals and some open-air sections where enterprising thieves and persons with flying steeds could gain access to the complex.





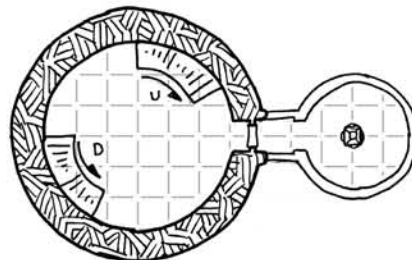
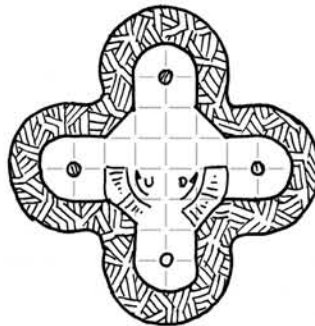
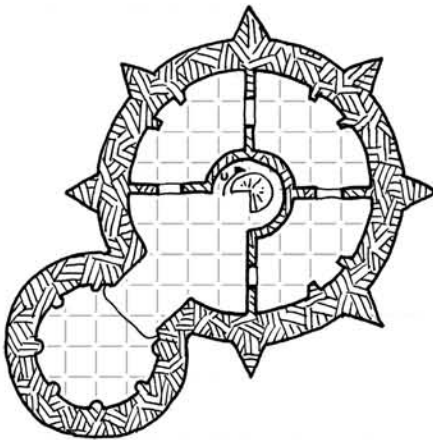
The top level is two towers connected by a covered bridge. I picture a single portal right in the middle of the bridge, so you can't actually use the bridge to get from tower to tower without crossing through the portal.



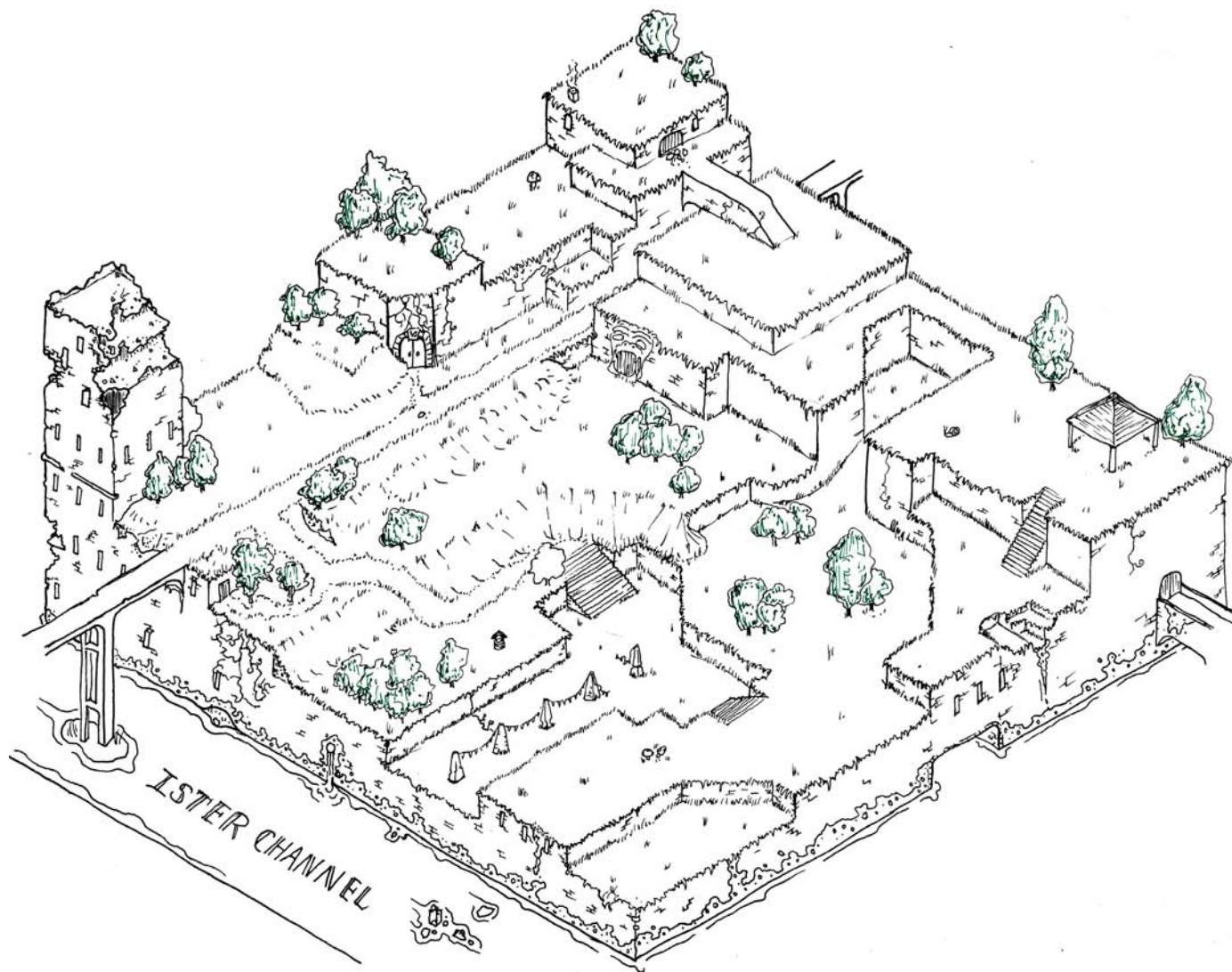
The next level down is three towers, two of which are connected by an open-air bridge. The tower on the left I picture as having two portals, at the two dead-end regions of the c-shaped room.



Finally the level just above the ground floor is comprised of multiple towers, and also is home to the only open-air portal of the structure. There is a large pillar made of green stone sitting on the roof of one of the smaller towers and reached by a bridge – when activated it calls down a bolt of green lighting from the skies and is open for travel for ten minutes. The spike-sided tower to the left is also home to three more portals (and a balcony overlooking the stone circle on the main level), each embedded in the wall of its own chamber, framed in heavy obsidian blocks.



A Green and Pleasant Map



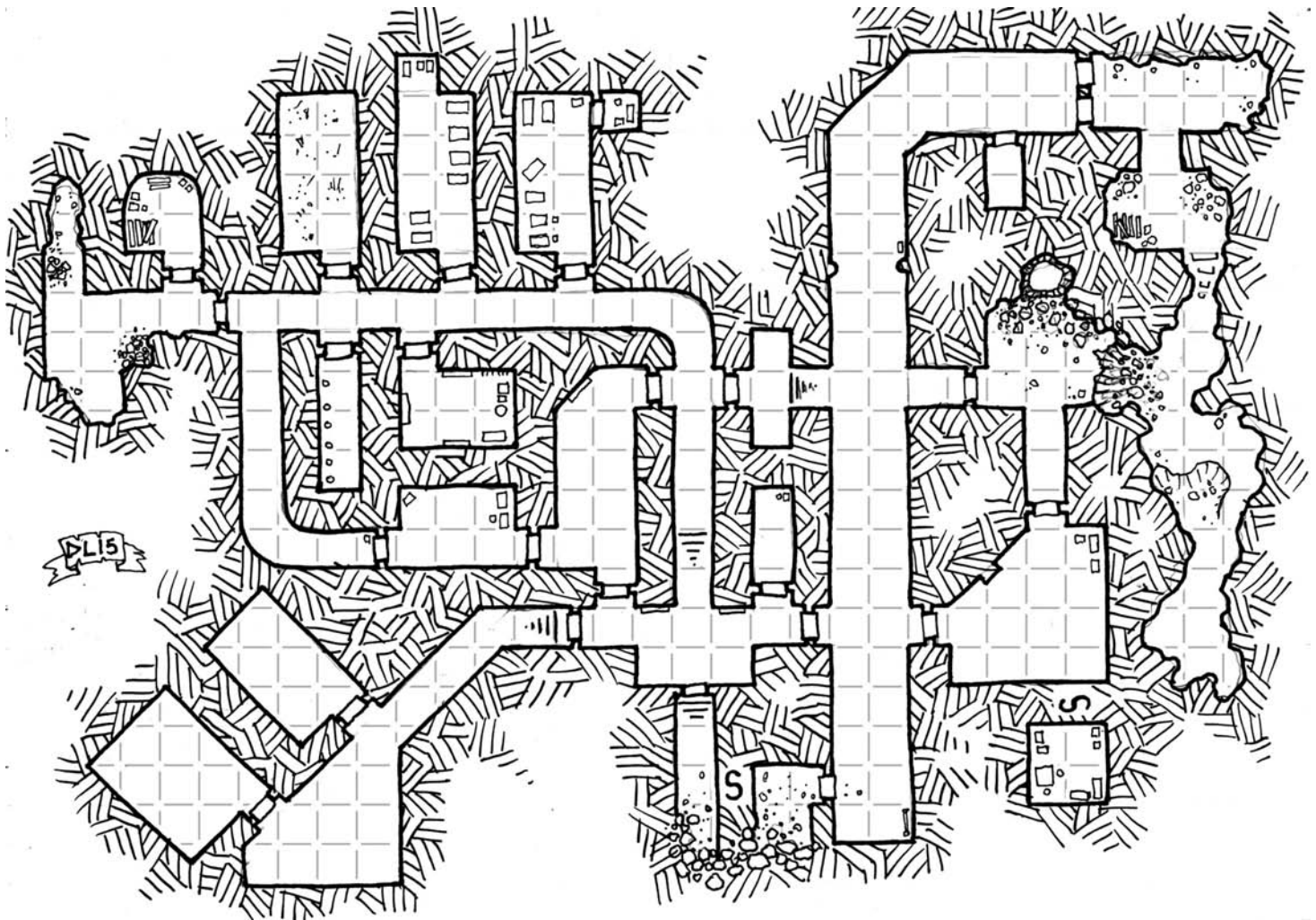
A companion piece to the Red and Pleasant Map, this map was inspired by the gardens of Voivodja. A city block-sized chunk of city, surrounded by streams with a few bridges connecting it to its neighbours. While mostly covered in greenery and small trees, the remnants of the city below are more clear here than in most gardens, with a few entrances into the city itself as well as visible walls and towers.

When I was drawing this I pictured a group of adventurers encountering a hunting party here – teleporting in through the devilish face built

into the wall near the top of the map (after all, the vampires among the hunting party cannot travel here across the bridges, so they need other routes to enter the garden).

They are hunting a wounded and grounded kirin that some believe has hidden itself here. If the party does not get involved in the hunt (on either side), when they return to the surface there will be a grand party underway, with various vampires enjoying the bloodied chunks of the once noble beast they have slain, while taunting the child in the well.

Sir James' Lost Base



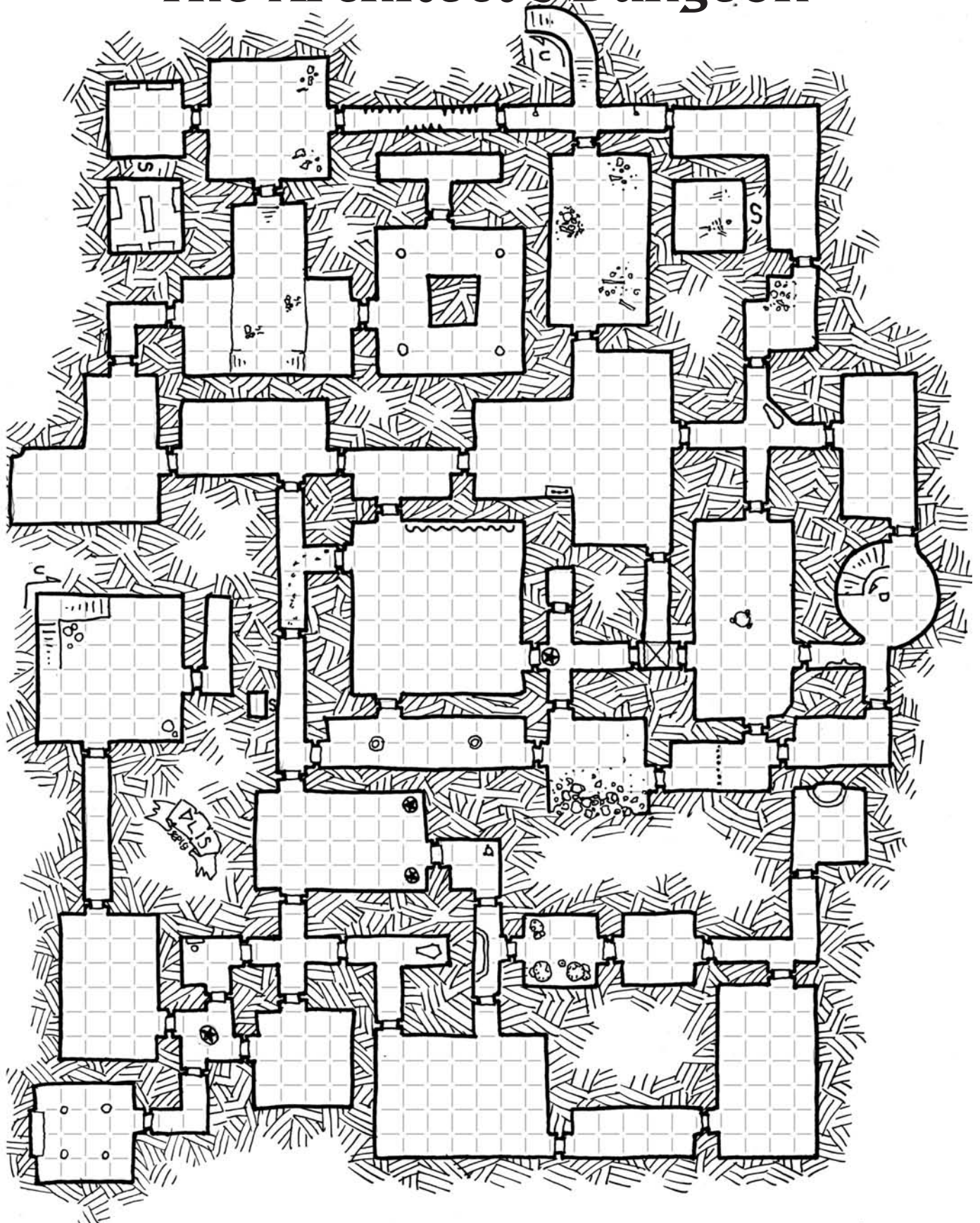
Sir James sought out an underground military headquarters from which he could command troops and maintain an eye on logistics but also be out of sight when needed. In the end he commissioned a pair of underground headquarters, neither of which was really completed before his death.

This particular structure was not only incomplete, but Sir James never used it as its designer intended, instead using it as a decoy base. Construction was never completed and the front entrance to the structure (at the lower middle of the page) was collapsed to prevent it falling into enemy hands.

To enter the structure now, one has to come in through the ceiling of a chamber that was undermined during construction and subsequently collapsed (drawn as the hole in the upper-right quadrant of the map). The hole is a fairly recent entryway, and little of the underlying structure has been looted or explored.

The structure was evidently meant to be significantly larger when completed, but the vagaries of war and the role it got pushed into as a decoy kept it from being properly expanded before it was buried.

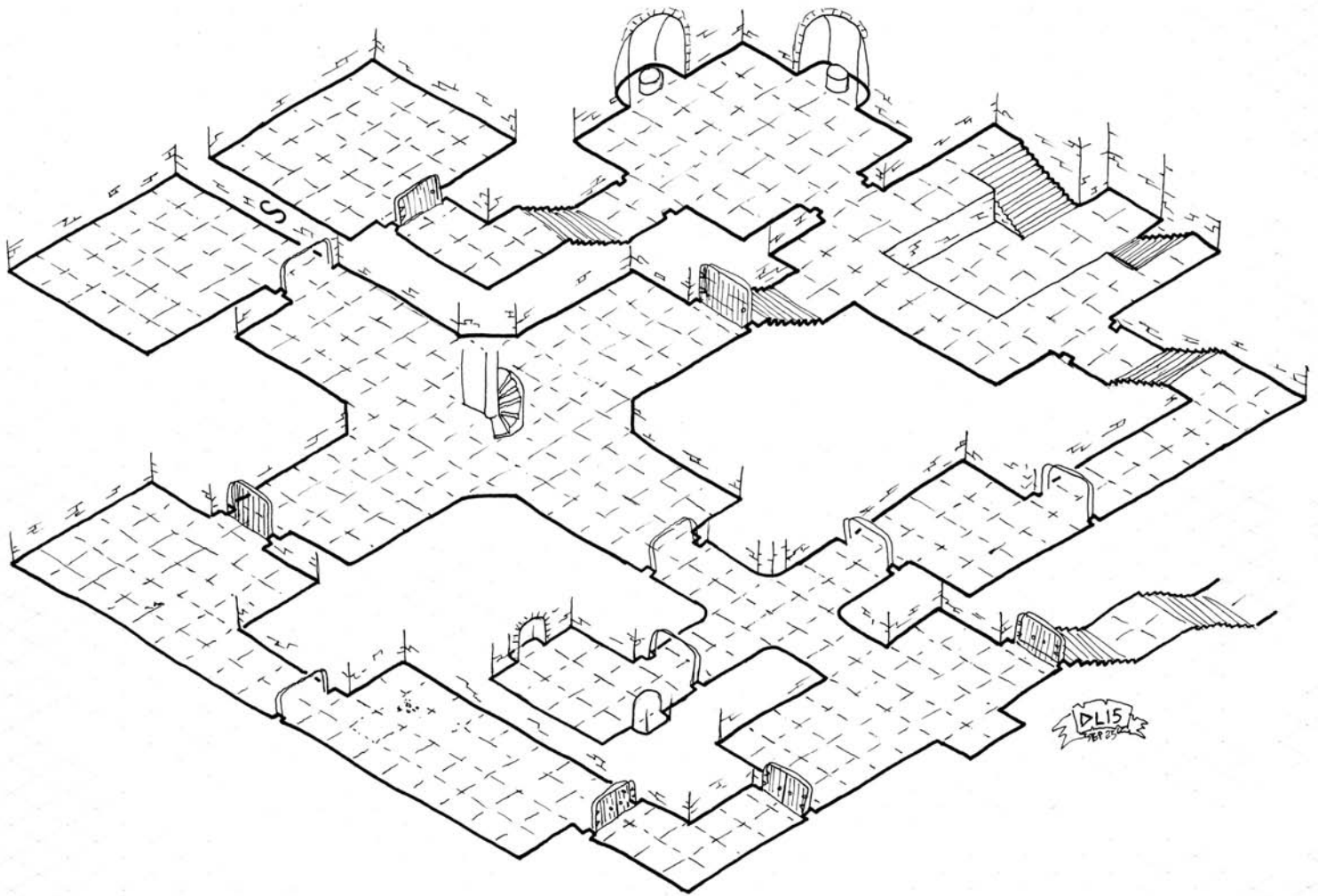
The Architect's Dungeon



This dungeon was mostly randomly generated using the Dungeon Architect Cards that I got from a Kickstarter in 2015.

You can probably still acquire the cards (at least in PDF format) from Simian Circle Games.

The Architect's Isometric Delve

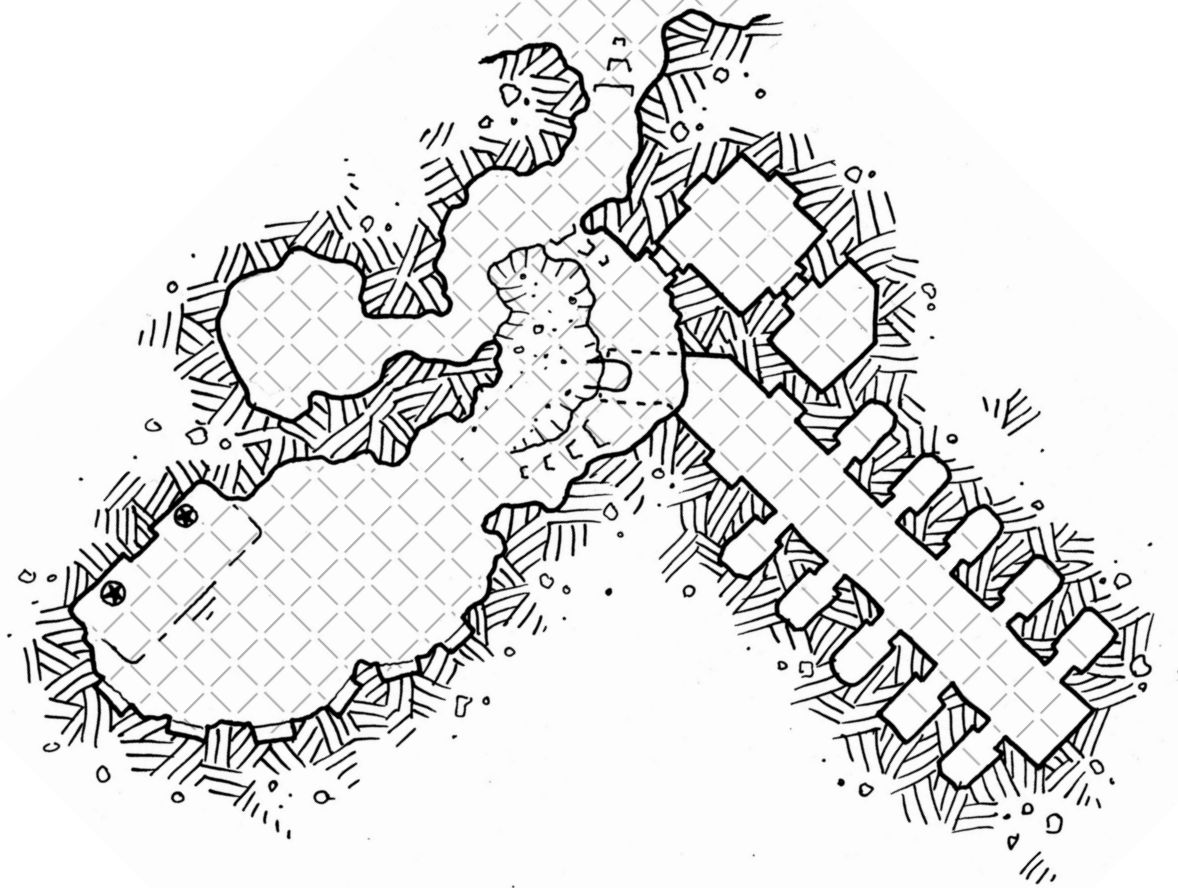


This is another map drawn using the Dungeon Architect Cards as the baseline for the design and structure.

I wanted a map that was smaller and less sprawling than my first try with the cards (the Architect's Dungeon on the previous page). Since I had a new pad of isometric paper that I haven't tried yet (from squarehex), I combined the two ideas together into one great tasting dungeon. Less than a dozen rooms make this a perfectly sized dungeon level for an evening of play (or two if you use a system with particularly long combats and decide to sprinkle multiple groups of enemies through the level).

The isometric design really POPS in this one — a combination of the hand-drawn grid and the lightly drawn and non-overlapping walls. I'm quite proud of the whole thing. It also manages to have a bit more character than the larger Dungeon Architect Card map — a combination of the ability to draw in more character at this scale and the limited size of the structure.

Crypt of the Child Kings



This is the real meat and potatoes of my fantasy games – small underground maps of caves that have been modified for human or subhuman occupation or use.

In this case, the cave has been converted into a set of crypts with a pair of preparatory rooms above and a small shrine in the largest cave, with several more crypts along the walls of the shrine (where the bodies of the high priests are said to be laid).

The crypts have lain quiet and abandoned for years. As Jens Larsen posits:

Were the child kings really... children...? Human children? Or was that just the closest, non-disturbing epithet that their subjects could think of? And why so many tombs? How many were there of these child kings? Was it a long line of rulers that were buried as they passed away? Or do the signs that they all died at the same time speak the truth? Were they in fact an eternal group of rulers that met with a sudden challenge they could not overcome?

Sickness.

A curse.

Invasion.

Retribution.

Maybe the answer lies within.

Maybe it should just stay that way.

An old man still watches over the lower caves from the preparatory chambers near the entrance, but everyone knows he is too frightened to descend any further than those two chambers. According to his tales (all second-hand from people at the tavern) no one ever descends the ancient stairs into the cavern, and yet he hears noises from below on a regular basis.

The Coot's Egg

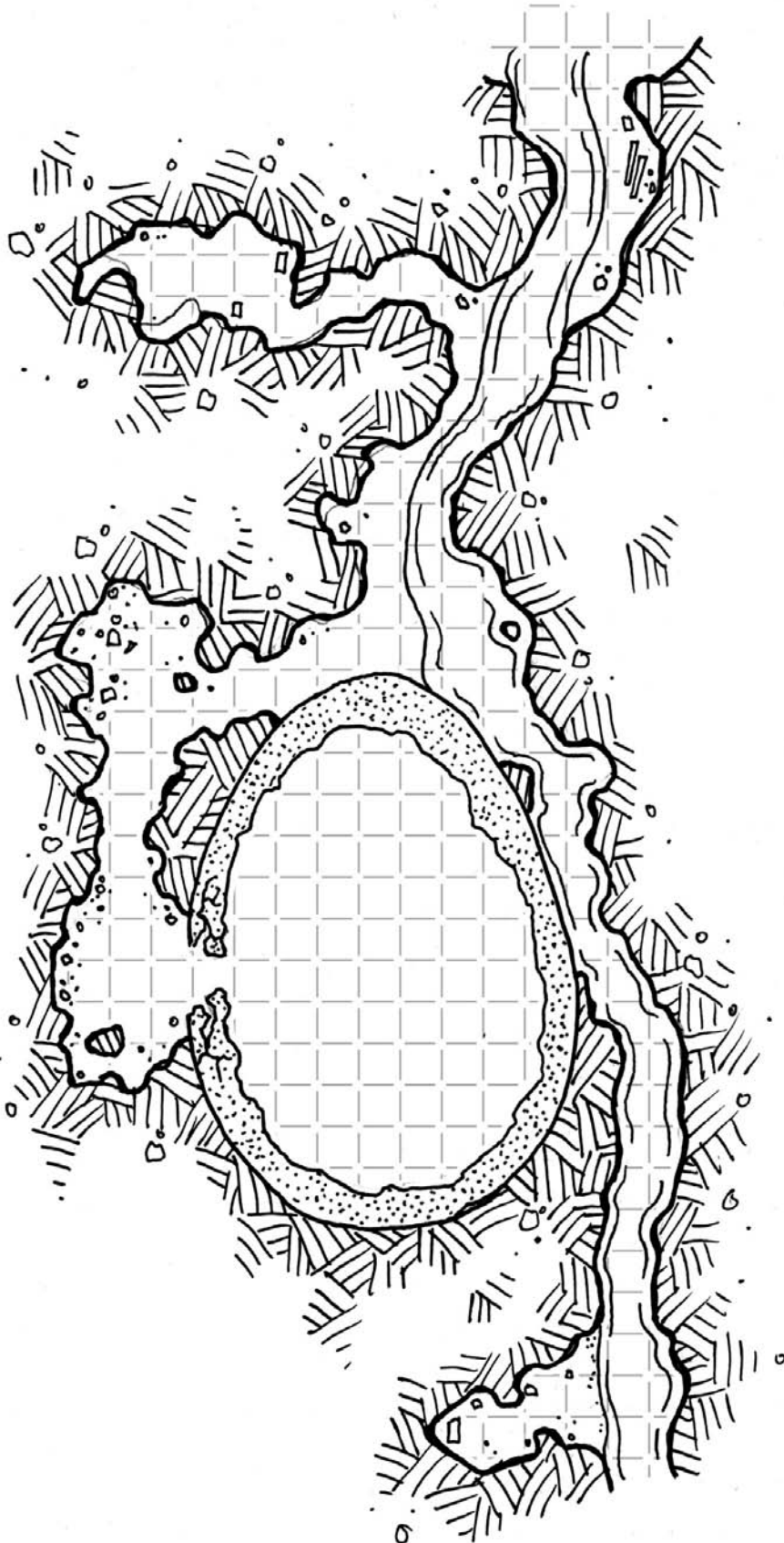
Obviously the name of this is a bit of a joke referencing the "Egg of Coot" from Arneson's "The First Fantasy Campaign" (which some people take to be an attack on Mr Gyax, but was in fact aimed at Gregg Scott, head of Microarmor at the time).

An insanely large egg lies underground here, partially exposed by a small underground river and further excavations by parties unknown.

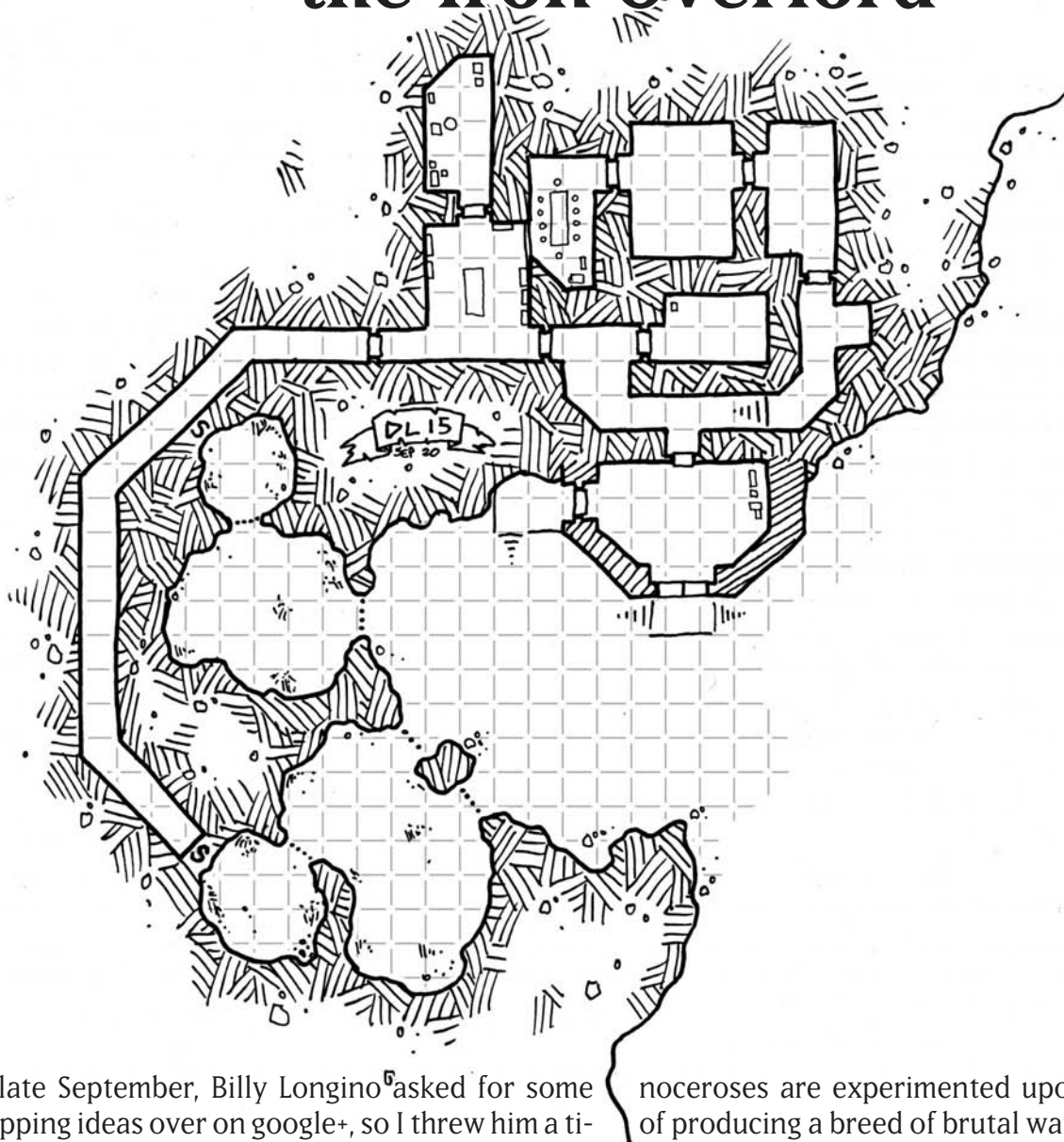
Some like to think it was a dragon's egg. But the scale makes that unlikely at best – what dragon could lay a 140 foot long egg? Even guesses about the tarrasque's reproductive cycle get caught up by the size of this shell.

Of course, the point is pretty much moot now, because unknown forces have cracked the egg and consumed whatever was within.

But there are strange things afoot in the nearest village, and the six-eyed sage of the Amber Hills claims that the egg was the embryo of a god. And whoever ate it might have left enough yolk behind for some of the children to have found it and played with it or even eaten it...



Rhinoceros Containment Caves of the Iron Overlord



In late September, Billy Longino⁶ asked for some mapping ideas over on google+, so I threw him a little I was working on at the time – Rhinoceros Containment Caves of the Iron Overlord. He thought it was me trying to throw him off his game, but he worked through it and produced a really cool little map.

But it wasn't really a joke, as I was in the middle of my own version of said map and was curious how he would interpret the name compared to my version (because his mapping style is quite similar to mine and I really do like it).

The Iron Overlord (a sorcerer of some power who is never seen outside of his full plate armour) maintains this hillside structure where the rhi-

noceroses are experimented upon with the goal of producing a breed of brutal war rhinos. Most of the time the place is fairly quiet, observing the four rhinos in their two enclosures. But sometimes the rhinos are magically tranquilized and carried up the sloping corridor to the lab. The room adjoining the lab to the east is also twelve feet above the lab, allowing the Iron Overlord and any guests to oversee the work being done to the rhinos without getting their hands bloody.

The whole facility lies just outside of whatever city the Iron Overlord is based out of. Most of those who work here live on the outskirts of town and walk here to work (cleaning and feeding staff) while the surgeon who does the major work lives in the offices behind the viewing room.

The Shattered Tower

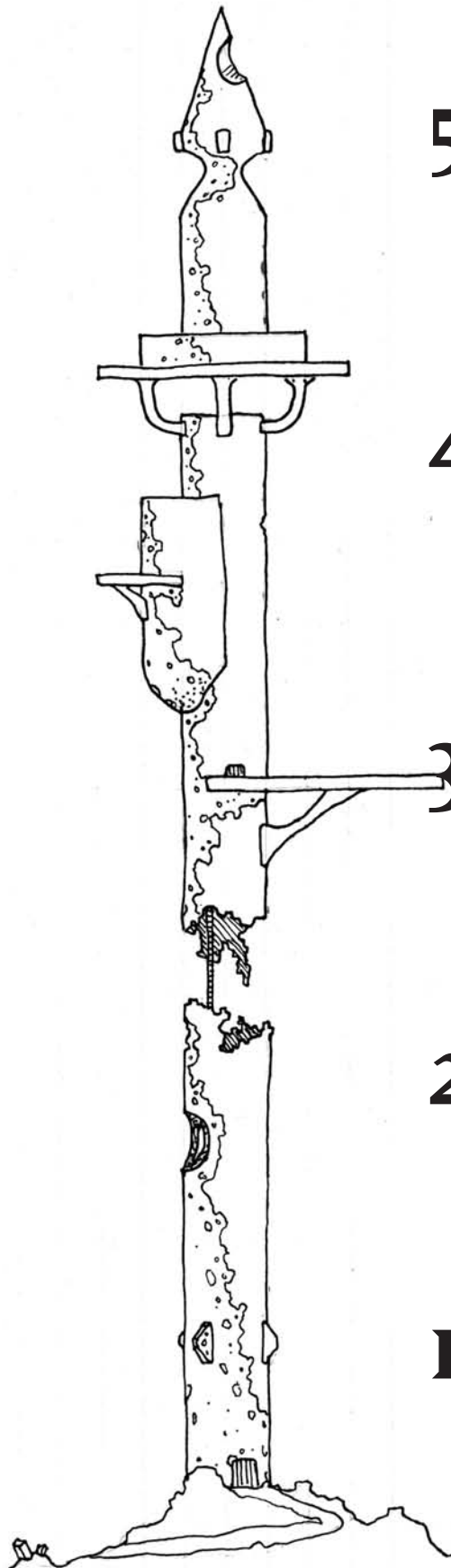
One of the quickest and easiest ways to indicate weirdness to players is to have something quietly and simply defying gravity. In the case of the Shattered Tower it may not even be immediately apparent... until you look up and see the break in the incredibly tall tower almost 180 feet above ground and that the upper reaches of the tower are only connected to the lower areas by a simple ladder.

The tower itself dates back to elven rule or possibly earlier and thrusts up silently from the rough mountainous terrain of the Amaranthine Wastes, casting its shadow like a sundial across the Violaceous Cut where the Ironflow river crosses into the wastes.

The entrance to the tower is a massive door of an unknown variety of stone likely imported to this world from across the dimensional boundaries, kept wizard locked through the ages. Those wishing to enter and explore the spire are best to bring at least one means of knocking aside the sealing enchantments that still work to keep the tower safe from interlopers.

Only in the last year has the ladder between the lower and upper parts of the shattered tower shown up. It has been mentioned by travellers in the past, but it is likely that whoever had erected the ladder also pulled it up to the upper portion of the tower when it wasn't in use. But for the last eight months the ladder has been visible from the Violaceous Cut to those with spyglasses and magically enhanced vision that can

see across the distances involved. Perhaps those who put it there have suffered some foul fate? Or do they no longer require secrecy in their endeavours? Or have they just left the tower completely, leaving their ladder behind?



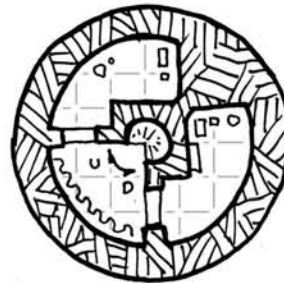
5



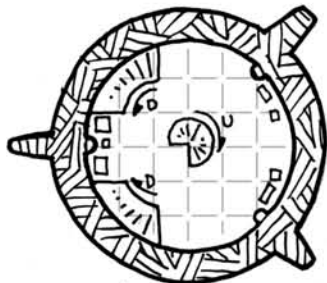
4



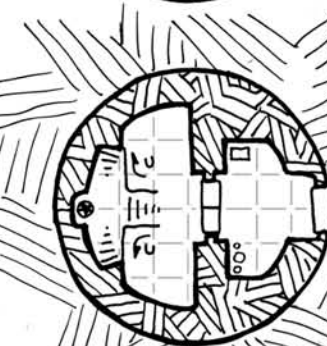
3



2

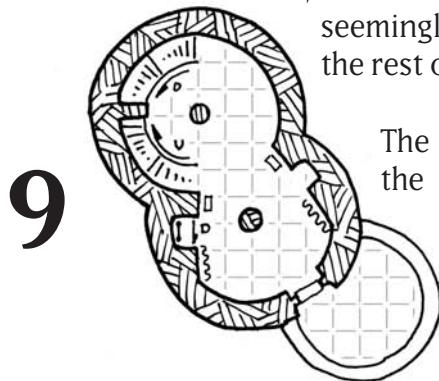


1



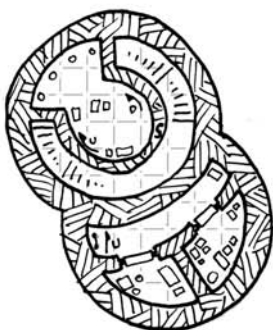
The upper levels (6 through 13) float in the air above the base of the tower, slowly lifting and falling by about 18 inches vertically and maybe 12 inches side to side. The structure defies gravity, but seems anchored to this physical locus, unable and unwilling to be moved elsewhere.

For ages there was no connection between the lower and upper levels of the tower, but recently someone hung a rope ladder down from the upper levels. At one point the rope ladder would be raised when not in use, but now it just hangs there, seemingly abandoned like the rest of the structure.



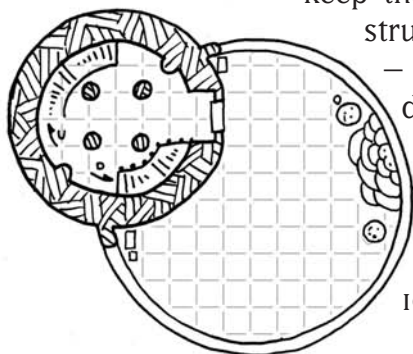
9

The external areas of the upper levels are home to two different flying beasts that have come to some sort of compromise and rarely



8

fight among themselves – on the top-most balcony nests a family of wyverns, and the lower two balconies are home to a clamour of harpies who remain frustrated at the arcane locks that keep them out of the structure proper



7

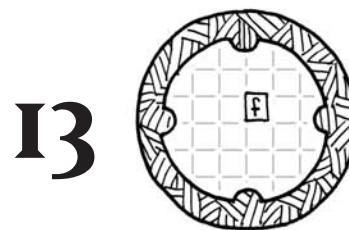
– however some do wander into the tower levels via the open stairwell on level 10.



6

Access to the mid levels is through the floor of level 6 (via the ladder that hangs from the hole in the floor), or the stairwell at the top of level 10 which has no ceiling. Access to the upper structures (levels 11, 12 and

13) is either by flying to the wyvern-infested landing of level 11, or figuring out how to reactivate the teleporter system that used to move people between levels 10 & 11.

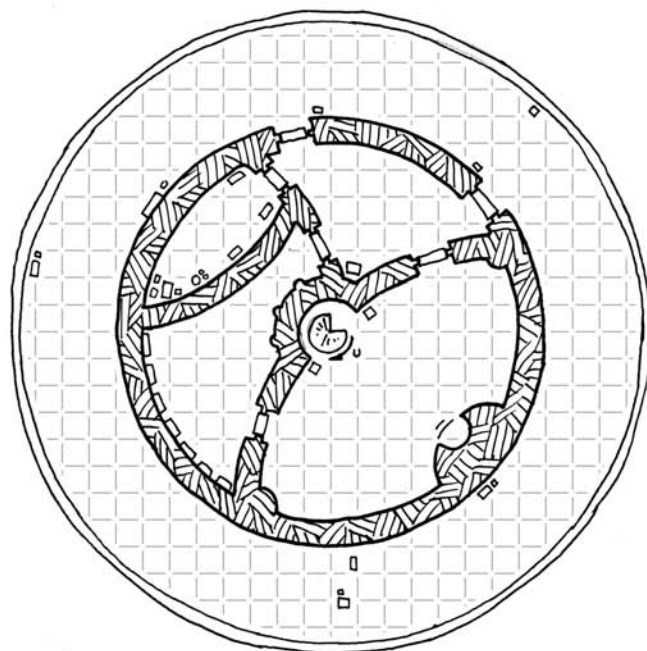


13

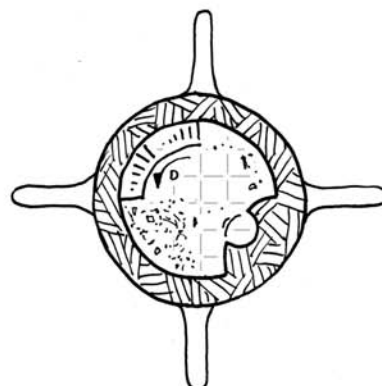


12

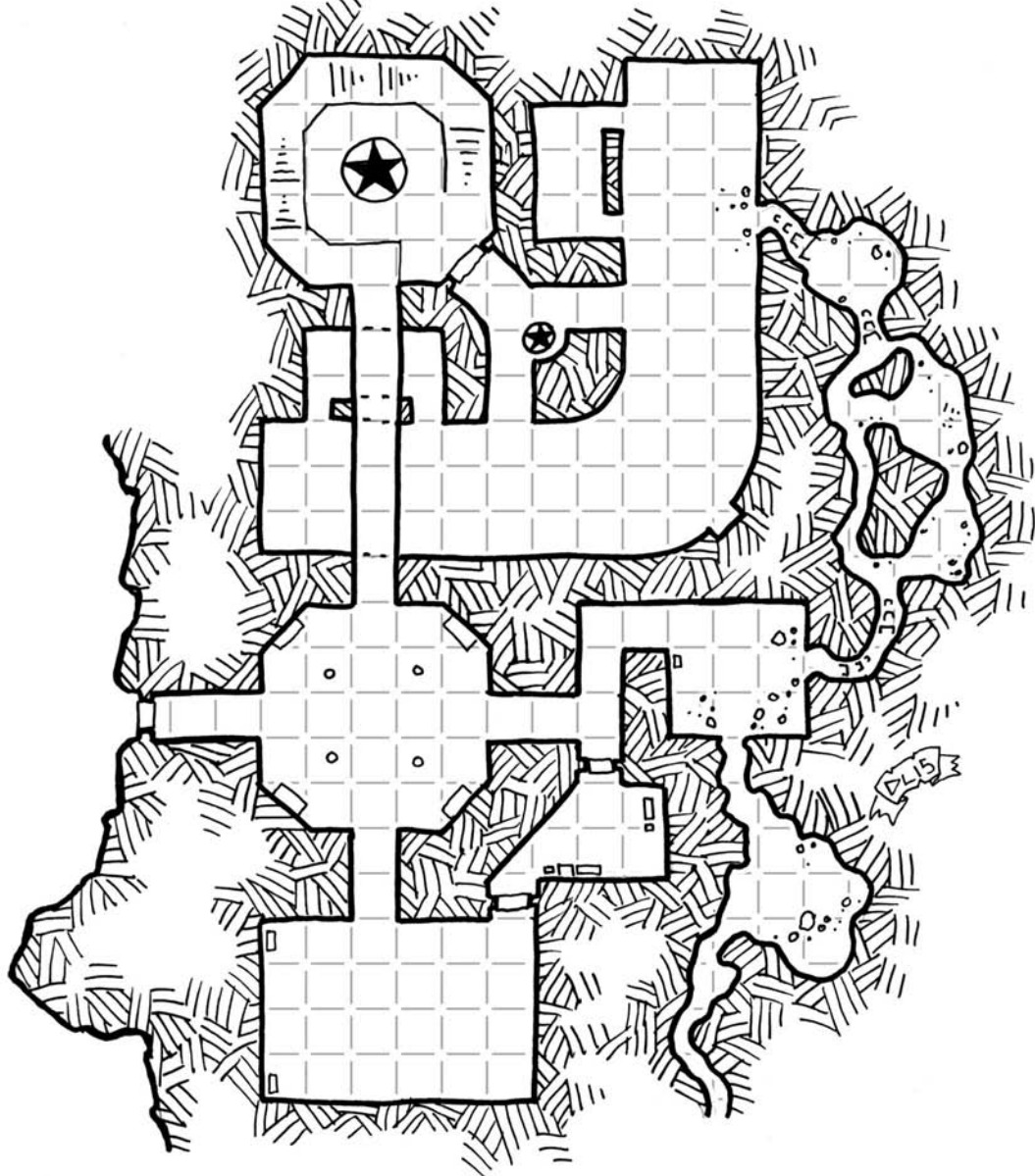
11



10



The First Breach



The first of the dwarven earthships to come to this world failed to breach the surface and its engines failed somewhere beneath the Plains of Harr – now the Harr Badlands after centuries of war between the Kale and the armies of men.

After the fighting was over, dwarven engineers sealed off the ancient ship, but only after bringing the ship's mind up from the depths and building a small temple or memorial for it. The ship's mind still resides in the great hall of the First Breach, offering advice to those who would seek it out.

Unfortunately, it is most definitely insane.

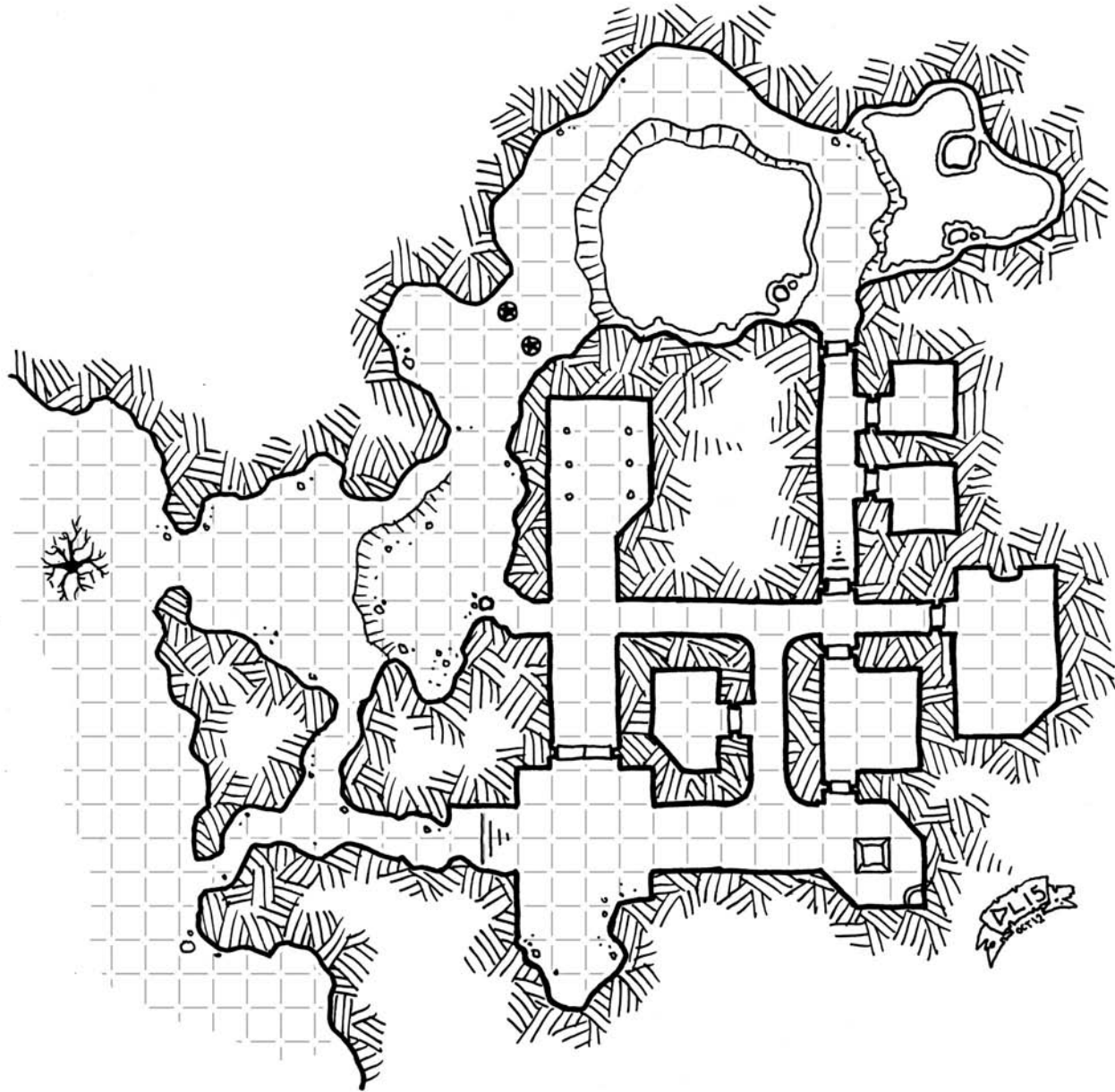
Now the door to the Breach is locked and the dwarven caretakers have departed with their kin

in the working Earthships deep underground to travel between the worlds and hopefully find their way home.

The Breach in turn has been breached again by others – subhuman creatures who listen to the mad whispers of the ship's mind and have dug down along the old paths the dwarves sealed... perhaps as deep as the ruined earthship itself?

The great stairs down to the hall where the mind holds court curls around a massive statue of the dwarven captain who lead the ship here and who died in the wars thereafter. The smaller statue down the hall is a representation of his daughter, the engineer of the lost earthship, who rescued the ship's mind from the crushed remains.

Warrek's Nest



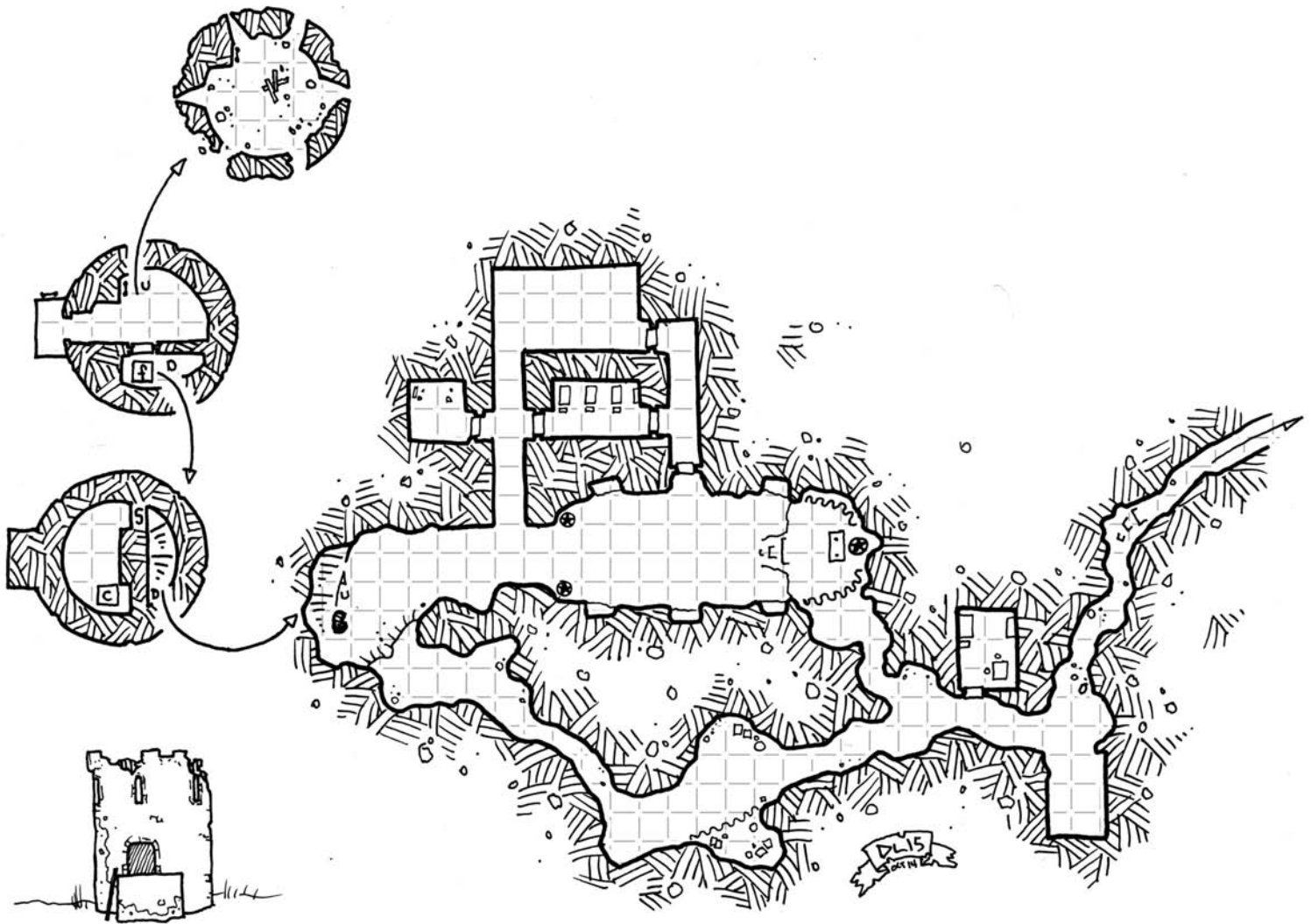
The very beginnings of an underground citadel that never was, Warrek's Nest expanded on an existing cave and was meant to become a massive multi-leveled underground structure. The location was chosen because of the presence of water, easy access to farmland, and limestone which was easy to dig through. However, no one expected the limestone to be home to rock worms, and the water to have small subterranean access to a nest of obscene eyes.

Construction soon came to a stop, and Lord Warrek the Strong ended up hidden in the finished struc-

tures with his loyal retainers – besieged by stone worms, harried by obscene eyes, and completely insane with claustrophobia.

Today the nest is quieter – home to a sorcerer who has magically harnessed the rock worms and is using them to restart construction in the great hall and who has killed all but one of the obscene eyes in the waters. The sorcerer and his flunkies generally keep the the southern portion of the nest. The corridor to the water has two locked rooms that are home to any prisoners the sorcerer currently has.

Brenton's Watch



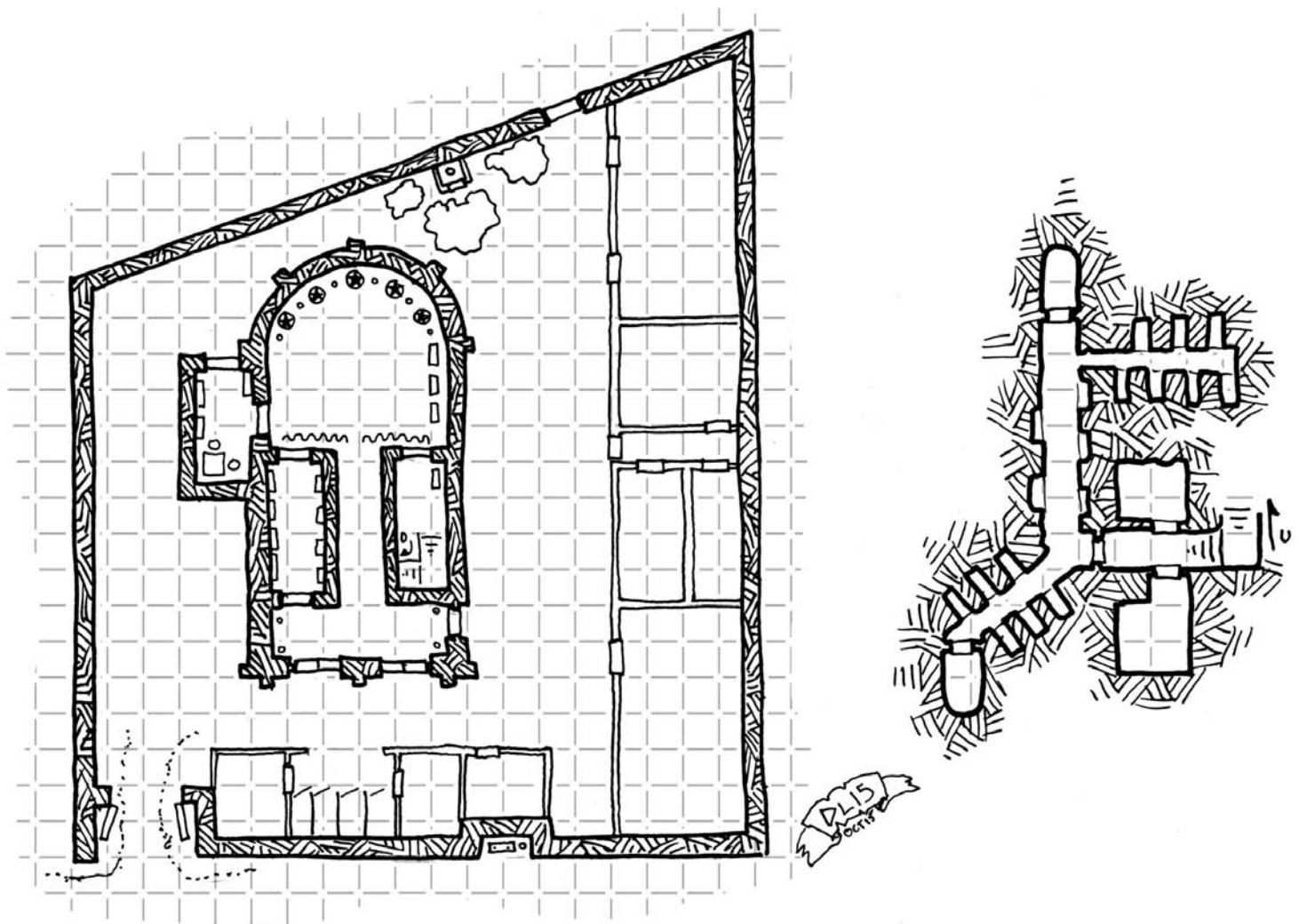
Brenton's Watch is an old watchtower, one of dozens scattered along the borders of the old Andlic Kingdom. Now it is basically an abandoned stump of stone about an hour outside of Treffinor. Far enough away that no one cares, and close enough that people can still get there quietly and without too much preparation.

If you were to explore the grounds nearby you would find an area in the bushes where horses are often tied and at the base of the watchtower are the marks in the sandy soil where the base of a ladder is evidently placed to climb into the tower. The ladder is easily spotted once inside the tower as it lies on the floor of the main level, just past the missing entry door. The tower is quietly

abandoned, slowly working its way back into the ground...

But in the basement of the tower there is a secret door, and behind that door a stairwell that leads down into a natural cave beneath the tower. This cave has been modified in some areas and fully renovated in others to produce a church-like atmosphere as well as support structures for a small cult of Ilhan the Binder. Congregants secretly gather here once a month, entering via the watchtower. Unknown to most congregants, the leader of the cult travels here herself via a different route the ends at a well-concealed small cave about 400 feet from the tower.

Keegan's Temple Compound



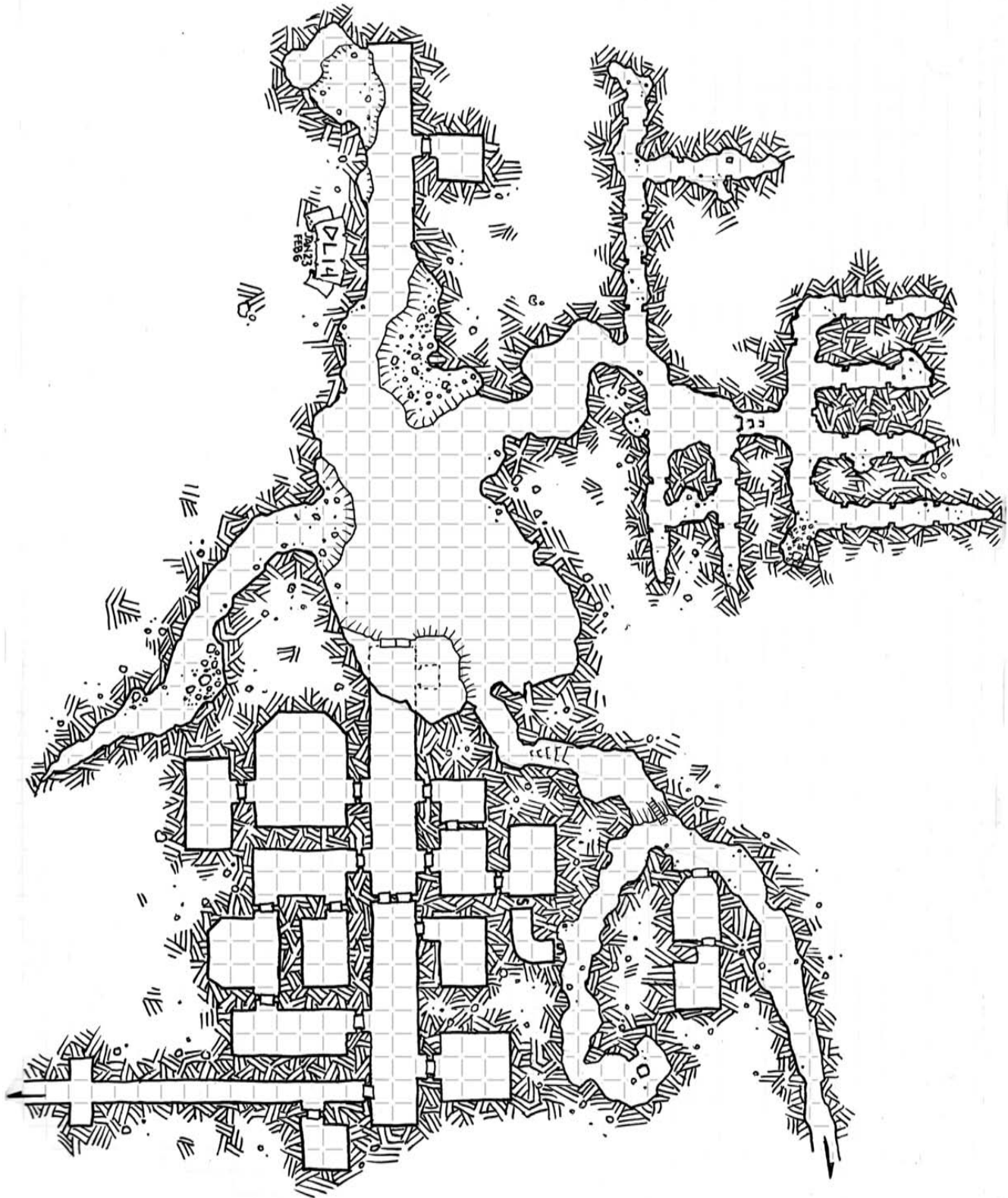
Temples and churches are a fairly common sight in a city, but few maintain a standing military force without having a massive structure or complex to house them in. In the case of Keegan's Temple, the finances were not available to build a massive church / temple / armoury complex. Instead a smaller temple was built in a walled compound donated to the church.

The compound has a main gate and a smaller postern gate for servants and deliveries. Wooden structures along the walls serve as stables, kitch-

ens and barracks. The temple itself is often busy and also fairly exclusive to the order of lawful warrior-priests who reside and base there, so a smaller shrine has been built into the south wall for those who wish to give thanks to or petition the god of this temple without entering into the compound proper.

Beneath the temple itself is a small reliquary and crypt where fallen soldiers and aged priests have been interred and commemorated.

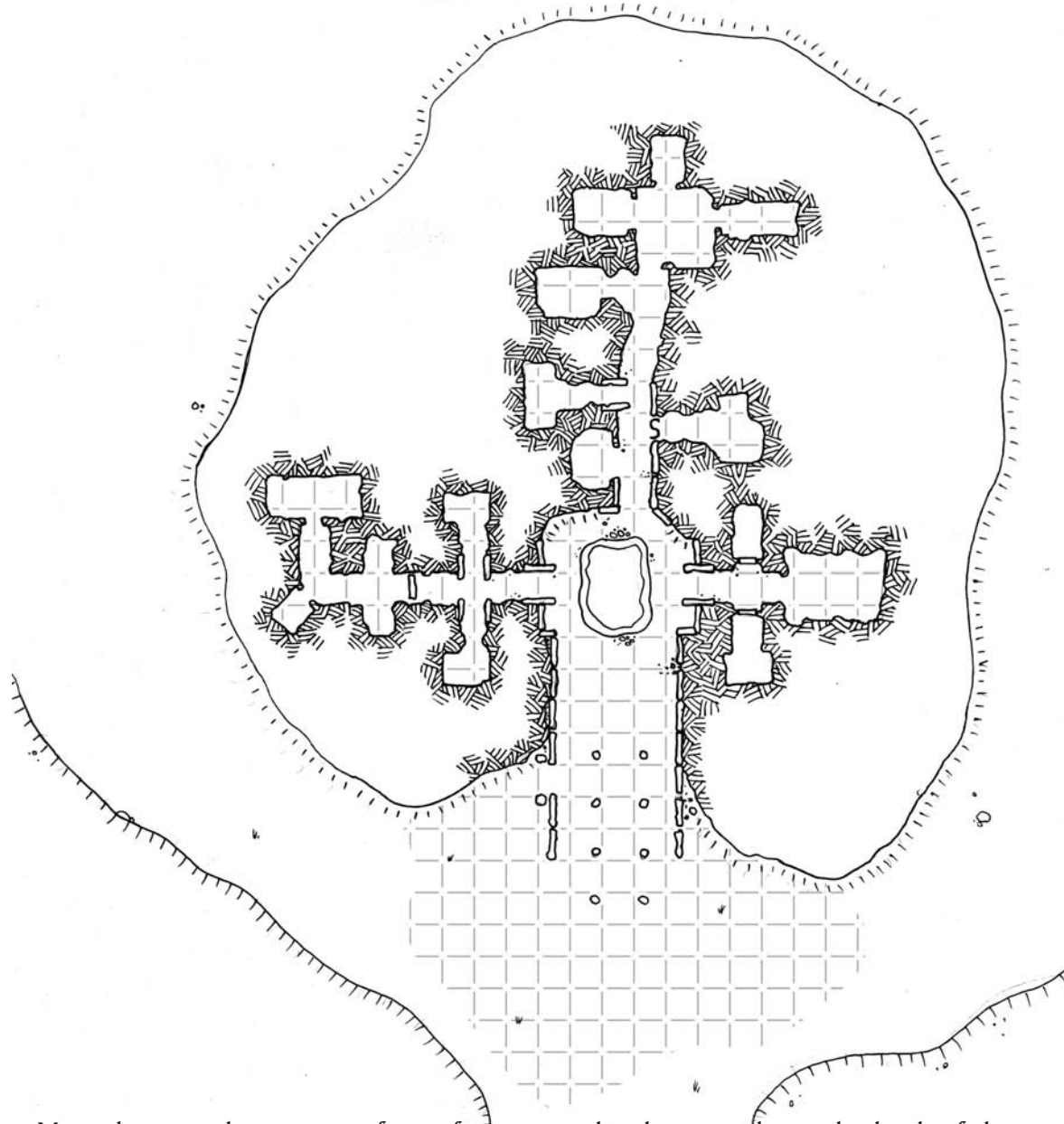
Dwarven Mines



Normally mines are far more extensive than these, but the majority of these mines were converted into more typical dwarven structures, leaving only the unobtainium mines on the northwest face of a large underground cave.

These mines are meant to be linked to another dwarven stronghold, perhaps part of the fallen dwarven fortress of Kuln (as hinted at in the Challenge of the Frog Idol).

Three-Branded Barrow Mound



Barrow Mounds are a huge part of our fantasy mindset — probably because they feature prominently in a few major works of the genre combined with their connection to things ancient that we still discover to this day.

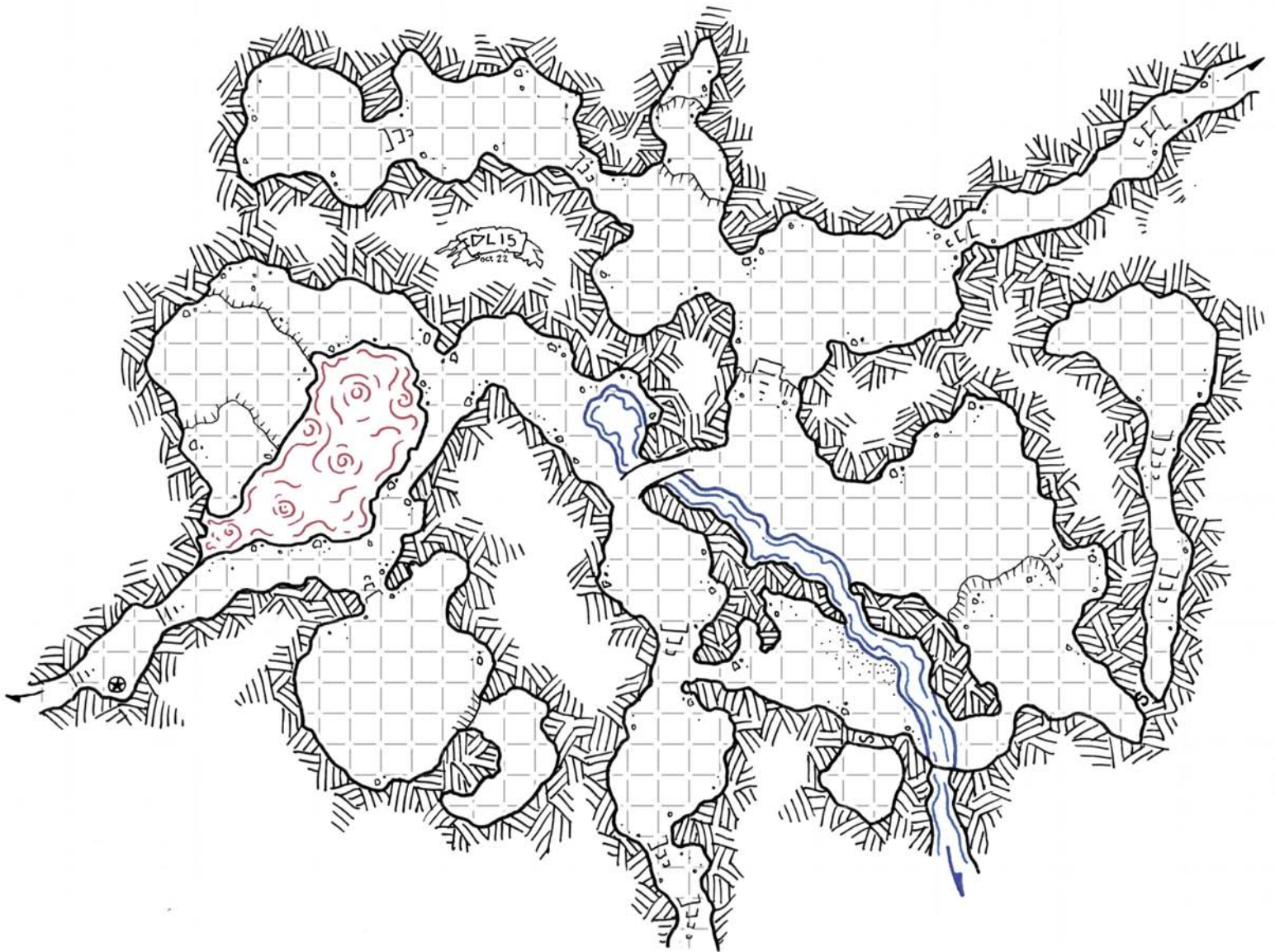
This barrow is a massive mound, built up over generation after generation as it grew. The original barrow is to the back of the mound (top of the map) and has been joined by two more recent additions that have extended the mound significantly.

Because the mound has been expanded, it was also well maintained for generations, producing a massive mound of earth with no less than sixteen tombs within it. The original barrow was just

the three tombs at the back of the northernmost chamber (in itself a three-branch barrow mound from the very beginning). The barrow mound was extended south as new tombs were added and eventually petered out when the front of the barrow began to encroach on the pool of the drowned maiden.

The two tomb structures to each side of the pool of the drowned maiden were added later, and the encroaching mounds were held away from the pool by massive slabs of stone that form the entrance to the three barrows. Everything up to the pool is open to the skies, with the three tomb complexes being apparently dug into the hillside and reinforced with heavy slabs of stone.

Christina's Caves



A significantly more linear dungeon than most of my works, the dungeon is expected to be entered from the upper right and departed (to some horrible evil boss fight, no doubt) on the lower left after circumnavigating the pit of bubbling molten hot magma.

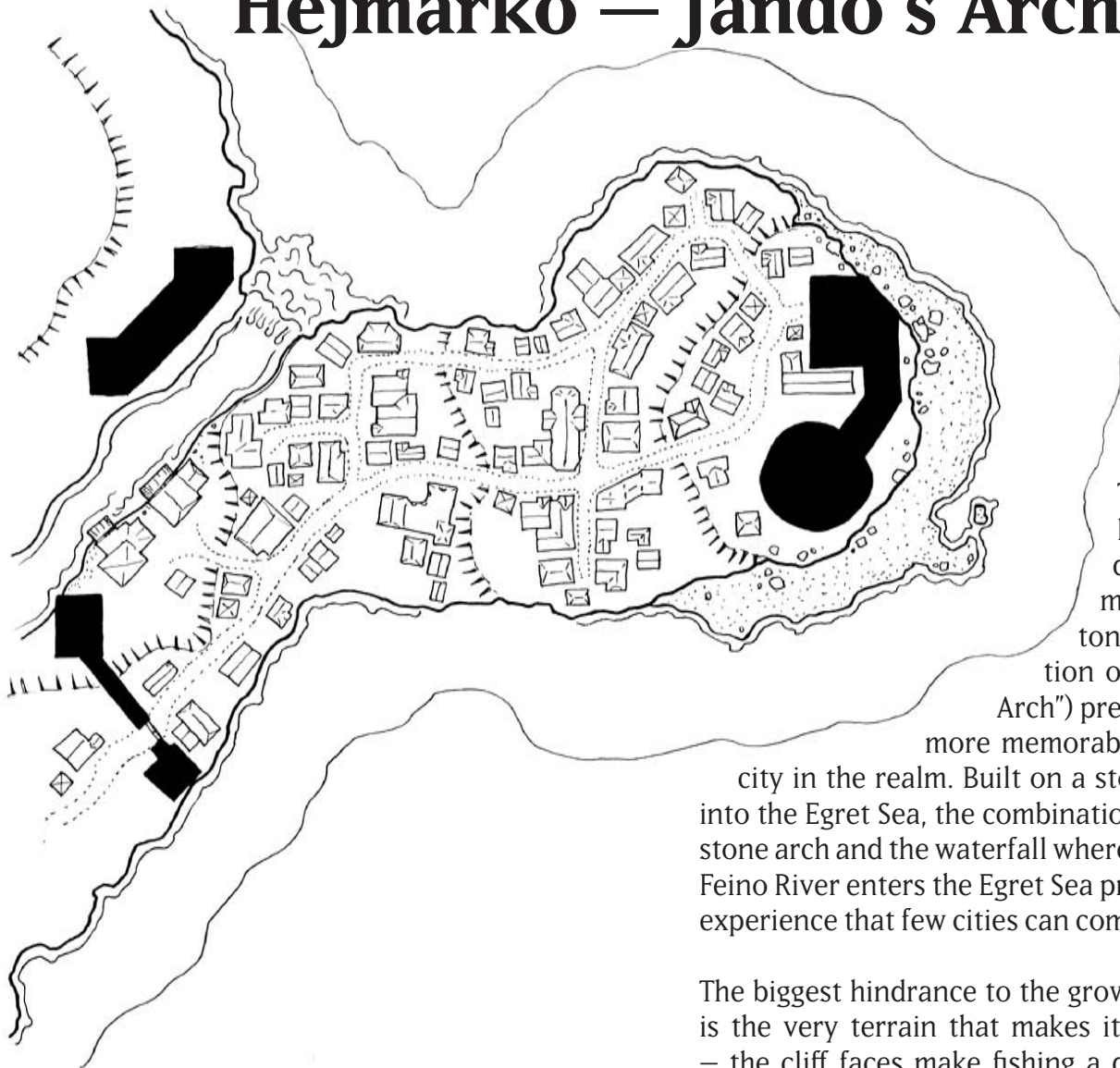
I want to make little airquotes around that word like Dr Evil. "Magma"

The caves are also home to a natural mineral-rich hotspring that is probably fed by the heat of the

"magma" and then flows to the lower right. Obviously this hot spring should be strangely magical, or at least home to some odd treasure a la Dungeon of the Fire Opal from the AD&D DMG.

We can also assume that there are vents in the ceiling of the magma chamber that allow the hot sulfurous gasses to escape the chamber without suffocating everyone who wanders through – this in turn produces a chimney like effect, drawing air rapidly down both entrance / exit passages from the map.

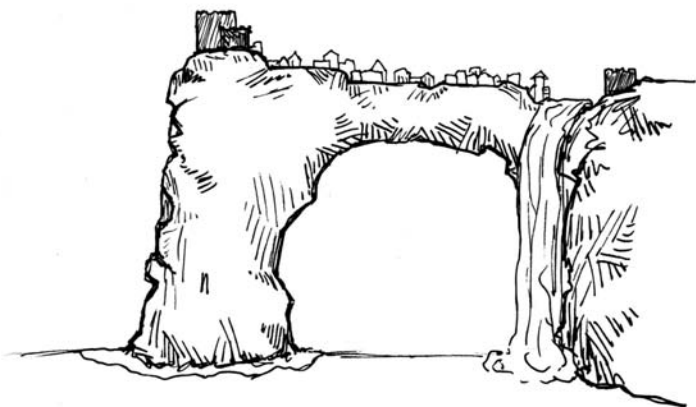
Hejmarko — Jando's Arch



The settlement known as Jando's Arch (Hejmarko in the local tongue, a contraction of "Home on the Arch") presents one of the more memorable vistas of any

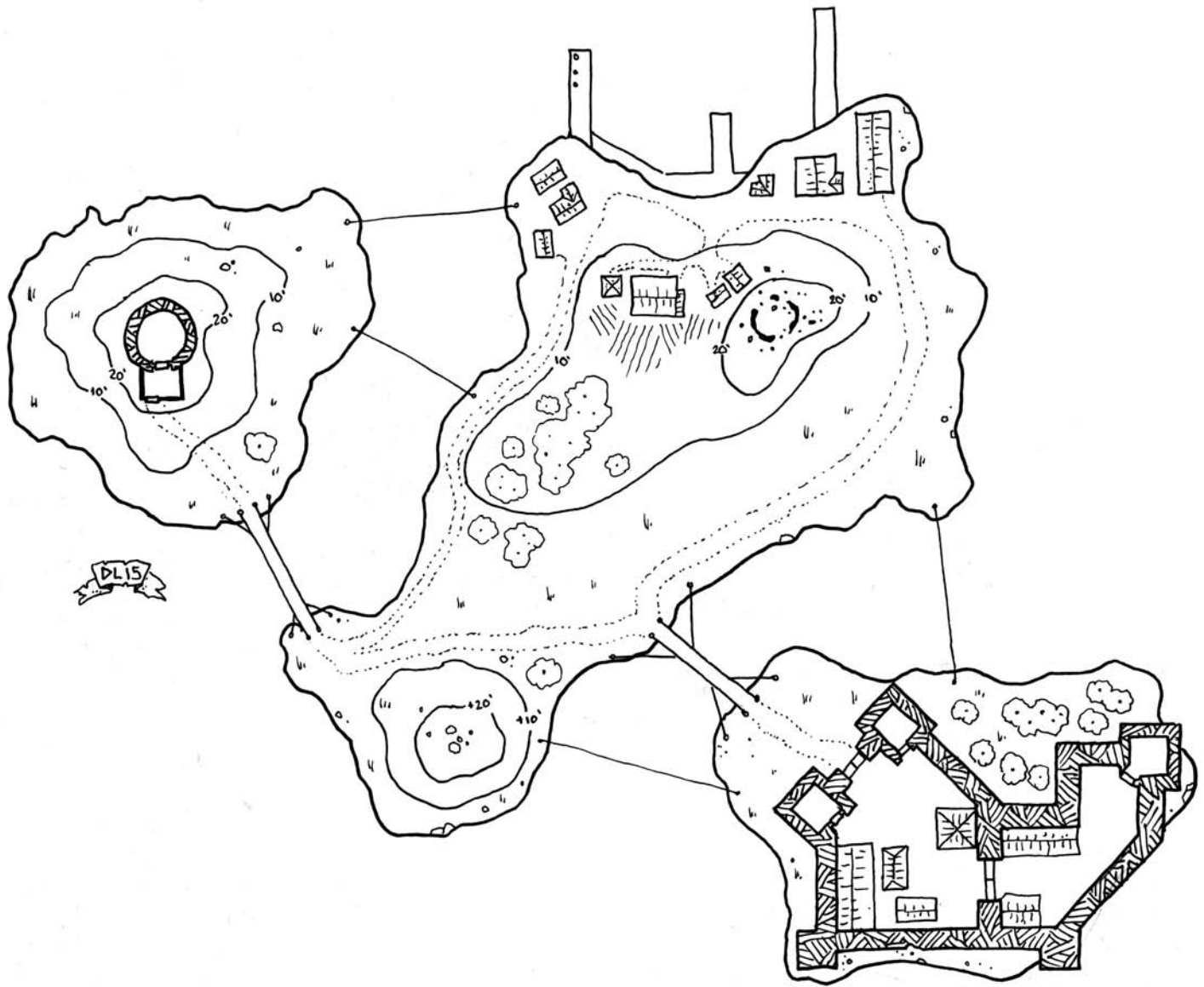
city in the realm. Built on a stone arch jutting into the Egret Sea, the combination of the natural stone arch and the waterfall where the short-lived Feino River enters the Egret Sea present a sensory experience that few cities can compete with.

The biggest hindrance to the growth of Hejmarko is the very terrain that makes it so picturesque – the cliff faces make fishing a difficult endeavour, and the rocky terrain around the arch makes good crop-growing land a treasure in itself. The main dish of the Hejmarkans is lamb for the rich and mutton for the poor as their long-haired brown sheep work the scrub and short grasses of the area. Thus Hejmarko remains a small and very picturesque settlement with a few more inns than would be expected in a town of its size.



The main fortification at the tip of the arch is Jando's Keep – an incomplete structure that was intended to have both an inner and outer bailey, but in the end is comprised of a single keep house and tower connected by a long hall. Protective fortifications at the edge of the settlement were deemed a higher priority than finishing the keep, and both the "Fall Keep" on the opposite side of the river and the city gates are better maintained than Jando's Keep itself.

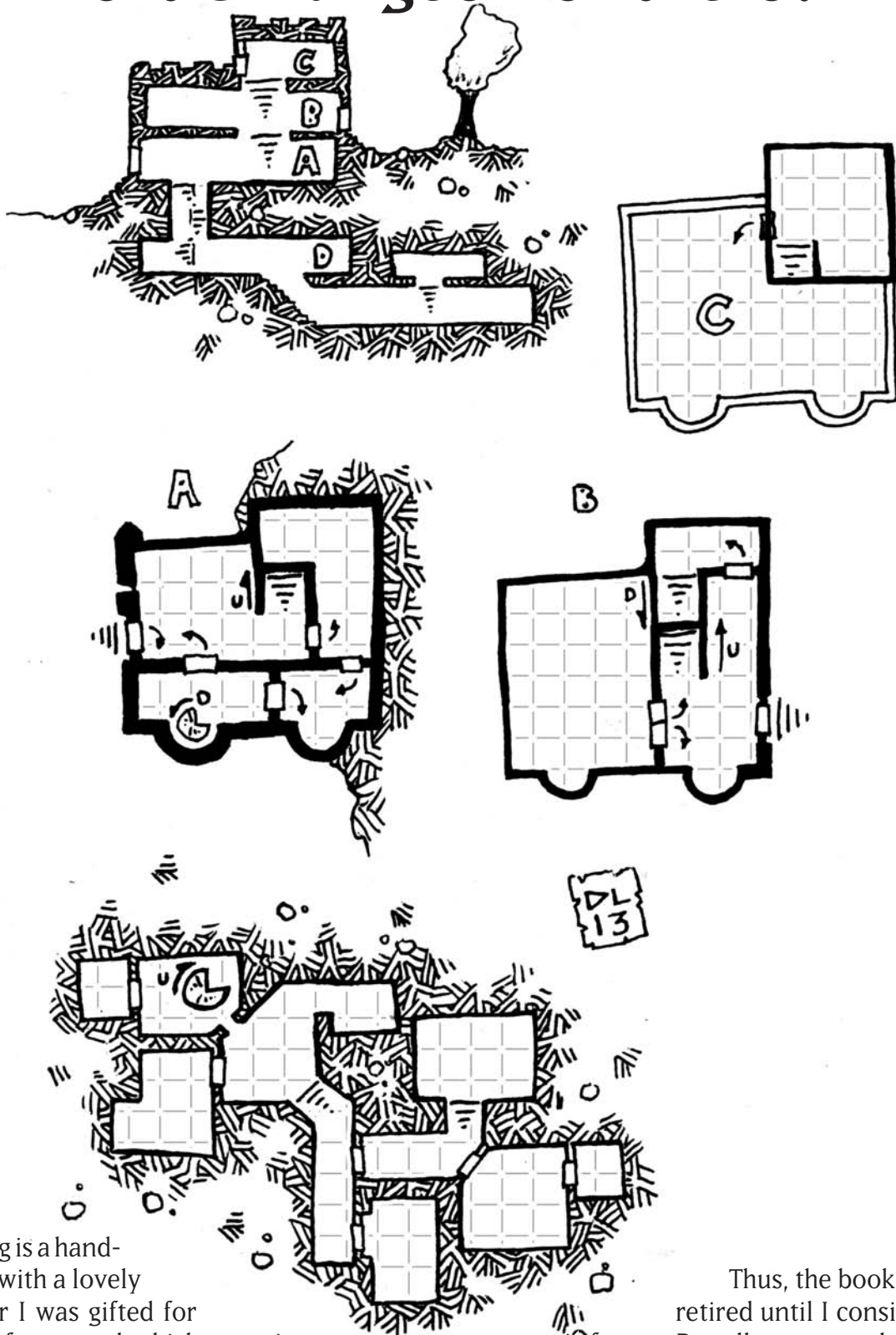
Lino's Islands in the Sky



Not all land masses sit comfortably on the ground. Some insist on picking up and floating away, doing their own things it would seem. Some of these have been wrangled by people with access to flying machines and mounts and in the cast of Lino's Islands, several smaller islands were lashed together and built up.

Lino's Islands are an almost idyllic pair of hilly islands with a small rocky flat-topped lump off to one side. The rocky island is home to Lino's Keep, and the smaller almost spherical island is home to the wizard tower of Strephon the Magus. The larger landmass has an older ruined tower on a hill, and a few buildings to support the aerial docks that jut out from the most accessible bank of the island.

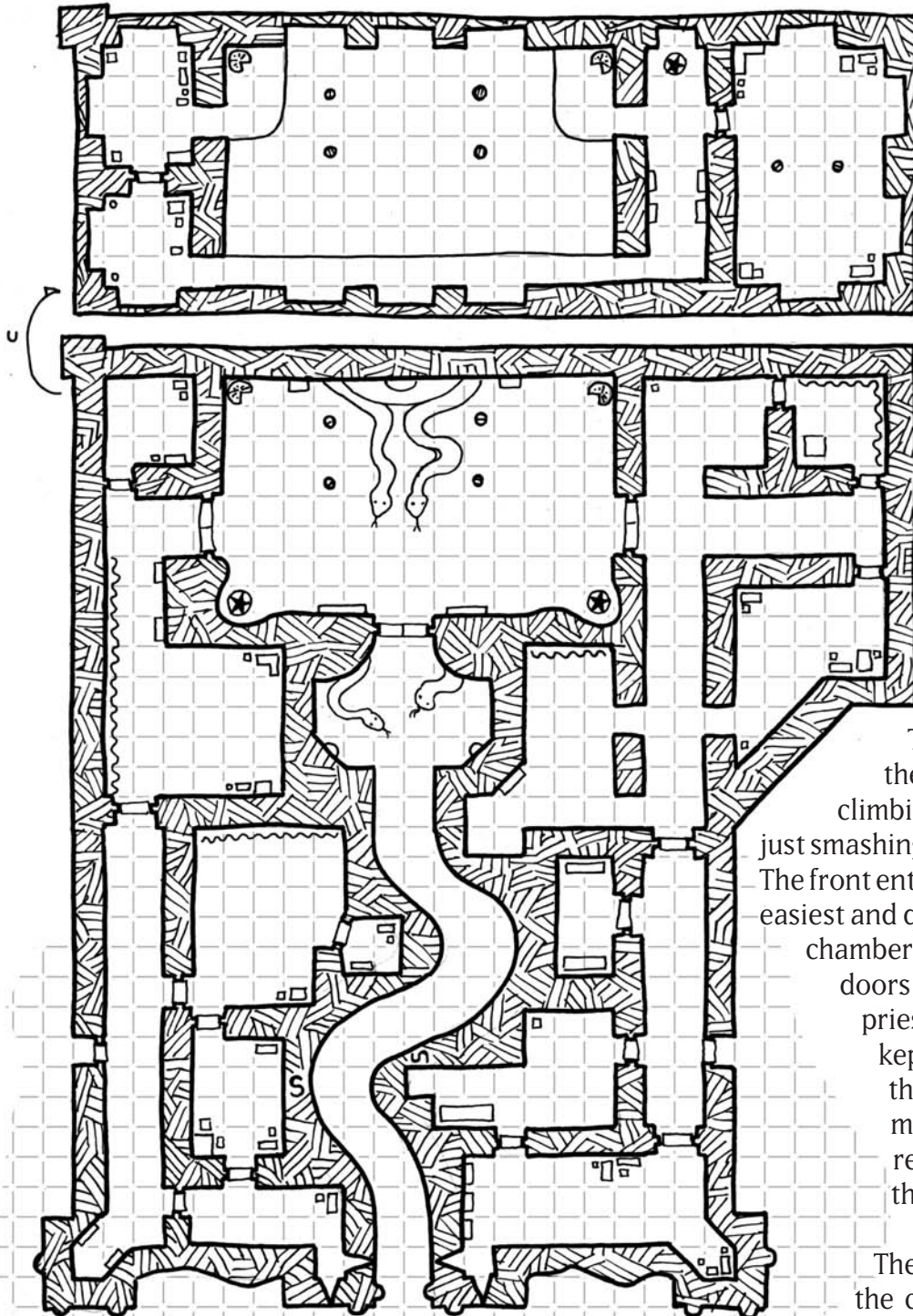
Small Fort & Dungeon of the Oak King



The Oak King is a hand-made book with a lovely rough paper I was gifted for Christmas of 2012 and which contains a number of maps that I drew over the next few months. The paper, however, wasn't conducive for use with my primary pens of the day, and also doesn't work well with the fine markers I use now (Sakura Microns and Mitsubishi Uni-Pins – both bleed excessively on this paper).

Thus, the book was quietly retired until I considered using it for my Drawlloween work. In the end I didn't use it for Drawlloween either, but when I went through it in December, I realized that it contained over a half-dozen maps that had never been scanned or posted to the blog.

Temple of the Snake



The worship of the Snake is a recurring theme for evil fantasy religions with a long history of awesome-ness and strange cold-blooded civilizations that predate humanity. So when Chris Williams asked for a Temple of the Snake God, it just made sense — bringing forth memories of Thulsa Doom and the module I'm currently running for my D&D5e crew — *Dwellers of the Forbidden City*.

There are three entrances into the temple (and the possibility of climbing up to the second floor and just smashing in one of the windows there). The front entrance (or the windows) are the easiest and quickest way to get to the main chamber of the temple, while the side doors lead to the chambers where priests and staff and records are kept — potentially slowing down the adventurers and providing many additional chances for the residents of the temple to raise the alarm.

The long sinuous corridor down the centre of the temple will certainly make adventurers feel they are walking into a trap... and if the DM decides to run with that there are a pair of secret doors that lead into the corridor that can be used to cut off retreat.

Kubicka's Roots - the Polluted Tree

Many small towns and hamlets have an old tree near their centre – a reminder of the transience of time and the seasons, and the ability of the community to continue and thrive through the ages.

But when fell powers sneak into the village and corrupt the town, what better place than in the very roots of this symbol.

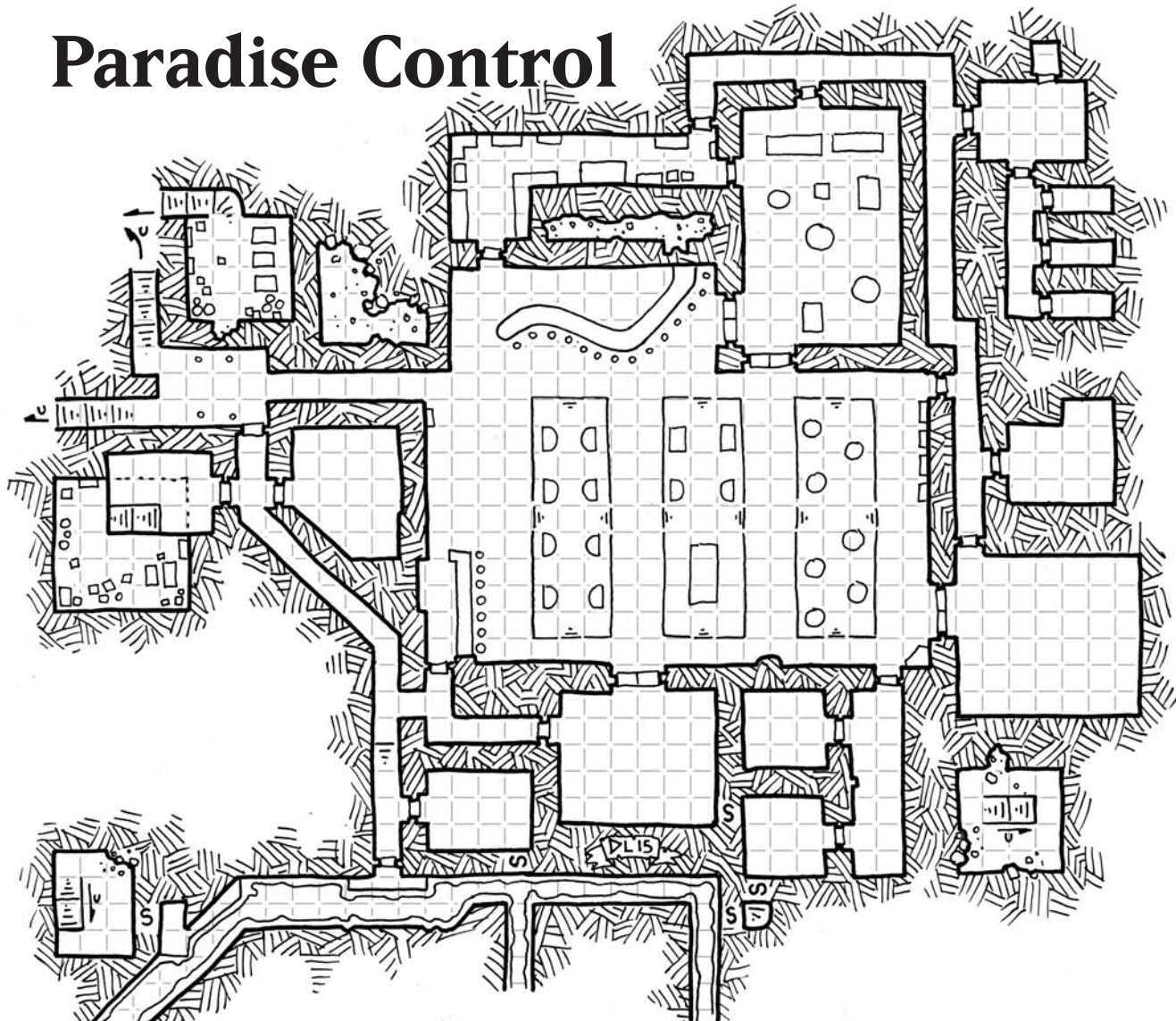
Kubicka's Tree is a massive oak in front of the inn at the centre of town. But the tree is failing, growing strange rot that the locals are unable to cure and that no amount of pruning seems to stop. The tree is dying, rotting away. And the cause of this rot is deep beneath the tree.

The dark cult that has infiltrated the townfolk has found a source of power that they can tap into deep within Kubicka's roots. Secret passages and narrow tunnels lead to the space beneath the tree where the roots of the massive oak nearly form a sphere around a dark altar sitting in a pool of greasy ichor. Sure signs of the evil and corruption here.

Around the roots are dark and twisting passages cut into the earth by foul blind creatures that should never be so close to the surface world, drawn by the nurturing ooze that surrounds the altar. But slaying these beasts and destroying this little shrine to corruption will never be enough. Because this isn't the cause of the evils in the town, it is but another symptom.



Paradise Control



When Garry Hamlin asked for an underground casino map for his D&D game, I immediately had a flashback to the classic *Operation: Sprechenhaltestelle* adventure that came bundled with the 1980 & 1981 editions of TSR's *Top Secret RPG* by Merle Rasmussen. One of the organizations hidden beneath the streets of the city is Pair-a-Dice, a full-fledged casino floor set underground.

Now, realistically an underground casino in a faux-medieval environment would most likely resemble a prohibition-era gambling den more than what we think of as a casino – a couple of rooms where people can play their games of chance and maybe store some drinks and a couple of security goons. But this is full on fantasy, so I went with something a little more full-on James Bond, *Dragonslayer*.

Paradise Control is a small casino when compared to modern mega-casinos, but is quite the underground establishment. It was built out of the basements of multiple structures in town, although dis-

connected from the actual buildings above during the construction phase. A few disconnected basements remain around the casino, but the only way to the surface is the stairs at the main entrance and a secret sewer escape system.

There are two staircases down to the lobby of Paradise Control from a pair of local businesses. The lobby channels clients towards the main floor with three gambling "pits", two bars, a linked restaurant and a few halls that can be rented, used for parties, or set up as additional gambling space as needed.

The lower left portion of the map is the service hallways for general staff, including storage space and sewer access (for trash disposal). The upper right passages link the kitchen to the dinning area, and also provide access for security to the various rooms of the establishment (the security room is in the upper right corner and comes with a set of three cells for taking care of problems).

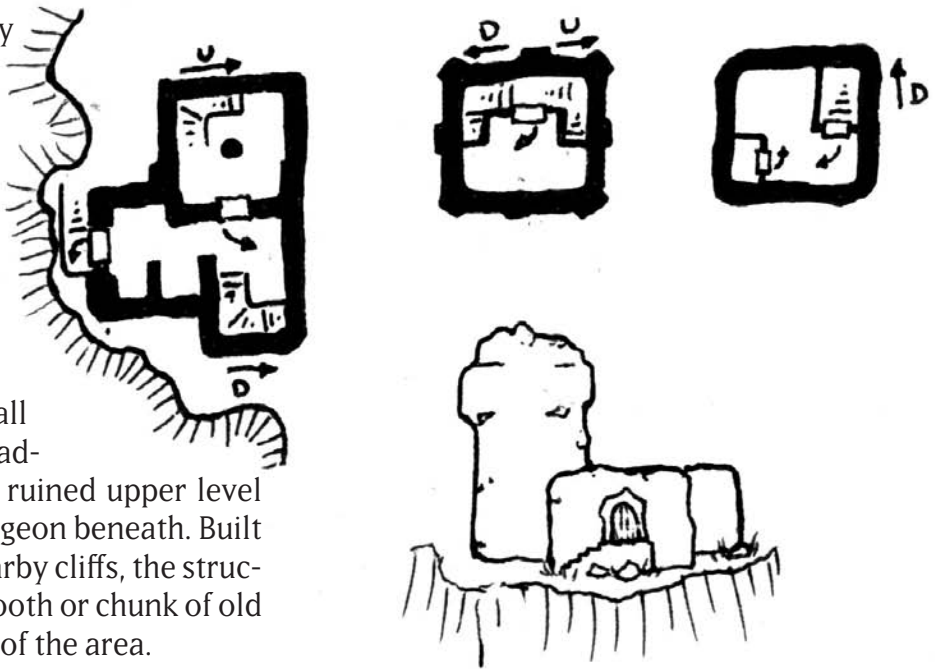
Little Tower of the Oak King

Inspired by Gus L.'s cartography over on his Dungeon of Signs blog, I started drawing small representations of the structures as I drew them. This was my first such attempt, I believe (I do this a lot more now, but still not as often as I should).

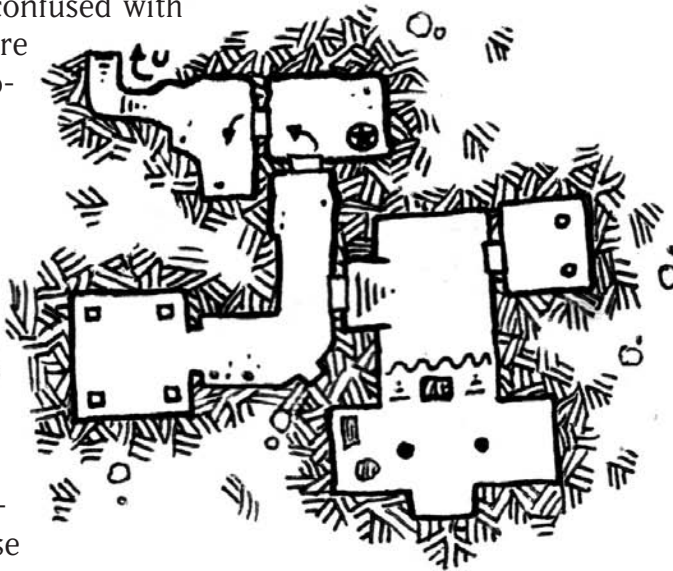
A little tower overlooking a small cliff, this is a pretty archetypal adventure location down to the ruined upper level of the tower and the small dungeon beneath. Built from the pale stones of the nearby cliffs, the structure stands out like a broken tooth or chunk of old ivory jammed into the red soil of the area.

Recently the home of hobgoblin raiders, the structure was cleared out by mercenary adventurers a few years ago. Now it is home to their henchmen and the few adventurers that aren't out doing something "exciting" (never to be confused with "noble"). While the adventurers are less hostile to local trade and the local farmers, it turns out that a team of chaotic mercenary sorcerers and priests aren't the best of neighbours. Farmers go missing, crops are destroyed or taken by force, and occasionally worse things come looking for them (including a recent rift torn from the palest of the Blue Hells so an insulted resident from that realm could attempt to extract retribution for insults received at the hands of these adventurers).

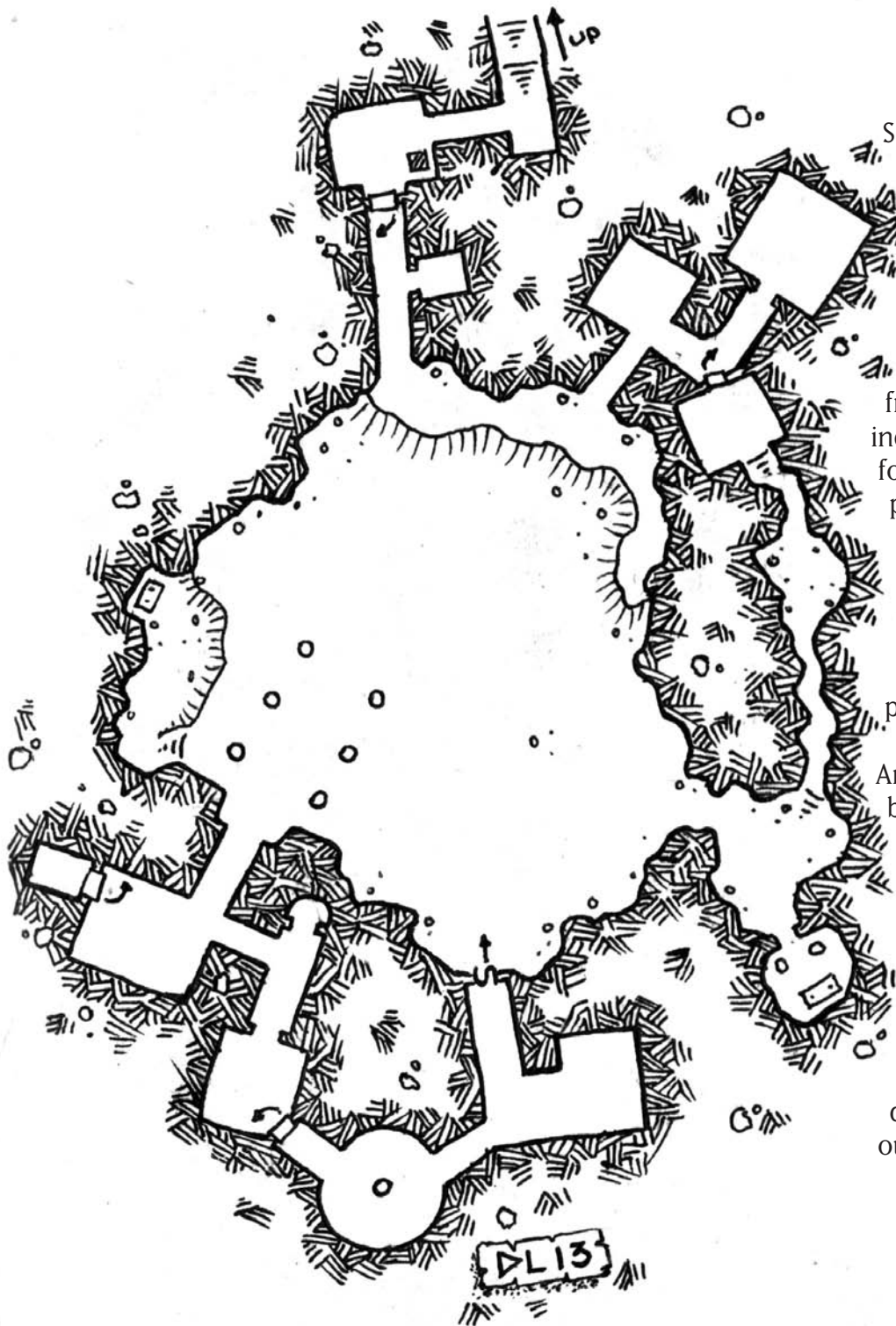
Perhaps the only way to get rid of them now is to fight fire with fire, and find some more adventurers. Hopefully of a more noble mien. Hopefully.



DL13



Excavations of the Oak King



Sometimes we found things in the ground and began to dig for more. Other times we started to dig, and found things. This unassuming stairwell cut into the rocky earth by the Elder's Grave has little around it – no piles of dirt or debris from extensive excavations to indicate much of interest. But forty feet below, where the temperature settles to something basically cool and damp, the worked stone opens up to a massive cavern well over a hundred feet across and sunken a further 24 feet below the point of entry.

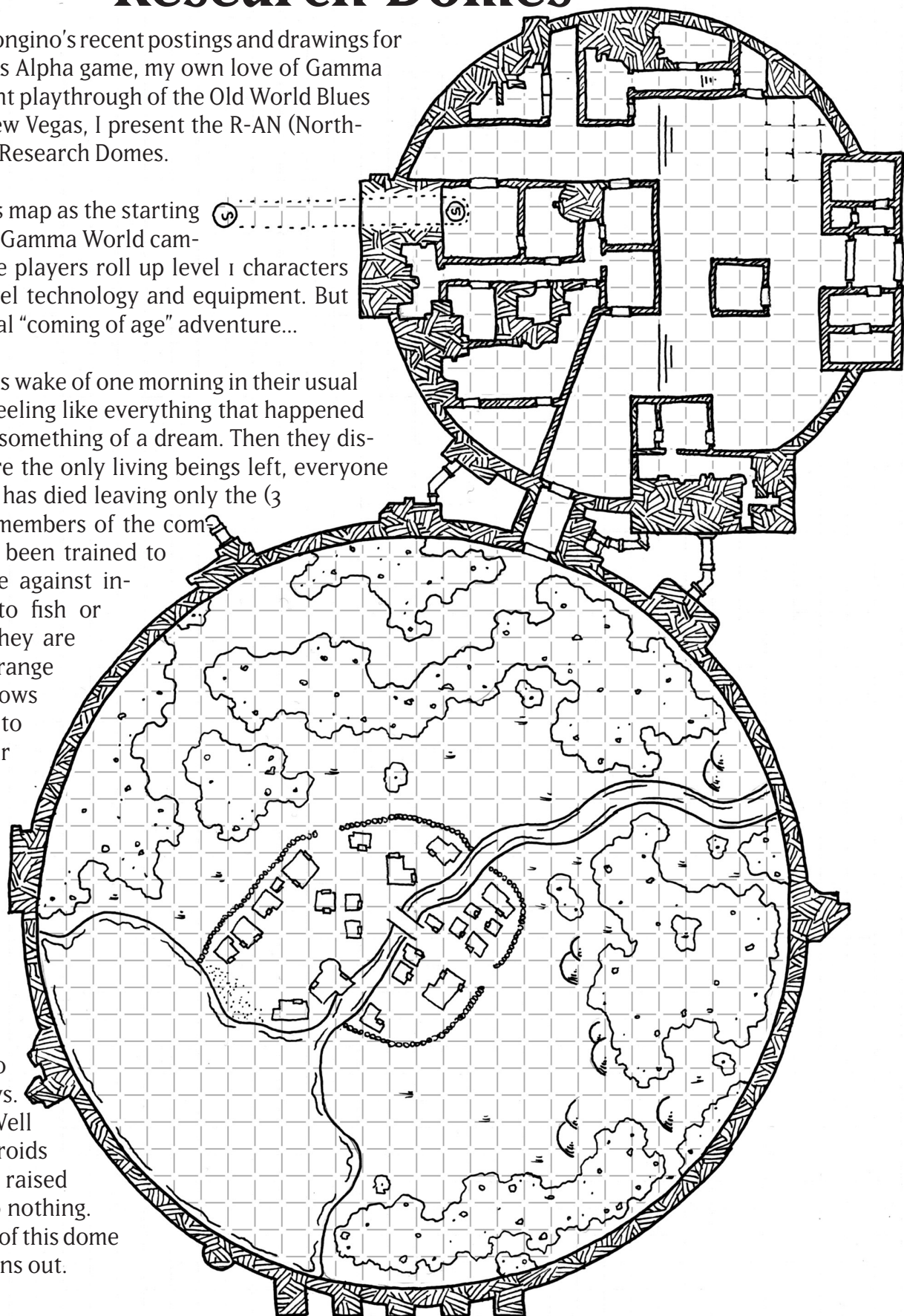
And of course someone has built shrines to things left unworshiped down here, in the further depths of this recess in the dark. Some portions of the caves around the central cavern have been worked and converted into their own structures where those who creep through the dark sleep and avoid the sun outside.

R-AN (NorthCott) Sociological Research Domes

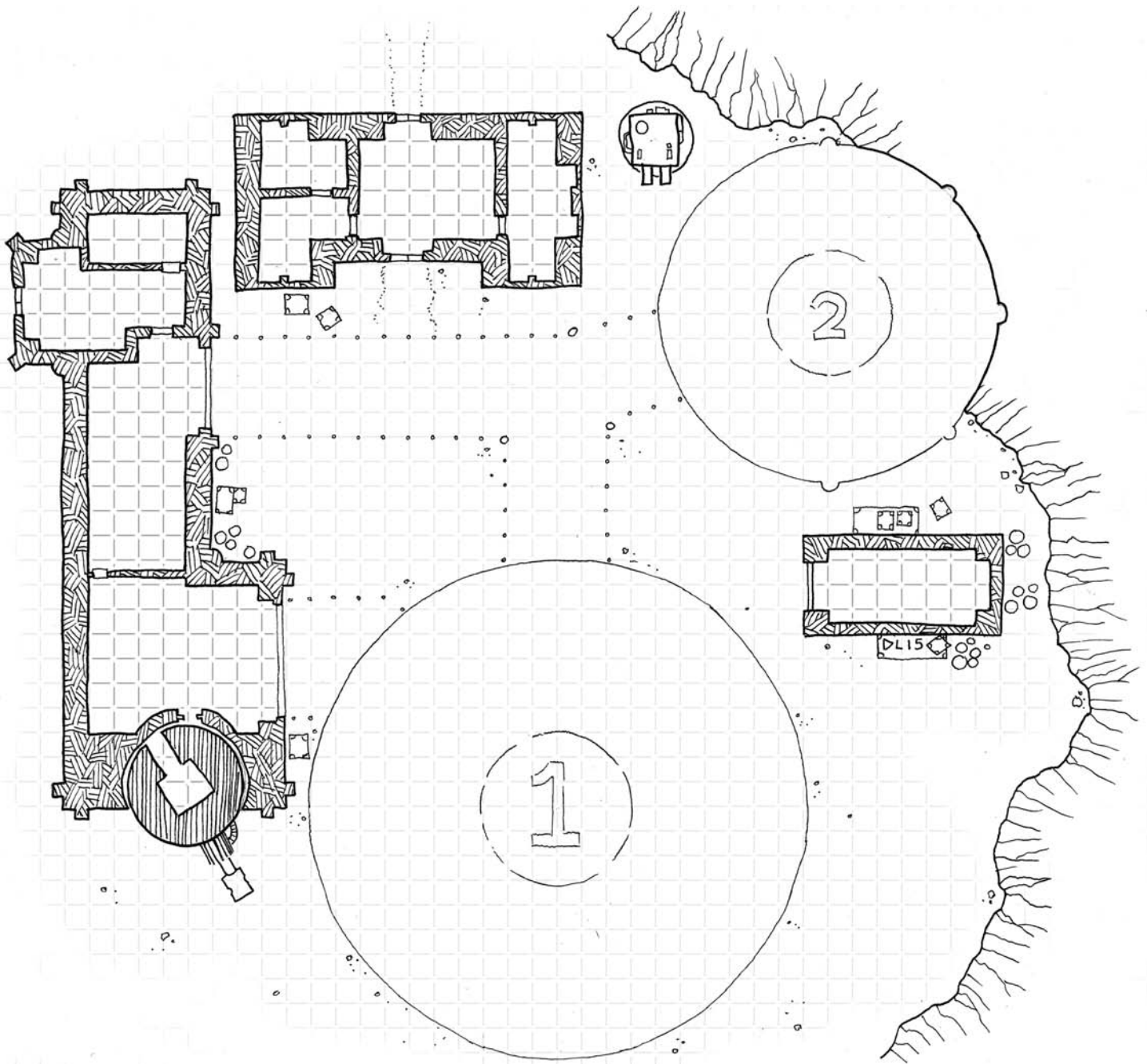
Inspired by Billy Longino's recent postings and drawings for his Metamorphosis Alpha game, my own love of Gamma World, and a recent playthrough of the Old World Blues DLC for Fallout New Vegas, I present the R-AN (NorthCott) Sociological Research Domes.

I picture using this map as the starting point for a classic Gamma World campaign — where the players roll up level 1 characters with medieval level technology and equipment. But instead of the usual “coming of age” adventure...

The party members wake of one morning in their usual medieval village feeling like everything that happened up until now was something of a dream. Then they discover that they are the only living beings left, everyone else in the village has died leaving only the (3 to 6) adolescent members of the community who have been trained to defend the village against invaders, but not to fish or hunt. Turns out they are all wearing strange headgear that allows the research AI to manipulate their visual cortex (in order to hide the fact that they live in a dome from them) and that reduces their INT stat by 1/3. With the AI crashed, it still provides the INT reduction, but no sensory overlays. All the villagers? Well built robots / androids that trained them, raised them, and now do nothing. It's time to get out of this dome before the food runs out.



Landing Facility Lambda-Bravo



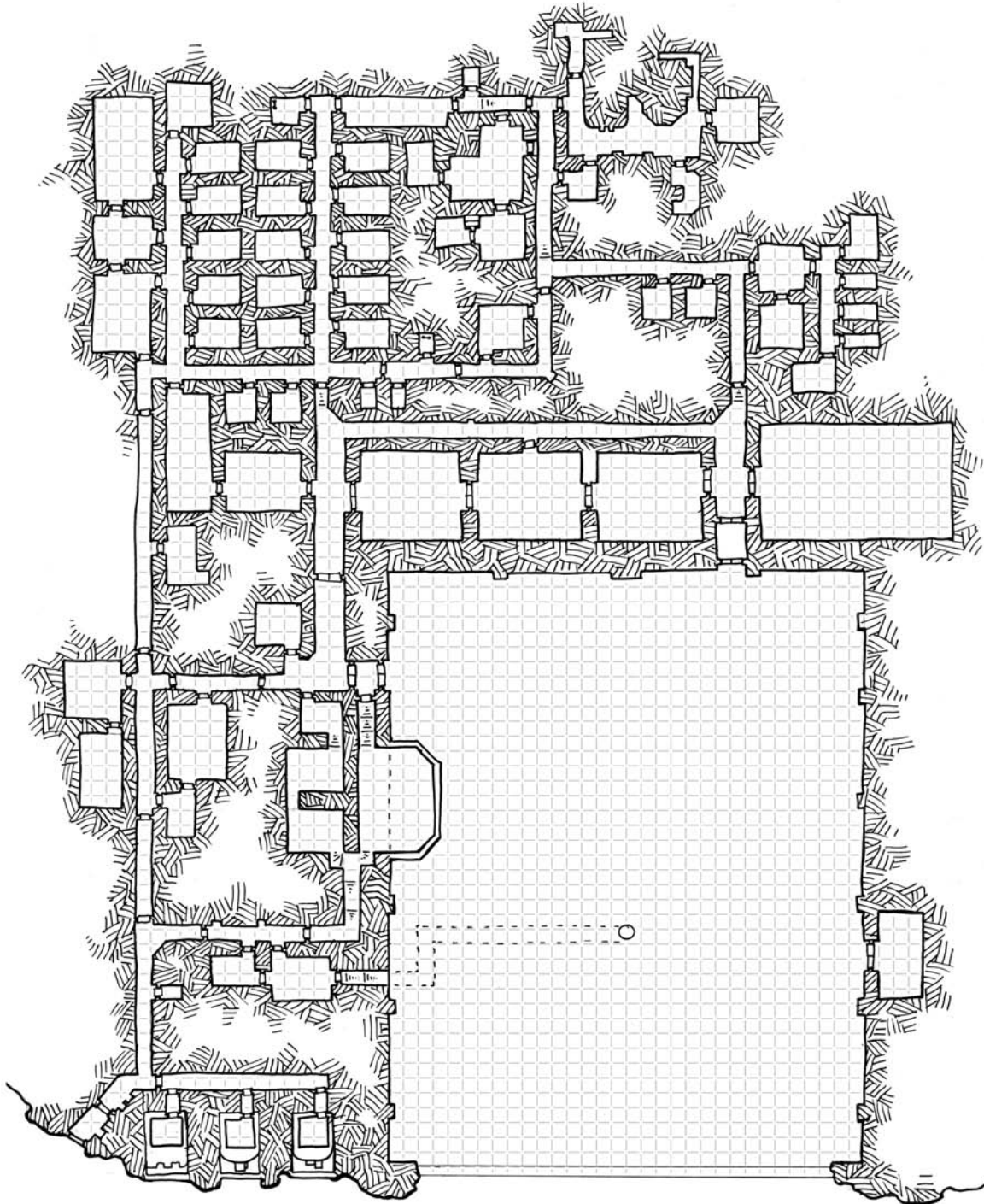
Through the early days of May, my social media stream was entirely taken over by May 4th Star Wars material and the release of White Star. I really can't claim that my social media feed doesn't impact my work, and to go along with the Space Tug UPF Terence Trent D'Arby that I posted earlier this month, I have a place for it to land.

Originally I was envisioning a small landing craft area for a WH40K Dark Heresy game, but I was

also thinking (at least subconsciously at first) of the abandoned supply facility that recurs in the first season of Star Wars Rebels

However, no matter how much I tried to make it feel WH40K to me, when I look at the two circular pads, all I end up thinking of is many an hour spent playing one of the many Ratchet & Clank video games on the PS2...

The Secret Asteroid Base

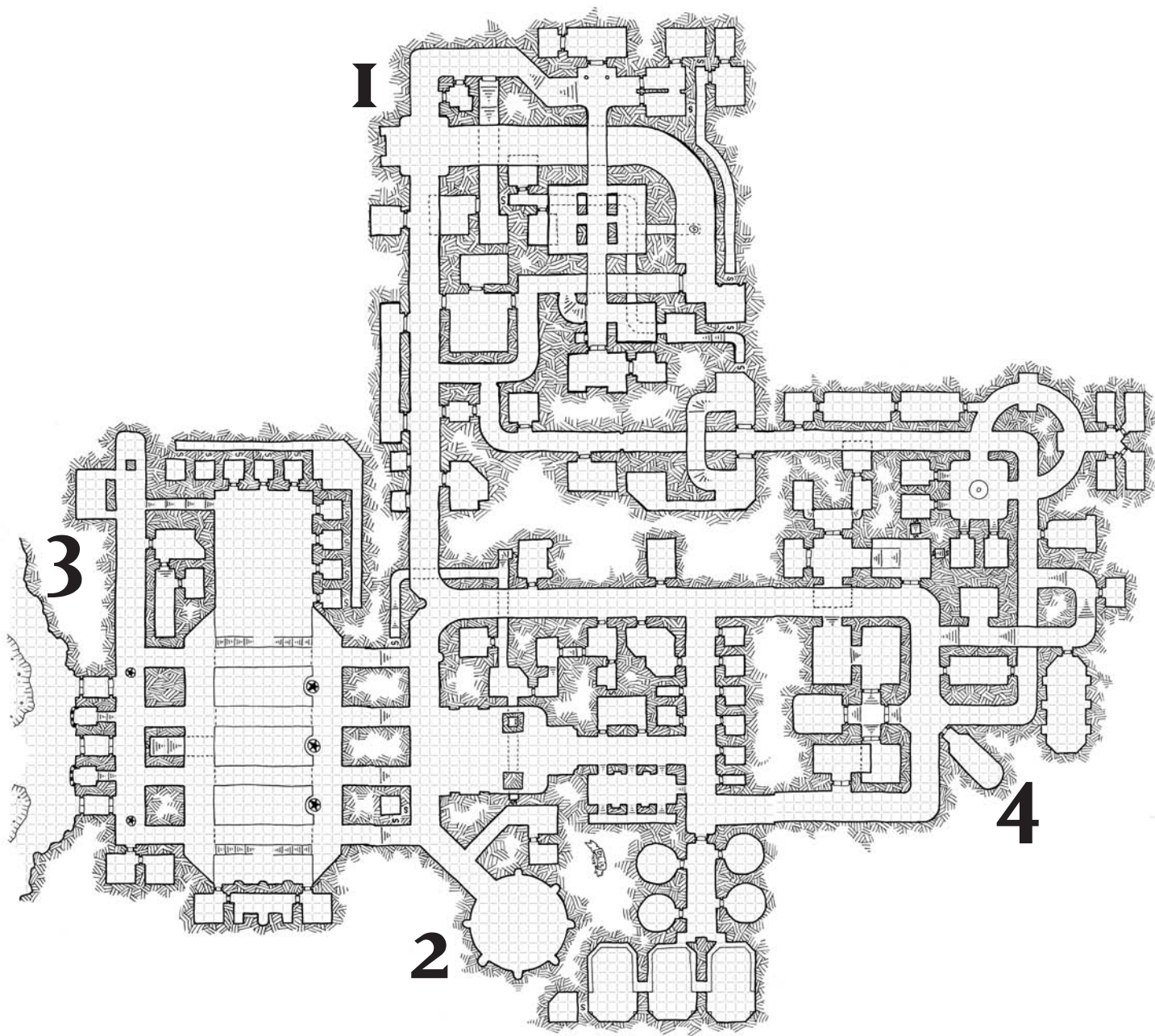


A wonderful staple of science fiction of most genres is the secret asteroid base used by the pirates, a small military or para-military force, or the illegal raritanium-mining conglomerate.

This map presents such an environment, albeit drawn for those sci-fi games that also come with artificial gravity – so Star Wars and Traveller right off the bat. Built back from the landing bay designed for two small cutters or similar ships, the base consists of a raised command area overlook-

ing the landing bay, three concealed weapon emplacements to fend off encroaching ships, storage and warehousing for the ore / pirate booty (just behind the bay), a brig / or prison for interlopers or high-value targets (right side, behind the warehousing), quarters & barracks, entertainment & eating environments for the staff, power plant (upper right), and three airlocks to the asteroid surface (one on this level beside the turrets, two reached by ladders up and down from the base to the surface above and below it)

The Giant's Halls



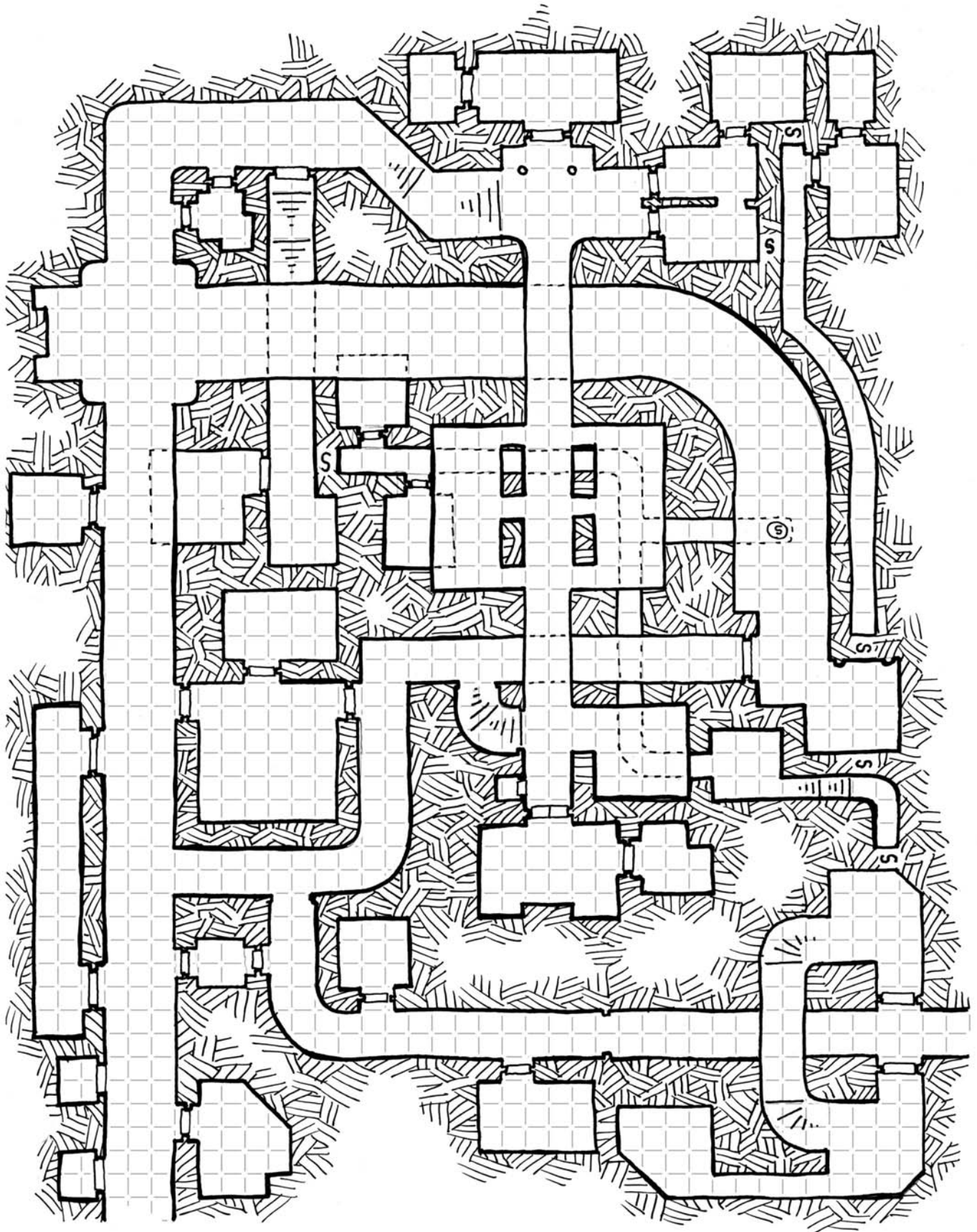
The goal of the Giant's Halls was to draw up a dungeon based upon unreasonably large hallways. The kind of thing that makes little sense from a construction point of view, but produces epic vistas for running battles and exploration.

Years of playing "old school" means that I think in 10' squares, making the major halls 30 and 40 feet wide, but they can also still be used with a 5' grid, still making them quite large for halls and bringing

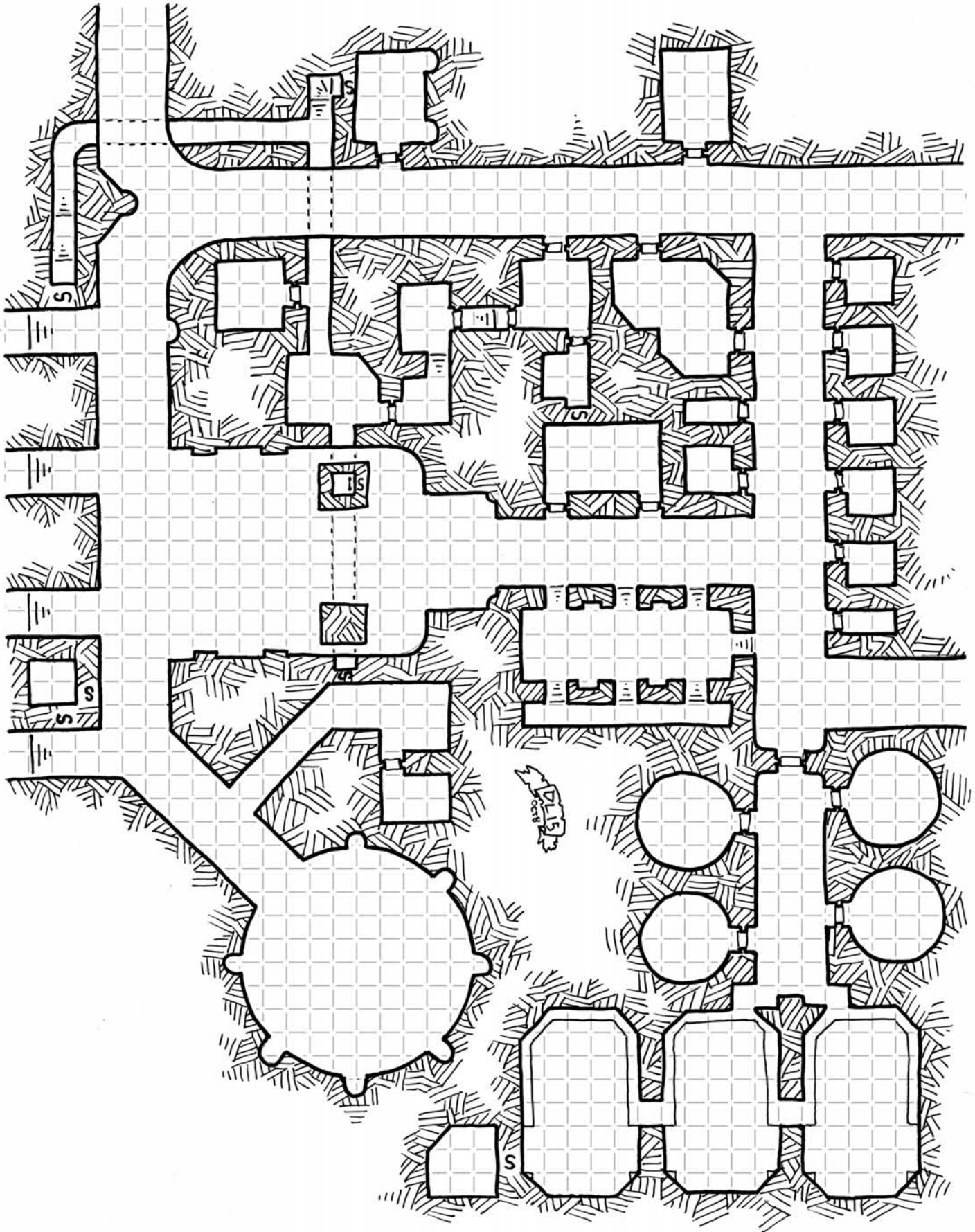
the size of the rooms and side passages down. But that would also conflict with the idea of this being a massive underground structure of giants.

Over the next four pages are the four individual maps that make up the Giant's Halls. The structure evolved as I was drawing it into a broodingnagian dwarven fortress (or some similar race that builds massive structures underground).

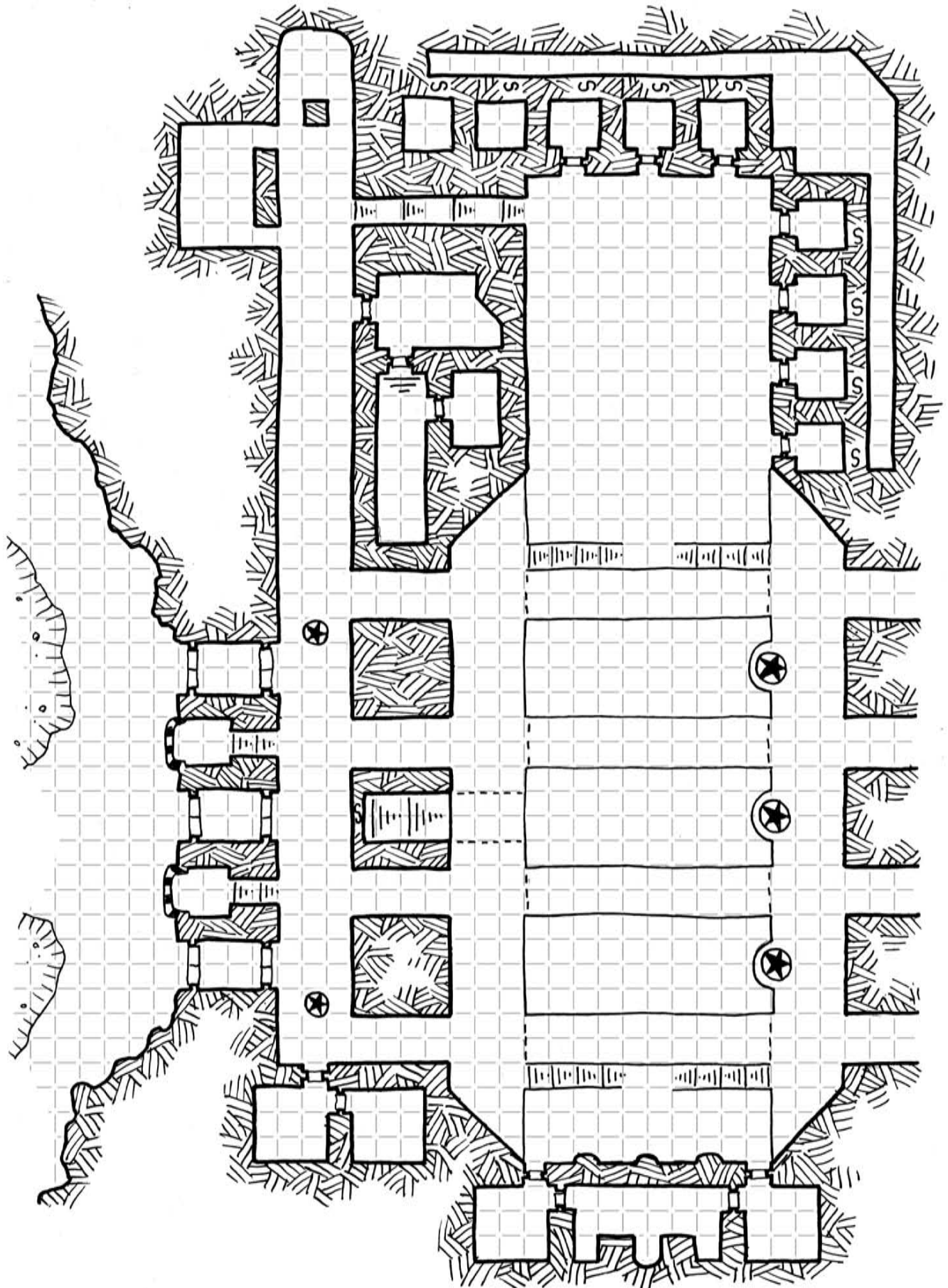
The Giant's Halls (Map 1)



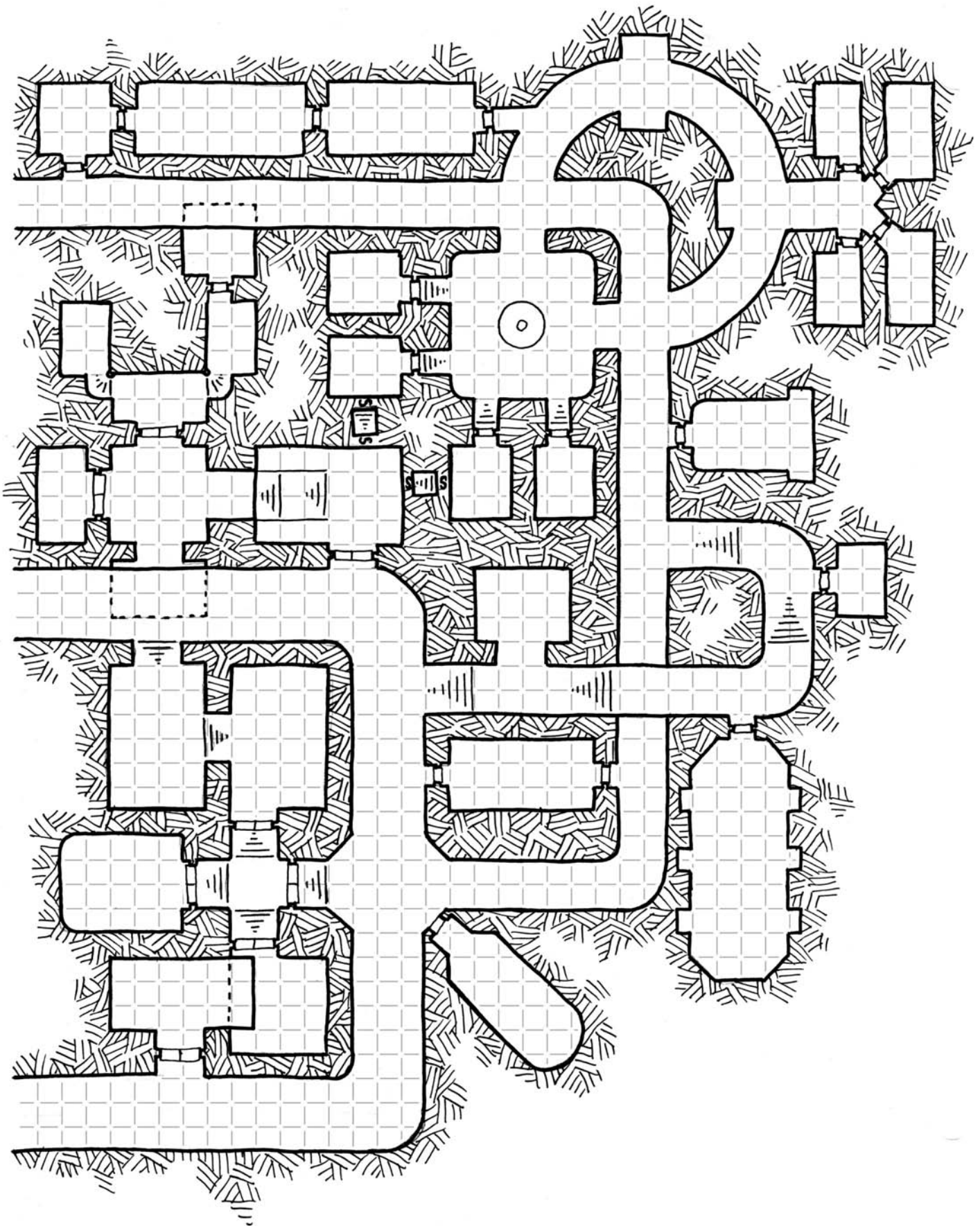
The Giant's Halls (Map 2)



The Giant's Halls (Map 3)



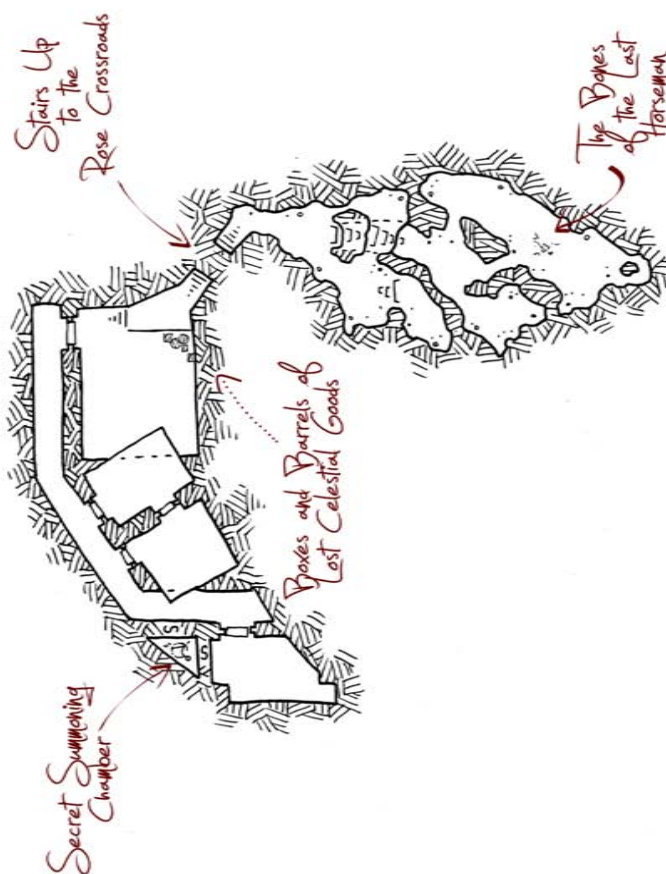
The Giant's Halls (Map 4)



Seven Secret Maps

The Main Halls

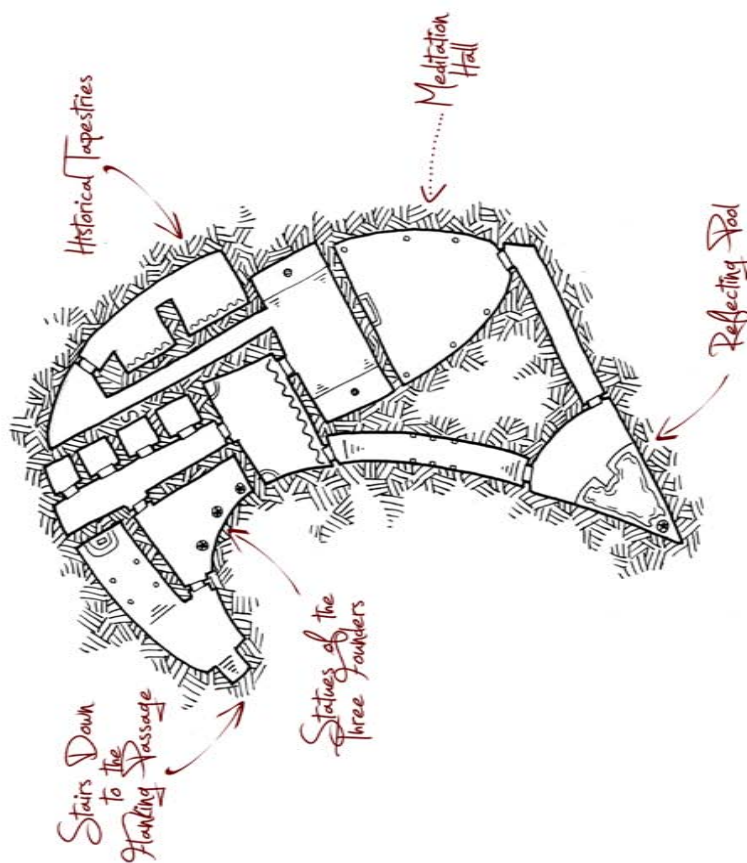
(Floors are a strange purplish stone.)



Secret Map #1 by Dyson Logos

Temple of Vosto

(Floors are a strange purplish stone.)

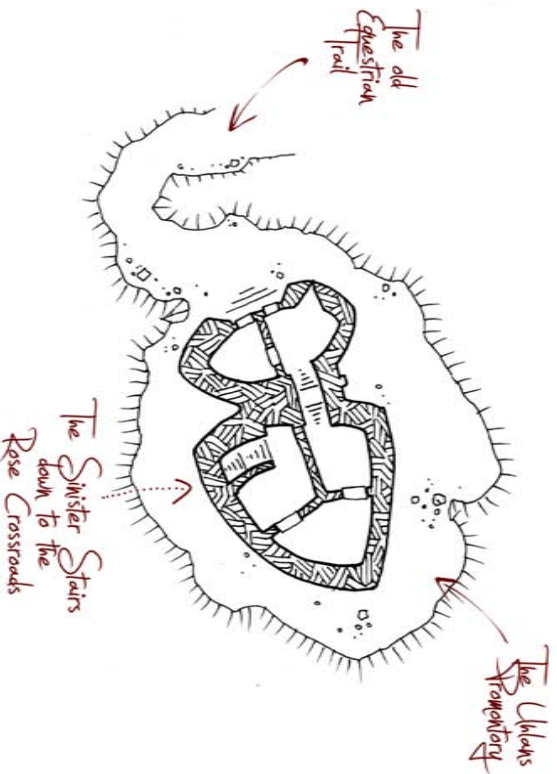


Secret Map #2 by Dyson Logos

Seven Secret Maps

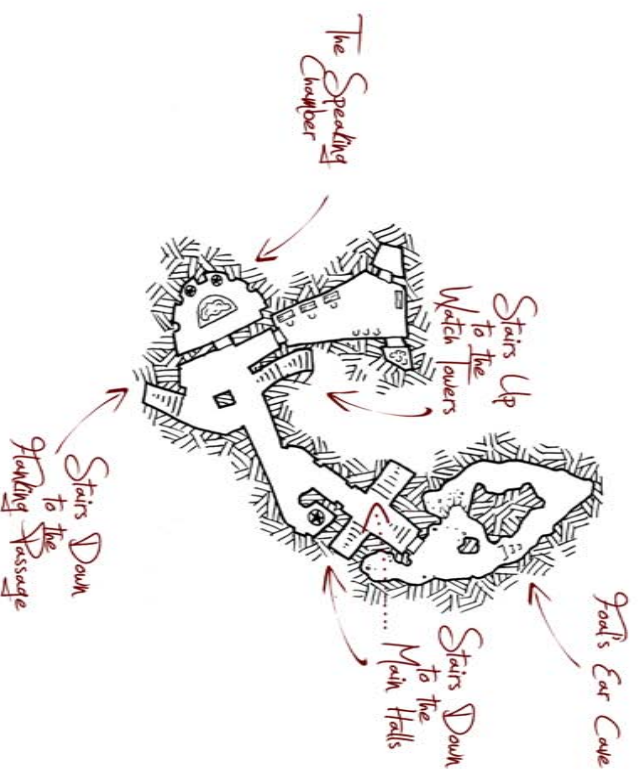
The Watchtowers

(Floors are dark, glass-like obsidian)



The Rose Crossroads

(Floors and most walls are pink granite)



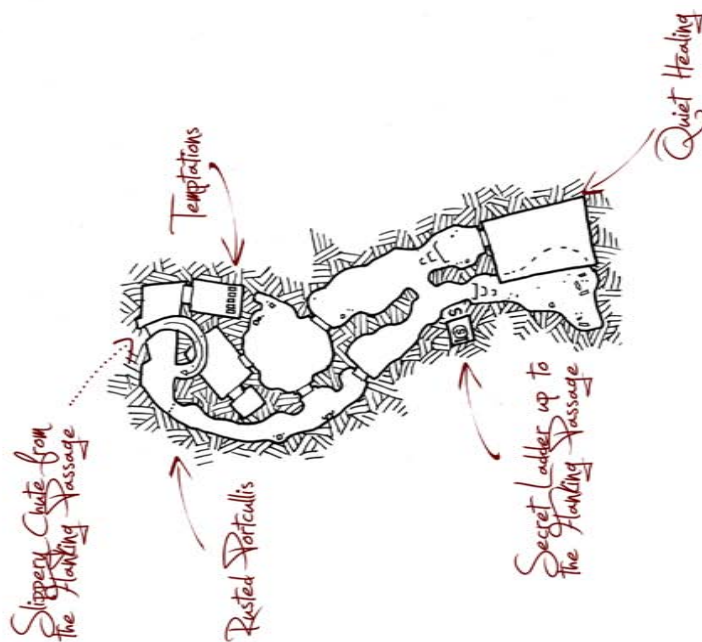
Secret Map #3 by Dyson Logos

Secret Map #4 by Dyson Logos

Seven Secret Maps

Sinister Dublette

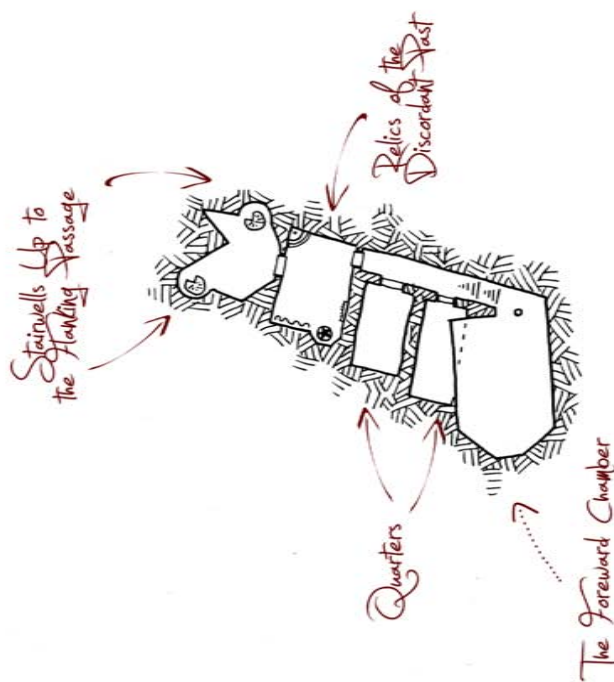
(Floors and most walls are pink granite.)



Secret Map #5 by Dyson Logos

The Four Quarters

(Floors and most walls are pink granite.)

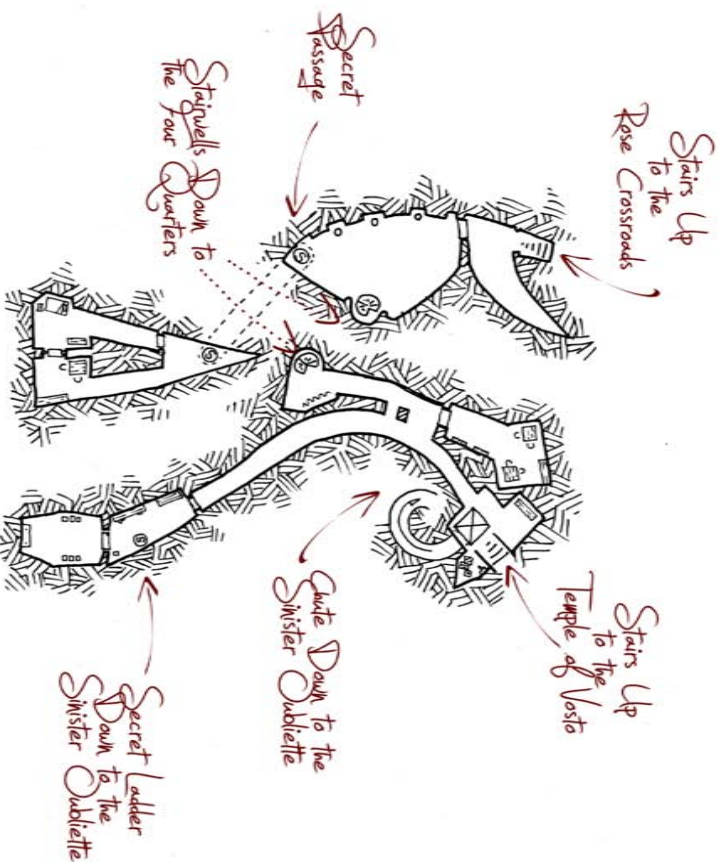


Secret Map #6 by Dyson Logos

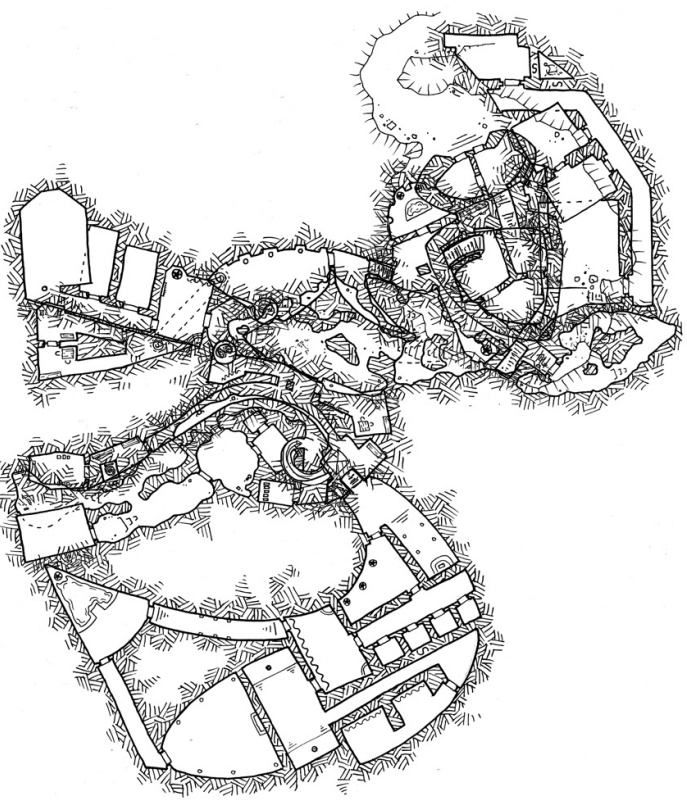
Seven Secret Maps

The Flanking Passage

(Floors are a dark reddish stone)



The seven maps on the preceding pages were mailed out in sets of two or three at a time to an unsuspecting badger (well, a friend who goes by that nickname). I did this as part of a much larger plan of terror. If the seven maps are connected along the stairways and linkages as shown, they overlay upon each other and end up looking like this:



You see, there are "some people" in the RPG community who are engaged in what has become known as "the #PonyWar" and I was recruited into it by Eric & Stephanie Franklin and worked up this elaborate map set for Jason Paul "the Badger" McCartan of Infinibadger Games & OSRToday.

Secret Map #7 by Dyson Logos