GUILD
Annihilation Hold
Undead orcs guard a unique artifact. Can your brave party recover it?
An adventure for four to five characters of levels 10 thru 16.
Alan Patrick & Jeff C. Stevens

Annihilation Hold

Version 1

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Using this Supplement

No specific location is mentioned in this supplement, making it easy to insert into most campaigns.

Text in these yellow boxes is to be read to players.

Text in grey boxes is for the DM only and should not be read to players.

Most of the creatures in this adventure are found in the 5th Edition *Monster Manual*. Page numbers have been included for easy reference but depending on the printing edition of your *Monster Manual*, they may not match.

In addition, several new creatures have been created for this supplement. They are noted in **BOLD** with no *Monster Manual* reference. You can find these creature stat blocks at the end of the adventure in the **Creatures of Annihilation Hold** appendix.

Unless otherwise noted, all NPCs have the stats of a **commoner**.

Maps

Unless otherwise noted, for all maps:
1 square = 5 feet.

Average Party Level

The **Average Party Level (APL)** can be used to calculate the appropriate challenge level for your party. To calculate the APL, add the total levels of all characters and divide the sum by the number of characters (rounding up for .5 or greater).

Skill Checks and Saving Throws

Specific DCs are written for each of the encounters. You may wish to change these DCs based on the APL of the adventuring party. We suggest the below range:

APL	Check / Save DC
10th thru 12th	16
13th thru 15th	18
16th +	20

In addition, if you feel a skill check or saving throw DC is too low or too high, feel free to adjust the DC as you wish.

You Are the Dungeon Master

As mentioned above, you do not have to run this adventure as written. You are empowered to make changes as you wish—adjusting the encounters as the game is played, if you like. If you think the dungeon is too large, cut out a room or two. If the threats are too easy, give them additional hit points or an extra attack.

Find Any Errors?

We tried to make this perfect but I'm sure we missed a thing or two. If you find something, or just have a question, visit my website and send me an email: www.jeffstevensgames.com

Adventure Overview

Welcome to *Annihilation Hold*, a 2 to 4-hour adventure for *Dungeons & Dragons*.

This short adventure is designed for five characters of levels 10 through 16 and includes combat, roleplay, and exploration; especially focused players may find that social interaction dramatically changes this adventure's content.

The adventure is the exploration of a complex under the protection of undead orcs. These creatures guard a vase which imprisons the evil djinni who destroyed their once-grand orc civilization.

Adventure Background

Beyond the western mountains, the orcs generally kept to themselves. Over the years they built their civilization. They enriched themselves through magic and music, and followed a doctrine of peace and acceptance that was empowered by the dangerous mountain range on one side and the swirling seas on the other.

Their quiet society was shattered when a djinni named **Hasteth** was summoned by their elder mages. Hasteth was a creature of pure evil and perverted the wishes that it granted. In time, the orcs were able to trap the djinni within an enchanted ceramic jar called the ***Annihilation Hold***, but not before their entire way of life was torn asunder. Many centuries have gone by and the orcs are scattered to the wind, with few recalling their proud nation.

Today, bards and scholars argue tirelessly about the legend of the lost nation of the orcs, and the tale of Hasteth and the *Annihilation Hold* has passed into myth. In truth, the jar was entombed inside a hidden complex and is said to be guarded by the unyielding spirits of the brave orcs that swore an oath to keep the vile djinni locked away for eternity. These orcs, known as the **Order of the Eternal Oath**, have fended off countless devil attacks, tomb robbers, and would-be plunderers over the centuries.

Plot Hooks

There are a number of possible ways to introduce this adventure:

We Stumbled on It! The complex could lie behind a waterfall or perhaps was recently exposed beneath a sand dune. Regardless, the characters happen across the entrance while journeying.

The Bard's Tale. Some bards and loremasters specialize in tales of the fantastic, and while the characters rest their bones in a tavern, the performers weave a tale of the fallen orc nation. They claim that they know the site of Hasteth's resting place, and gladly sell maps to the place for 15 gp. The maps aren't very specific and require two months or more of searching, but one of the bards will accompany them for a mere 100 gp "and all the rights to the story of grand adventure." If the bard accompanies the characters, they can find the complex in two weeks.

Oh, We of Noble Blood. If there is an orc, half-orc, or otherwise orc-blooded creature amongst the characters, they are plagued by troubling dreams. In them, the character is begged to "come home and take up their birthright", and they are treated to a wispy vision that looks like a band of orc knights surrounding an ethereal creature, its face locked in a silent scream. When they wake, they find a crude map drawn or etched on their skin.

Orc & Half-orc Characters

Orc and half-orc characters may have heard rumors or tales of the orc complex, though they would have no knowledge of what the *Annihilation Hold* is, or what it contains. They have advantage on Arcana, History, and Religion checks made while in the complex.

Alternate Hook – Quickplay

Protect the Annihilation Hold

Should you only have limited time to play, give one player a copy of the **lich** stat block and each of the remaining players a copy of the **Paladin of the Eternal Oath** stat block. Show them the map and allow them to place themselves wherever they like. Explain the Order of the Eternal Oath to them, their status as undead protectors of the *Annihilation Hold*, and that devils are assaulting the citadel in an attempt to gain access to it.

When play begins, place a devil of CR 5 or less in any room where at least one player is present. Starting on the second round, on initiative count 20 add another devil of CR 5 or less in any room where at least one player-controlled undead orc is present. All of the traps and environment effects are present, including the smoke from the *Annihilation Hold*. On initiative count 1, if there are fewer devils than player characters present in the complex, add devils of CR 10 or less to any room you choose until there is an equal number of devils and undead orcs.

Each time a devil is destroyed, roll a d20. On a roll of 18 or higher, replace that devil with a devil of CR 10 or less. For every five devils destroyed, add one devil of your choosing to a room of your choosing.

The players are victorious when the horde is defeated! There are a number of devils in the horde equal to four times the number of players present. If the devils touch the *Annihilation Hold*, the devils are victorious and the Order of the Eternal Oath fades into history.

Placing Devils

When placing devils, you may roll to determine which devil is placed, or you may choose devils as you like.

Devil Table Round 1

D6	Devil	CR	Found
1	Nupperibo	½	MToF, p 168
2	Imp	1	MM, p 76
3	Spined Devil	2	MM, p 78
4	Bearded Devil	3	MM, p 70
5	Merregon	4	DiA, p 238
6	Barbed Devil	5	MM, p 70

Devil Table Round 2

D6	Devil	CR	Found
1	Nupperibo	½	MToF, p 168
2	Imp	1	MM, p 76
3	Spined Devil	2	MM, p 78
4	Bearded Devil	3	MM, p 70
5	Merregon	4	DiA, p 238
6	Barbed Devil	5	MM, p 70

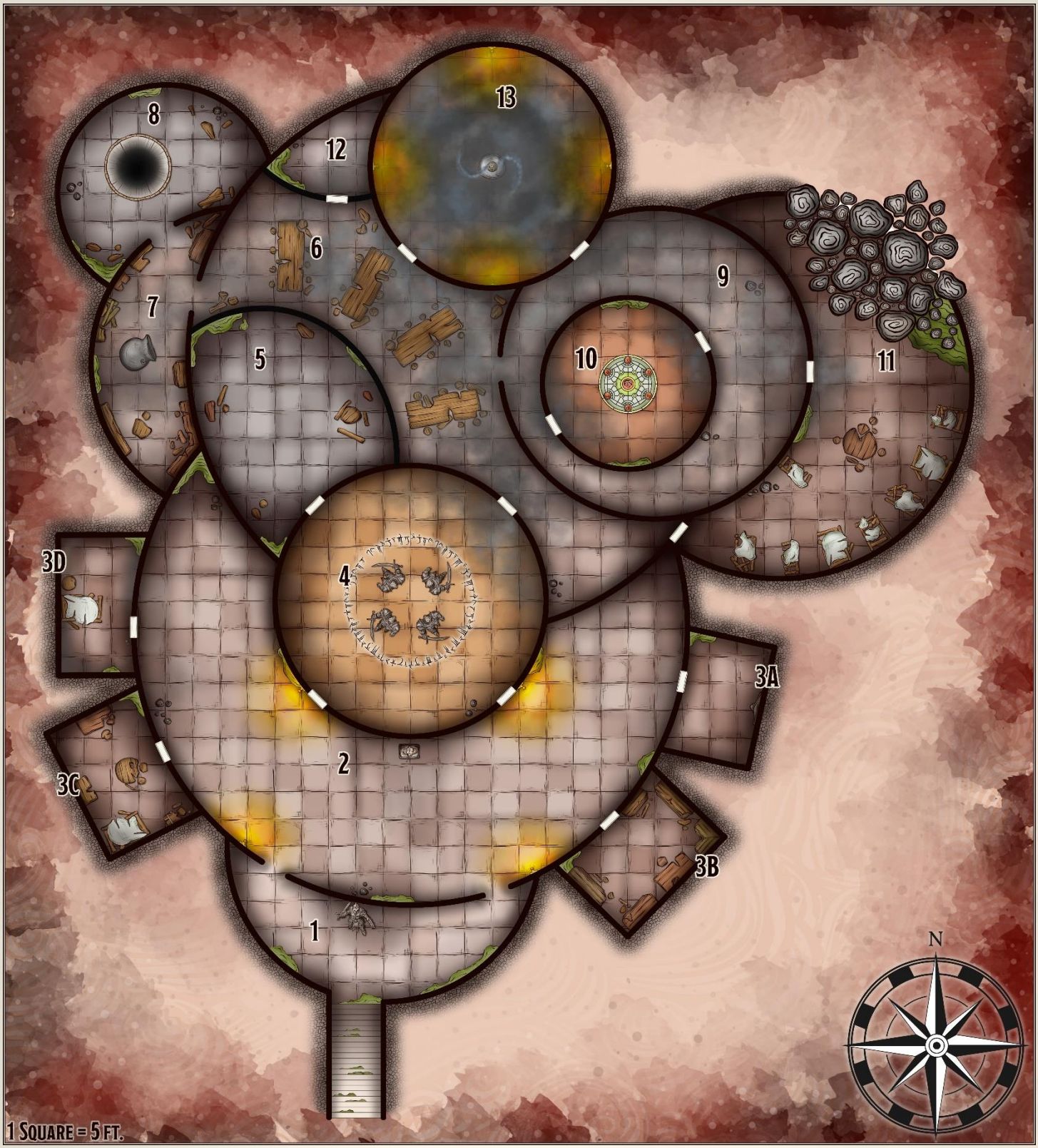
Devil Table Round 3+

D12	Devil	CR	Found
1	Nupperibo	½	MToF, p 168
2	Imp	1	MM, p 76
3	Spined Devil	2	MM, p 78
4	Bearded Devil	3	MM, p 70
5	Merregon	4	DiA, p 238
6	Barbed Devil	5	MM, p 70
7	White Abishai	6	DiA, p 241
8	Black Abishai	7	MToF, p 160
9	Chain Devil	8	MM, p 72
10	Bone Devil	9	MM, p 71
11-12	Orthon	10	MToF, p 169

References

MM = *Monster Manual*
MToF = *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*
DiA = *Descent into Avernus*

The Complex



Adventure Primer

The devil's voice is sweet to hear.

\- Stephen King

But We Want to Talk!

This adventure assumes that the characters proceed through the complex in an aggressive manner. If this is not the case, consider meshing your chosen story hooks with the **Alternate Hook – Quickplay** detailed above. Should the characters win the trust of the undead orcs, a fiendish horde assaults the complex, leaving the characters to choose a side or face the consequences!

The Adventure

The main adventure begins when the party reaches the complex holding the *Annihilation Hold*.

General Features of the Complex

Smoke: The *Annihilation Hold* (located in Area 13) continuously produces smoke, which lays close to the floor and is first noticed in Area 4. The smoke becomes more present as the characters get closer to Area 13.

Lighting: Unless otherwise noted, all rooms a dark

Terrain: Unless otherwise noted, all floors are marble tiles, and all walls and ceilings are cut stone blocks.

Doors and Archways: Most rooms are accessed by a door, which may be locked or unlocked. A few archways are found in Area 6.

Main Entrance

The entrance to the orc complex is underground, with a stone staircase covered in slippery mold and splotches of water, requiring a successful **DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check to safely descend. On a failed check, the creature slips on the stairs, tumbles to the bottom, and suffers 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

Room 1 – Grand Entrance Hall

Read or summarize:

> After descending the slick stairs, you can see what was once a grand entrance hall. Small grates in the floor at the base of the steps capture any water that comes through and deposits it back outside, leaving the floor ahead fairly dry. Despite exposure to the elements for many years, remnants of colorful frescoes still decorate the opposing walls. The far wall sports a heavily-corroded statue.

The Statue

Upon inspection and with a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Religion)** check it can be identified as **Karzag the Radiant**, an ancient deity of the sun and harvest that was revered by orcs.

Colorful Frescoes

The fresco begins on the left wall, depicting a grand orc civilization of wooden huts and intricate wooden buildings, with noble-looking orcs. It slowly changes as it moves across the area. The civilization appears ruined, while several orcs wearing decorated armor battle a large, blue creature.

A character succeeding on a **DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Arcana)** check recognizes the blue creature as a djinni.

Once recognized, a character may attempt a **DC 20 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Religion)** check. On a success, they identify the orcs as being from the Order of the Eternal Oath—a group dedicated to guarding an evil relic. They also recall a story about the orcs battling a djinni who destroyed a once magnificent orc civilization. Orc bards and half-orc bards have advantage to this check.

Orc Ghost

If the characters dwell here for more than a few moments, an orc **ghost** named **Jakar Nog'thog** (CR 4; MM, p 147; knows only Orcish) wearing ornate plate armor tears across the room, screaming a dire warning. If any of the characters speak Orcish, they understand the phrase as "Leave the *Annihilation Hold* to these dusty halls—our sacred duty binds us, and it, for eternity!"

It has no interest fighting the characters and seeks to scare them.

The ghost may converse with the party, sharing information found in **Adventure Background**. However, it does not speak of the *Annihilation Hold*, other than to say it holds a great and evil power. Rather, the ghost prefers to reminisce about the old days, telling stories about:

- the ancient orc civilization.
- its wonderous childhood.
- its strong warrior lineage (both mother and father were great warriors).

Room 2 – Main Hall

When entered, read or summarize:

> Four wall sconces fill this room with a soft, orange glow. A pedestal on the far wall holds a bust of an orc.

The Statue

A cobweb-covered bust of a regal-looking orc stands on a pedestal here. Engraved on the base in ancient Orcish is the name **Battlewarden Orralthum.**

Doors to 3A, 3B, and 3D

These iron-banded wooden doors are unlocked.

Door to 3C

This iron-banded wooden door is warped in the frame and deadbolted from the inside; it can be unlocked with a **DC 24 Dexterity check using thieves' tools**. Once unlocked, the door must be opened with a **DC 18 Strength (Athletics)** check; this check can be made with disadvantage if the door is still locked.

Doors to Area 4

These stone doors are braced from this side. No check is needed to remove the braces, but if the braces are replaced, a creature in Area 4 must succeed on a **DC 30 Strength (Athletics)** check to break the door down. It appears that this brace was added after construction was finished, and the characters may quite likely—and correctly—deduce that the braces were added to trap something inside.

Room 3A – Mask Trap

These iron-banded wooden doors are unlocked.

Read or summarize:

> This room is completely empty save for an ornately colored mask of an orc hanging on the far wall.

The Mask

The mask is a minor cursed magic item used to coerce treasure hunters into the room. The mask radiates an aura of transmutation magic if the *detect magic* spell is cast.

Mask of the Orc

Wondrous item, rare, cursed

An ornately carved and decorated wooden mask of an orc.

While wearing the mask, you gain darkvision out to 60 feet, you know the Orcish language, and you gain the Aggressive orc racial feature.

Curse: Once you don this cursed mask, you can't remove it unless you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. While wearing the mask, you can read, write, speak, and understand only Orcish.

The Floor

The floor of the room is a **Rotating Floor Trap** and is constructed of smooth stone, painstakingly painted to resemble the stone tiles found throughout the complex. A creature actively searching and succeeding on a **DC 20 Wisdom (Perception)** check notices the floor has been painted.

Rotating Floor Trap

The floor of this room rests on an axel and is held in place with counterweights. Once activated, the floor quickly rotates 90 degrees and then slowly resets.

Trigger. A creature that walks on either side of the floor triggers the trap.
Effect. The floor rotates 90 degrees, opening to a 10-foot-deep pit with a *teleportation circle* at the bottom. A creature landing in the pit is teleported to the ceiling of **Room 8 – Refuse Room** and dropped into the zombie otyugh pit.
Countermeasures. A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check reveals a gap between the floor and walls. A successful **DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools** disables the rotating floor, and a check with a total of 5 or lower triggers the trap.
Trigger. A creature that walks on either side of the floor triggers the trap.
Reset. Once activated, the floor quickly rotates 90 degrees. If not disabled, it then slowly resets after two rounds (12 seconds), becoming flat again 18 seconds later (3 rounds). The total reset time is 30 seconds (5 rounds).

Room 3B – Scroll Room

These iron-banded wooden doors are unlocked.

Read or summarize:

> The side walls of this room are lined with tall shelves filled with leather scroll cases. A small writing desk, complete with an ink pot and quill, stands along the far wall.

The Shelves

A character searching the shelves and succeeding on a **Wisdom (Perception)** check finds the items below. The results are cumulative:

DC	Item
10	A *spell scroll* of *protection from evil and good*.
12	Five acorn-sized balls of bat guano.
14	A *spell scroll* of *hold monster*.
16	Five small, straight pieces of iron.
18	A *spell scroll* of *greater restoration*.
20	A diamond worth 510 gp.

The Writing Desk

The writing desk is covered in parchment paper with mad scribblings and illustrations from the lich in Room 3C.

- A duck carrying a loaf of bread (illustration).
- Two orc hands in the act of thumb wrestling (illustration).
- "No one has better touch it!" (scribbling).
- "No work and all play makes for a lich a very good day!" (scribbling).

A character who searches the desk and succeeds on a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception)** check notices two pieces of parchment of particular interest.

- An illustration of a vase decorated with flying cranes. Above which is scribbled "Annihilation Hold."
- The word **"YAS'TA'PHREE"** written in Orcish and in large, capital letters.

Room 3C – Orc Lich

This iron-banded wooden door is warped in the frame and deadbolted from the inside; it can be unlocked with a **DC 24 Dexterity check using thieves' tools**. Once unlocked, the door must be opened with a **DC 18 Strength (Athletics)** check; this check can be made with disadvantage if the door is still locked.

When the room is entered, read or summarize:

> Remnants of beautiful furniture are scattered around the room, victims of time and exposure to air. The corpse of an orc dressed in a black robe is sprawled on the remains of a crumbled bed.

Orc Lich

If the characters investigate the corpse, they find that it is a **lich** (CR 21; MM, p 202. Male, lawful neutral) that is simply pretending to be dead while it assesses the characters and their intentions.

It has long since forgotten its name, but if the characters understand Orcish, it can impart any of the information in the **Adventure Background** section, including that it barricaded the doors in Room 2 to keep the *Annihilation Hold* contained. The lich speaks in an ancient dialect of Orcish and may have trouble understanding more modern usage.

The lich refuses to enter anything beyond Room 2 and is bound by a sacred oath from leaving the complex. If attacked, the lich has an enraged celestial **owlbear** (CR 3; MM, p 249) familiar that it can summon as one of its lair actions.

Protect the *Annihilation Hold*

The orc lich's sacred oath is broken if the *Annihilation Hold* is touched or removed from the complex, allowing it to:

- Rush to protect the relic
- Wait for the adventurers in Room 2 as they leave
- Re-barricade the doors from Room 4 to Room 2
- Pursue it outside of the complex.

The lich doesn't mind if the characters investigate the complex. Their main concern is the safety of the *Annihilation Hold*. If the characters have the item, the lich is not against bargaining for it. They may even offer safe passage out of the complex if the item is left behind. Or, perhaps offer a trade, which may include giving the characters one of the undead (most likely the zombie otyugh).

Room 3D – Guest Chambers

These iron-banded wooden doors are unlocked.

Read or summarize:

> The furniture in this room—a straw mattress and nightstand—indicates that visitors were once hosted here, but they have long since succumbed to the passage of time.

Five sheets of brittle parchment paper and two copper pieces are found in the nightstand if is it searched.

Room 4 – Champions

These stone doors are braced from this side. No check is needed to remove the braces, but if the braces are replaced, a creature in Area 4 must succeed on a **DC 30 Strength (Athletics)** check to break the door down. It appears that this brace was added after construction was finished.

When the room is entered, read or summarize:

> Four statues stand near the center of the room. They each depict a different orc champion, and their backs are to each other so that they may face out, ever-vigilant for intruders.

The statues are exquisitely carved and feature an orc champion in a battle-ready stance. While unlabeled, it is clear that they stand ready for any threat that may arrive. A circle of runes measuring 20 feet across surrounds the statues.

Odd black, shadow-like shapes fly about the circle and around the statues. Characters proficient in Religion might believe the shapes to be spirits, though the exact number can't be determined. If the characters move the weapons into the statues' hands, attack the spirits, or otherwise interact with them, the spirits (use **invisible stalkers**: CR 6; MM, p 192 but are considered undead) are released and attack the adventurers.

Champion Trap

Detection. A successful **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana)** check reveals the runes function as an inverted magic circle, preventing the spirits contained in the circle from escaping unless the physical wards or other triggers are activated.
Trigger. Dispelling the magic circle or moving any weapons held by the orc statues.
Effect. The spirits are released and attack.

Treasure

Each statue holds one of the objects below.

- A pair of silvered, serrated short swords.
- A silvered great axe covered in barbs.
- A *pike +1*, decorated with holy symbols of Karzag the Radiant.
- A spiked *shield +2* and a gem-encrusted mace worth 450 gp.
-

Scaling the Battle

Below are suggestions for scaling the battle:

APL 10–11: one **invisible stalker** for every two characters.
APL 12: one **invisible stalker** with 120 HP for every two characters.
APL 13–14: one **invisible stalker** with 160 HP for every two characters.
APL 15–16: one **invisible stalker** for every character.

The invisible stalkers are representations of the champions' spirits. Therefore, they are considered undead.

Room 5 – Battlewarden's Chambers

Read or summarize:

A regal-looking undead orc stands while swaying in the center of this room, holding a longsword entirely made of bone. The orc stops, looks up, and lets loose a battle cry while raising her bone longsword.

If the characters examined the bust in the northern alcove of Room 2, they recognize her as Battlewarden Orralthum (**Paladin of the Eternal Oath** with resistance to slashing damage). She has no intention of speaking with the living, and screams in primal rage when the characters enter; she desires nothing more than utter destruction. When combat begins, **orc wraiths** emerge from the walls and join the fray.

Scaling the Battle

Below are suggestions for scaling the battle:

APL 10–11: Battlewarden and one **orc wraith**.
APL 12–13: Battlewarden and two **orc wraiths**.
APL 14: Battlewarden and one **orc dire wraith** for every three characters.
APL 15–16: Battlewarden and one **orc dire wraith** for every two characters.

Treasure

When the Battlewarden is defeated, her *bone longsword* and *plate armor of resistance (slashing)* clatters to the floor.

Bone Longsword

Weapon (longsword), very rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, the weapon deals bludgeoning damage instead slashing damage.

When you hit a humanoid with this weapon, the humanoid takes an extra 1d6 necrotic damage.

Room 6 – Gathering Hall

Read or summarize:

A thin haze of smoke covers four collapsed banquet tables. Once, this place was a gathering and dining hall, but now nothing of use remains.

Two undead orc **Paladins of the Eternal Oath** (lawful neutral; Appendix A) patrol this place and endeavor to keep the *Annihilation Hold* safe from any that would come to disturb it. They are bound by their oath to stay here eternally, and while they know that they are undead, they have no concept of how much time has passed in the outside world.

The undead orcs allow the party to investigate the room but do not allow them to leave, attacking them when they attempt to exit.

Room 7 – Kitchen

Read or summarize:

> A thin haze of smoke covers the broken shelves and cabinetry which line the walls, and a large cookpot, unused for centuries, has been overturned in the center of this ancient kitchen.

Orc wraiths (see Appendix A)—oathbound orcs that weren't fully committed to their charge and have become mindless, hate-filled undead—rise from the rubble when the characters enter. They attack after one round but can't leave this chamber unless the *Annihilation Hold* is touched.

Scaling the Battle

Below are suggestions for scaling the battle:

APL 10–11: Two **orc wraiths**.
APL 12–13: Three **orc wraiths**.
APL 14: Three **orc dire wraiths**.
APL 15–16: Four **orc dire wraiths**.

Room 8 – Refuse Room

Smoke from the *Annihilation Hold* has not entered this room save for a few wispy portions. This place once served as a refuse room, and waste of all types filled the 10-foot-deep cesspit below the floor. The pit is now empty, save for a rare **otyugh zombie** at the bottom. The beast lies dormant until a potential meal comes within 15 feet of it.

Teleportation Circle

A creature succeeding on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check notices a set of arcane runes written on the ceiling, above the pit. This is the *teleportation circle* from Room 3A.

Room 9 – Outer Hallway

A thin layer of smoke lightly covers the floor.

Two undead orc **Paladins of the Eternal Oath** (lawful neutral; Appendix A) patrol the area and are sworn to protect the *Annihilation Hold*. Like the other fallen paladins, they are aware they are undead but do not know of events from outside the complex nor how much time has elapsed.

The undead orcs allow the party to investigate this area, but they defend themselves if attacked.

Room 10 – Bound Devil

The closed doors have kept the smoke from the Annihilation hold from entering this room. When entered, read or summarize:

> Amidst the scattered debris of this large room stands one notable thing: a very angry demon. that is currently bound in a magic circle.

A **nalfeshnee** (CR 13; MM, p 62) named **Gathellizan** is currently bound within a magic circle. Gathellizan cycles through spoken languages until it finds one that the characters understand, and then proceeds to plead with them with increasingly potent deals and promises.

DM's Note:

If the lich from Room 3A is asked about the demon and is willing to communicate, it shares that the demon led an incursion here several decades ago, and while the orcs couldn't defeat it, they were able to trap it.

Gathellizan and the Annihilation Hold

Gathellizan, knowing the greed that most adventurers possess, may speak of the *Annihilation Hold* to persuade the adventurers to release it, though it does not speak of the evil djinni inside. He says there is an item in the complex that can provide an adventurer with a wish. If he is released, he provides them with the command word for the *Annihilation Hold* ("yas'ta'phree"), potentially going so far as to blurt it out if it becomes clear that the characters won't deal with it or simply plan to kill it.

Gathellizan's Deals

Gathellizan is willing to:

- Create a magic item of very rare or lower rarity.
- Increase a character's chosen attribute by 2 to a maximum of 20.
- Help them find "one true happiness."
- Anything else that guarantees its escape.

Gathellizan's Escape

The demon's escape requires that a living creature deface the sigils that surround the binding circle. It bends any deal to its benefit if possible, but if released is true to its word. Upon fulfilling the request, it disappears, returning to wherever it came from, no doubt plotting revenge against the orcs.

Room 11 – Crumbling Barracks

Read or summarize:

> The remnants of what were once racks of sleeping bunks line the southern wall, and a large section of the northern wall has collapsed.

This cave-in caused substantial damage to the walls and ceiling; the corpses of three orcs lie mangled under the debris. The incident happened quickly, as the orcs appear to have died in their beds, crushed beneath untold tons of stone.

Treasure

A character who succeeds on a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception)** check while searching the orcs and rubble finds a leather pouch containing five odd-looking platinum coins, each stamped with the face of an orc woman with massive tusks. The coins are relics from the lost orc civilization and have a gold value of 10 gp each. However, to a collector of historical orc items, each coin is worth 200 gp.

In addition, the character finds a letter written in Orcish, though it appears to have only been partially completed, and reads:

Father, I hope to bring you and our ancestors' glory while serving with the Paladins of the Eternal Oath. My heart beats with the power of Karzag the Radiant.

Room 12 – Storage

Faint fingers of smoke have seeped into this room. When entered, read or summarize:

> Bulging walls, black with soot, and a buckled ceiling surround two orc skeletons: one wearing plate mail and the other wearing robes and holding a wand.

The two orcs were killed by a horned devil raiding the complex. It was unsuccessful and banished but its attacks weakened the structural integrity of this room.

Any excessively loud noise or sharp, strong impact on the weak surfaces here causes a 10-foot-radius section of the roof to collapse. Creatures caught in a collapse take 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a successful **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw.

Treasure

The orc dressed in robes holds a *wand of binding*, which it attempted to use on the horned devil.

Room 13 – Relic Room

The smoke in this room is thick, completely obscuring the floor, courtesy of the smoking *Annihilation Hold* resting on a center pedestal.

When entered, read or summarize:

> Flickering wall sconces cast an orange glow on a low hanging layer of smoke which obscures the floor of this room. The walls hold busts of orcs, weapons, scrolls, and other relics.
>
> A center pedestal holds a smoking vase.

Smokey Floor

The smoke lingers on the floor, creating a 2-foot-tall grey cloud, completely concealing the floor and its traps. Characters can attempt to remove the smoke in many ways; such as a *gust of wind* spell, forcing the smoke out through any open doors. However, the smoke from the *Annihilation Hold* replenishes the floor covering in two rounds.

Traps

Four **Magical Rune Traps** are built into the floor, each activated by stepping on a magical rune of an orc face.

Treasure

The following treasure is found displayed on the walls of this room:

- A *longbow +2*.
- A quiver of twelve *arrows +2*.
- A longsword with a jagged blade (*vorpal sword*).
- A *battleaxe +2* with a haft made of human teeth.
- Several leather and bamboo canisters containing spell scrolls and maps, chosen as you see fit.

Magical Rune Traps

Four magical traps are built into the floor, each activated by stepping on a magical rune of an orc face.

Detection. The floor is covered in a 2-foot cloud-like layer of grey smoke, making detecting the traps difficult.

Noticing. The runes are easily noticed if the layer of smoke has been removed.

Detect Magic. Though the runes are magical, so are several items in the room.

Find Traps. The layer of smoke obscures line-of-sight.

Searching. Searching for traps requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. This check is made with disadvantage as long as the layer of smoke remains.

Arcana. If the runes are visible, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals they are magical.

Disabling. The magic rune traps can be disabled with the use of *dispel magic* or with a successful **Intelligence (Arcana)** check with the DC equal to the trap's save DC.

Smiling Orc Face: Polymorph Rune
When activated, the character must succeed on a **DC 18 Wisdom** saving throw. On a failure, the character suffers the effects of the *polymorph* spell and is transformed into a blue **baboon** (CR 0; MM, p 318).

Snarling Orc Face: Biting Rune
When activated, the character must succeed on a **DC 18 Dexterity** saving throw. On a failure, the rune animates: a stone orc head extends from the rune and bites the character's foot, dealing 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage and the character is grappled (escape DC 18).

Small Orc Face: Shrinking Rune
When activated, the character must succeed on a **DC 18 Constitution** saving throw or be targeted by the reduce effect of an *enlarge/reduce* spell.

Exploding Orc Face: Feeblemind Rune
When activated, the character takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage and must succeed on a **DC 18 Intelligence** saving throw. On a failure, the sound of a faint explosion is heard, originating from the character's head and it suffers the effects of the *feeblemind* spell.

Annihilation Hold

If the jar is disturbed, every remaining undead orc arrives at the beginning of the next round in an attempt to destroy those that trespass into this chamber. If all of the orcs are already destroyed, devils attack instead (see **Alternate Hook – Quickplay** and **We Want to Talk!** sidebar)

Annihilation Hold

Wondrous Item, legendary, cursed

The *Annihilation Hold* features delicate, finely-detailed paintings of storks, herons, and swans, all playfully diving into a body of cerulean water. The jar's stopper is cracked and loose, and when the jar is not held by anyone or anything, it functions as an *eversmoking bottle*, but it constantly spews out smoke.

Curse. Once the stopper is removed and the command word ("yas'ta'phree") spoken, the curse manifests as the evil **djinni** Hasteth is released. The djinni is bound by cosmic law to grant a single wish to whomever freed it, but it desires to sow chaos and strife across reality and greatly enjoys perverting these wishes.

Once this wish is granted, Hasteth can't be bound by the *Annihilation Hold* again until a year and a day has passed, and the recipient of the wish has been killed. While free, the djinni rampages across the lands and while doing so proclaims that it is acting at the behest of whomever freed it.

Until the curse is broken, one of the cursed character's stats is lowered to 6. This statistic changes every day at dawn. Furthermore, until the curse is broken, the character's stats can't be raised by other magic or items, such as by a *headband of intellect*.

Conclusion & Later Development

If you would like to extend this adventure, you may do so in a number of ways:

Hasteth Freed

If Hasteth is freed, the characters soon discover that the djinni is rampaging in their name. If they're evil-aligned, this may provide a way to spread their infamy; if they're neutral or good-aligned, though, this may destroy alliances and friendships as the djinni's evil deeds tarnish their reputation.

Destroy Annihilation Hold

The characters may determine what the bottle contains, and then decide to destroy it. Hasteth is a creature from before recorded time—in fact, it may even be from another world or plane entirely! Destroying the bottle could very well become an epic quest in its own right, with the characters journeying to various locales as they acquire rare and legendary spell components so that they can perform a powerful ritual of disenchantment.

Player Option: Oath of the Eternal Order

If the characters reach an amicable resolution with the orcs, they may be invited to join the ranks of the paladins of the Oath of the Eternal Order.

If they accept the offer, their original Paladin oath is immediately replaced with the Oath of the Eternal Order and they lose all benefits of their previous oath.

The Oath of the Eternal Order rose from the orcs of a once-great kingdom. These people sought honor above all, and knew that a promise made was to be a promise kept. Their numbers were small as the tenets of devotion required a dedication that most couldn't truly support, for it followed them into death and beyond. They are attached to the subject of their oath and often adorn their gear and quarters with reminders of this pledge. They rarely retain familial relationships upon swearing their commitment oaths.

Tenets of the Eternal Order

The tenets of the Oath of the Eternal Order have not been shared with the outside world for many centuries, but the faithful excel at spending their time wisely. Their core principles are:

Strive for Truth. Every action you take and statement you make is in pursuit of truth, regardless of pain or displeasure.

Adherent to Oaths. Any promise made is a permanent one. These bonds are stronger than any legal document and must be protected at all costs.

Eternity Personified. Nothing can ever be truly forgotten, and no one ever really dies. You will be eternal, passing your stories and responsibilities to future generations.

Channel Divinity

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following Channel Divinity options.

Universal Truths. You can use your Channel Divinity to create a *zone of truth* as per the spell. When you do this, you may extend the duration of this effect by one hour for each hit die that you expend.

Divine Inquiry. You can use your Channel Divinity to ask a creature a single, specific question. If you do, that creature must answer quickly and truthfully unless they succeed on a Wisdom saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier. A creature that succeeds on this saving throw and chooses to lie or mislead takes an amount of radiant damage equal to your paladin level in d6s. For example, a 5th level paladin of the Oath of the Eternal Order that uses this feature would inflict 16 (5d6) radiant damage to a creature.

Oath Spells

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

Oath of the Eternal Order Spells Paladin Level – Spells
3rd –*expeditious retreat, mage armor*
5th – *calm emotions, enhance ability*
9th – *clairvoyance, speak with dead*
13th – *freedom of movement, Mordenkainen's faithful hound*
17th – *greater restoration, legend lore*

Aura of Resolute Will

Beginning at 7th level, you find that your will has been steeled by faith and experience. If you would fail a Wisdom saving throw, you may choose to succeed on that saving throw instead. If you do, you also gain one level of exhaustion.

At 18th level, when one of your allies within 30 feet would fail a Wisdom saving throw and you are aware of the effect that caused the saving throw, you may instead choose to have them succeed. If you do, you also gain one level of exhaustion.

Into Eternity You March

Starting at 15th level, you begin to exhibit aspects of undeath, including gaining a phylactery as if you were a lich. When you are reduced to 0 hit points and are not killed outright, you can choose to have your soul escape into your phylactery. If you do, and your phylactery is not destroyed while your soul is inside of it, you gain a new body in 1d10 days and return to it. When you do, you regain all of your hit points. Your new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

If your phylactery is destroyed, you can beseech your deity for a new one. This may require a quest or special holy mission; work with your DM for details.

An Oath Fulfilled

At 20th level, you fulfill your oath and become a physical manifestation of that promise. Your type changes to undead, but your physical form does not necessarily change. Your hair may turn grey, white, or even fall out, and your skin may become brittle or leathery; these details are yours to determine.

Additionally, you gain the following powers:

- ***Limited Turn Immunity.*** If you would be turned (such as by a cleric's ability to turn undead), you may choose to ignore that effect. Once you use this ability, it can't be used again until you complete a short or long rest.
- ***Orb of Faith.*** You hurl a magical ball of manifest faith that explodes at a point you can see withing 120 feet. Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC Dexterity saving throw with a DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier. The sphere spreads around corners. A creature takes 35 (10d6) force damage and 35 (10d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Creatures that fail this saving throw by 5 or more are also stunned for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). Once you use this ability, it can't be used again until you finish a long rest.

Appendix A: Creatures of Annihilation Hold

Battlewarden Orralthum

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (*magical plate with resistance to slashing damage*)
Hit Points 171 (18d8 + 90)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +3 Cha +3
Skills Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5
Damage Immunities poison
Damage Resistances slashing
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Spellcasting. The undead orc paladin is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, protection from evil and good, thunderous smite*
2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite, find steed*
3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite, dispel magic*

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the undead orc to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the undead orc drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The undead orc paladin makes three attacks with her bone longsword, which she wields with two hands.

Bone Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 4 (1d6) necrotic damage if the creature is a humanoid.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The undead orc exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the undead orc must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from the undead orc, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Reactions

Parry. The Battlewarden adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the Battlewarden must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Orc Wraith

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhausted, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Orc
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the wraith has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

Orc Dire Wraith

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhausted, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Orc
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the wraith has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 26 (5d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

Paladin of the Eternal Order

Medium undead (orc), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 171 (18d8 + 90)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws WIS +3 CHA +1
Skills Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Spellcasting. The undead orc paladin is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, protection from evil and good, thunderous smite*
2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite, find steed*
3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite, dispel magic*

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the undead orc to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the undead orc drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The undead orc paladin makes three attacks with its glaive or its shortbow.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The undead orc exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the undead orc must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from the undead orc, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Zombie Otyugh

Large undead, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws CON +7
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Otyugh
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Limited Telepathy. The otyugh can magically transmit simple messages and images to any creature within 120 feet of it that can understand a language. This form of telepathy doesn't allow the receiving creature to telepathically respond.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the otyugh to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the otyugh drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The zombie otyugh makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its tentacles.

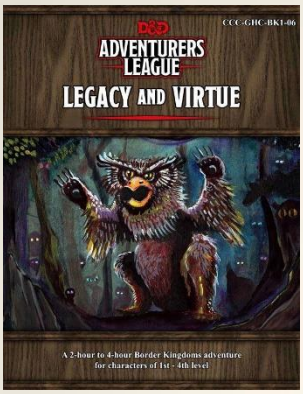
Bite. Melee *Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against disease or become poisoned until the disease is cured. Every 24 hours that elapse, the target must repeat the saving throw, reducing its hit point maximum by 5 (1d10) on a failure. The disease is cured on a success. The target dies if the disease reduces its hit point maximum to 0. This reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until the disease is cured.

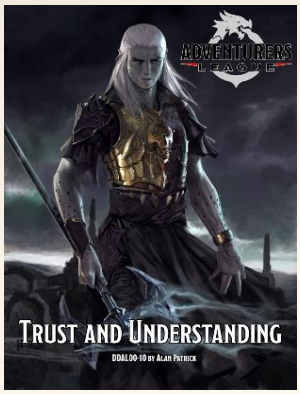
Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 4 (1d8) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained until the grapple ends. The otyugh has two tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

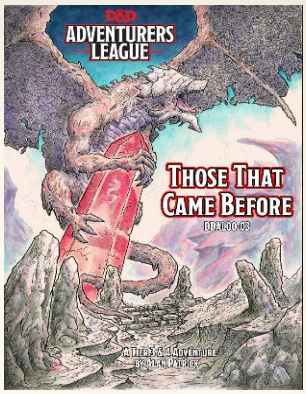
Tentacle Slam. The otyugh slams creatures grappled by it into each other or a solid surface. Each creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage and be stunned until the end of the otyugh's next turn. On a successful save, the target takes half the bludgeoning damage and isn't stunned.

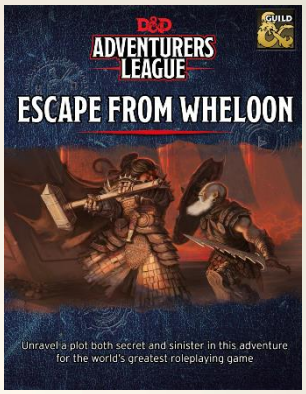
Please check out our other adventures.

Alan Patrick

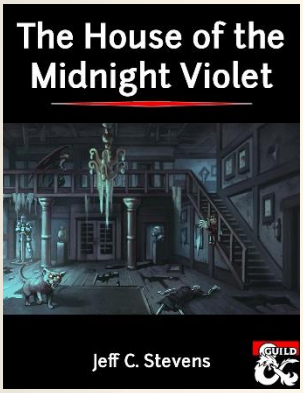


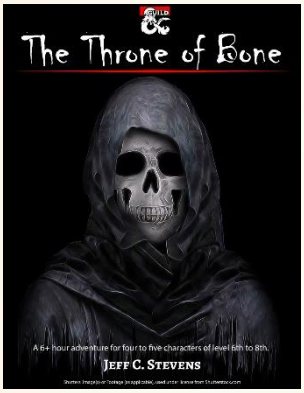


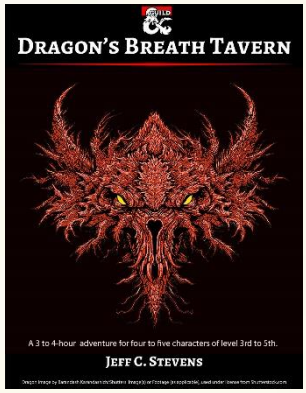


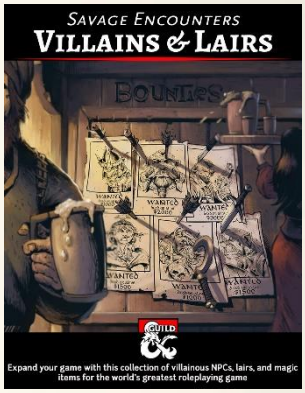


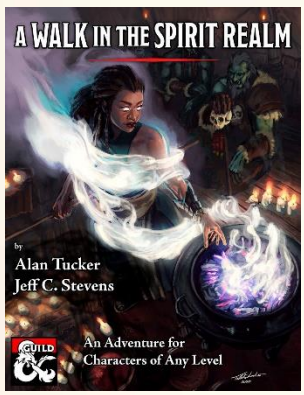
Jeff C. Stevens

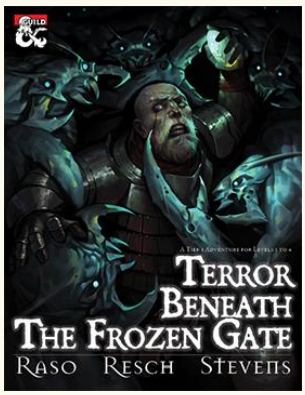


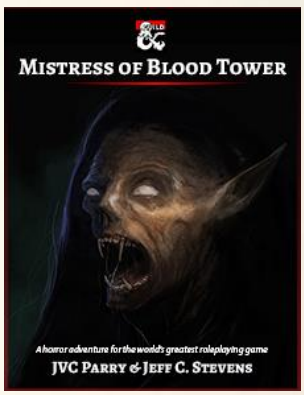












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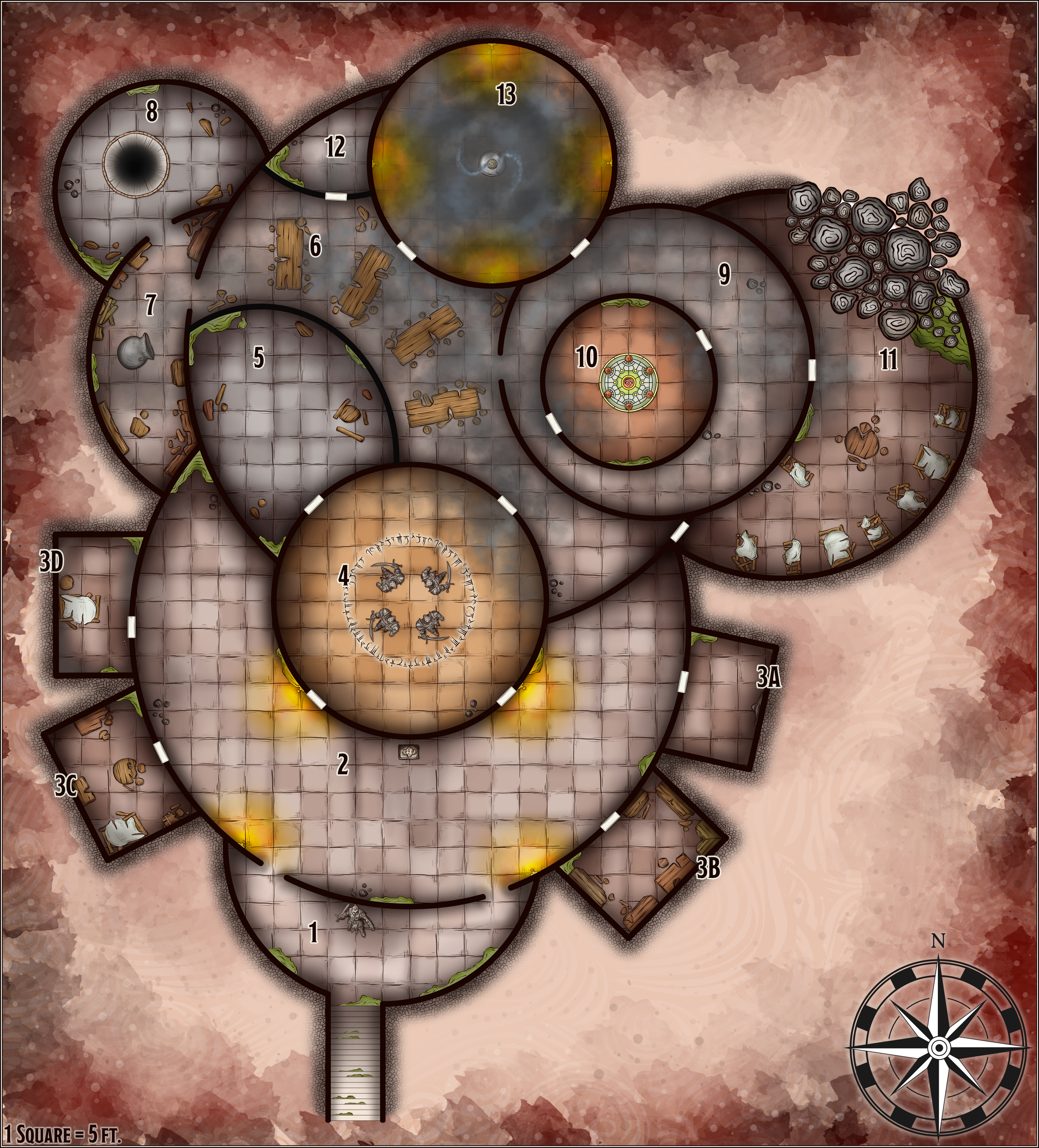
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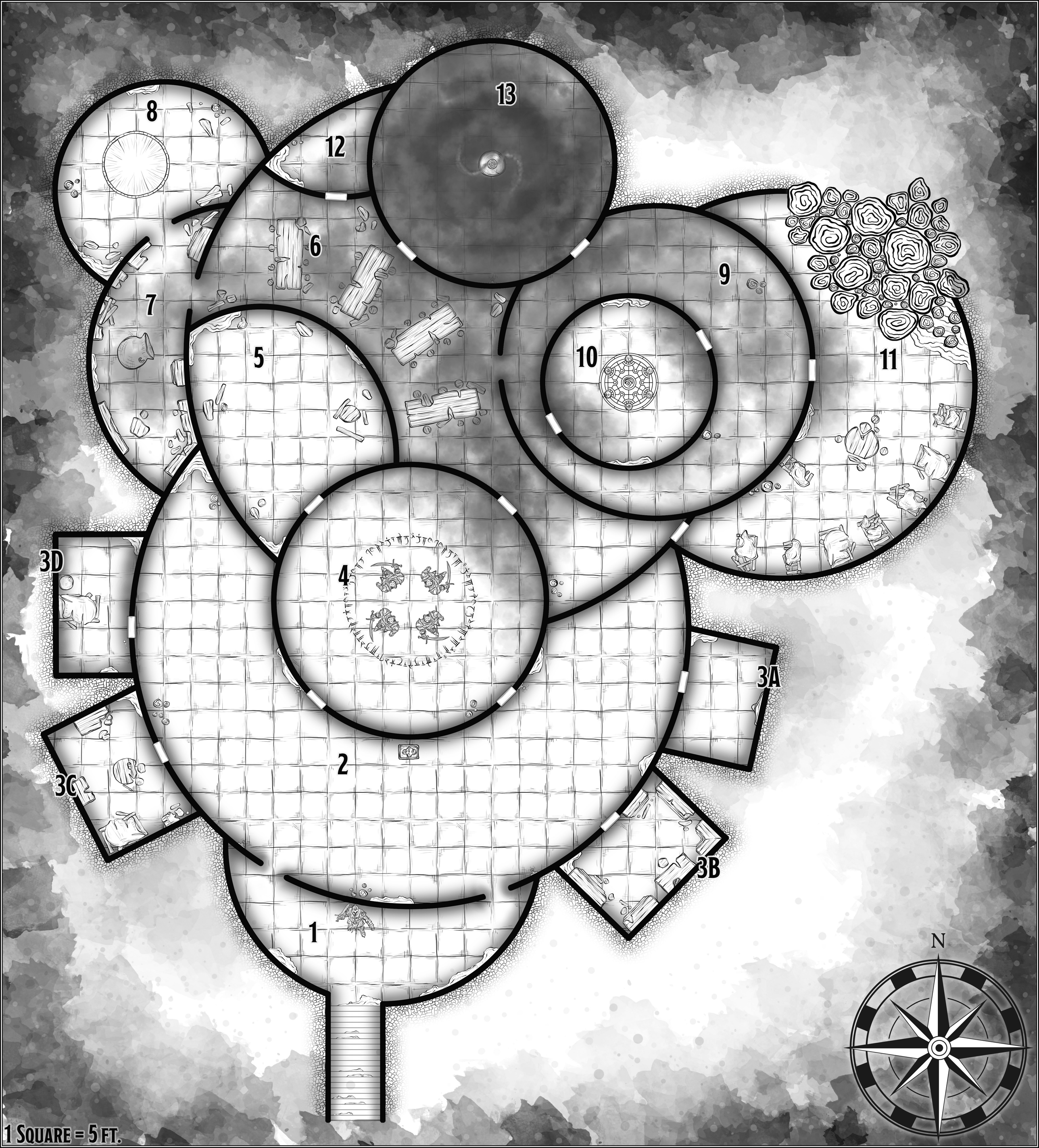
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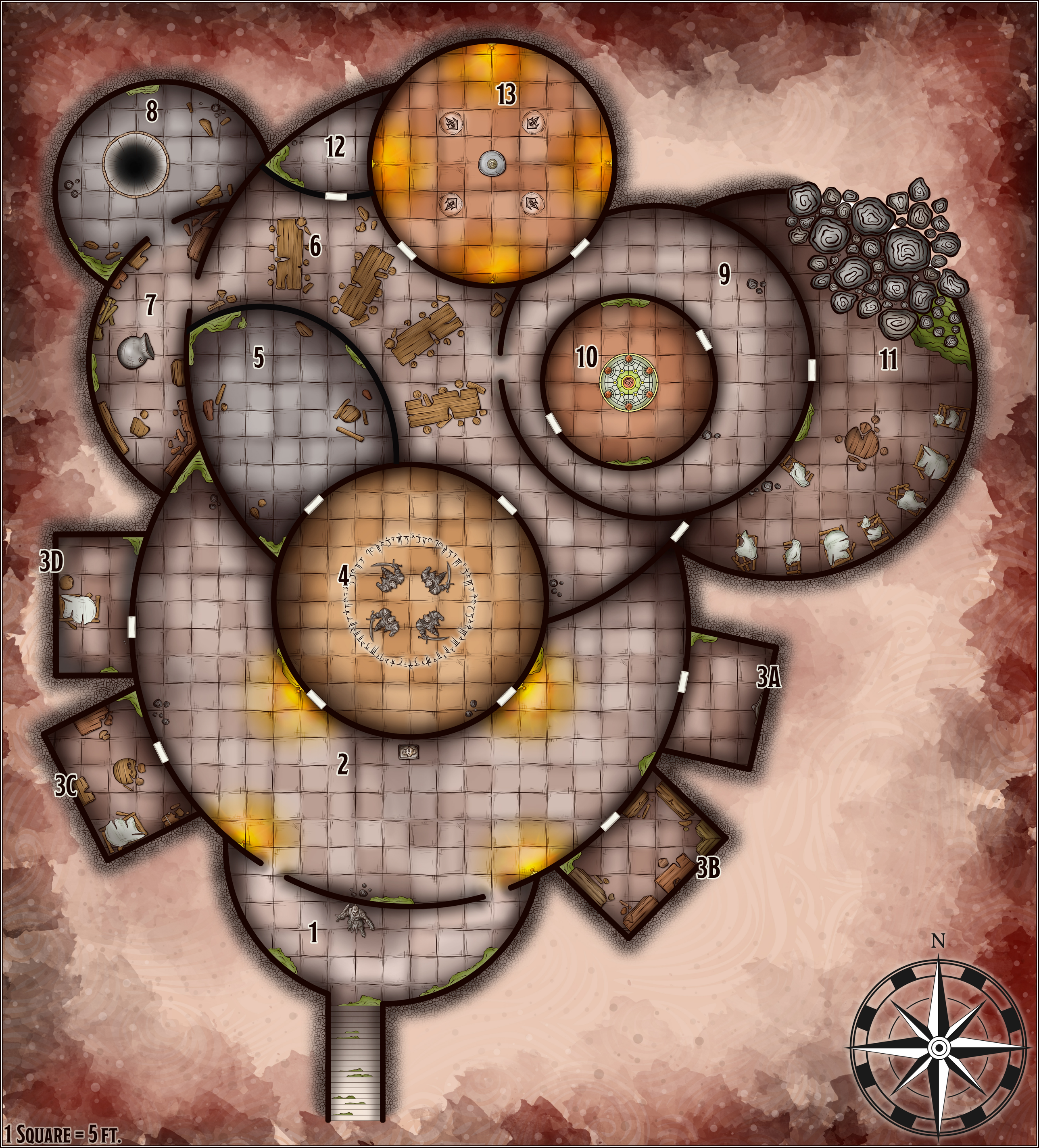
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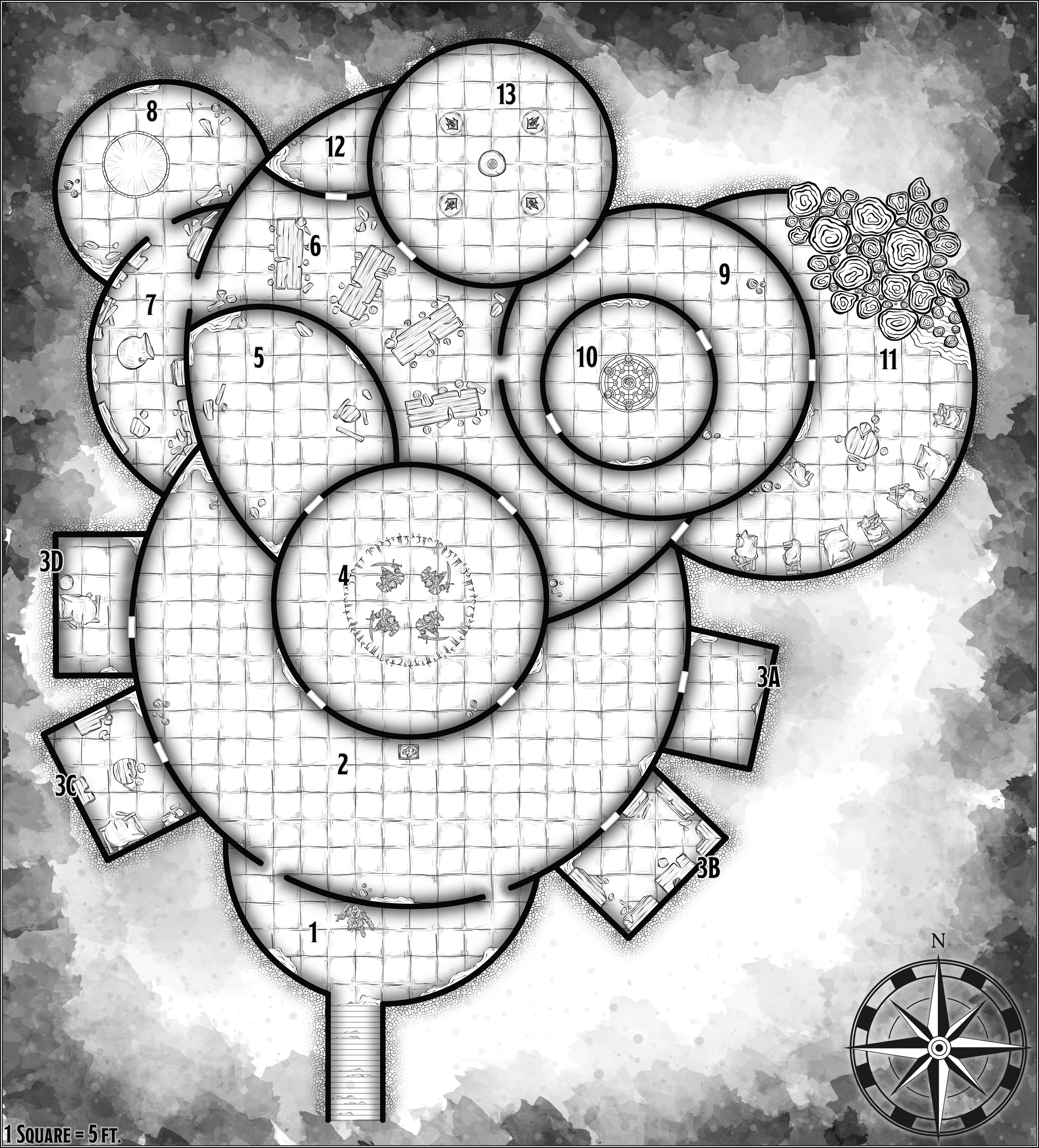
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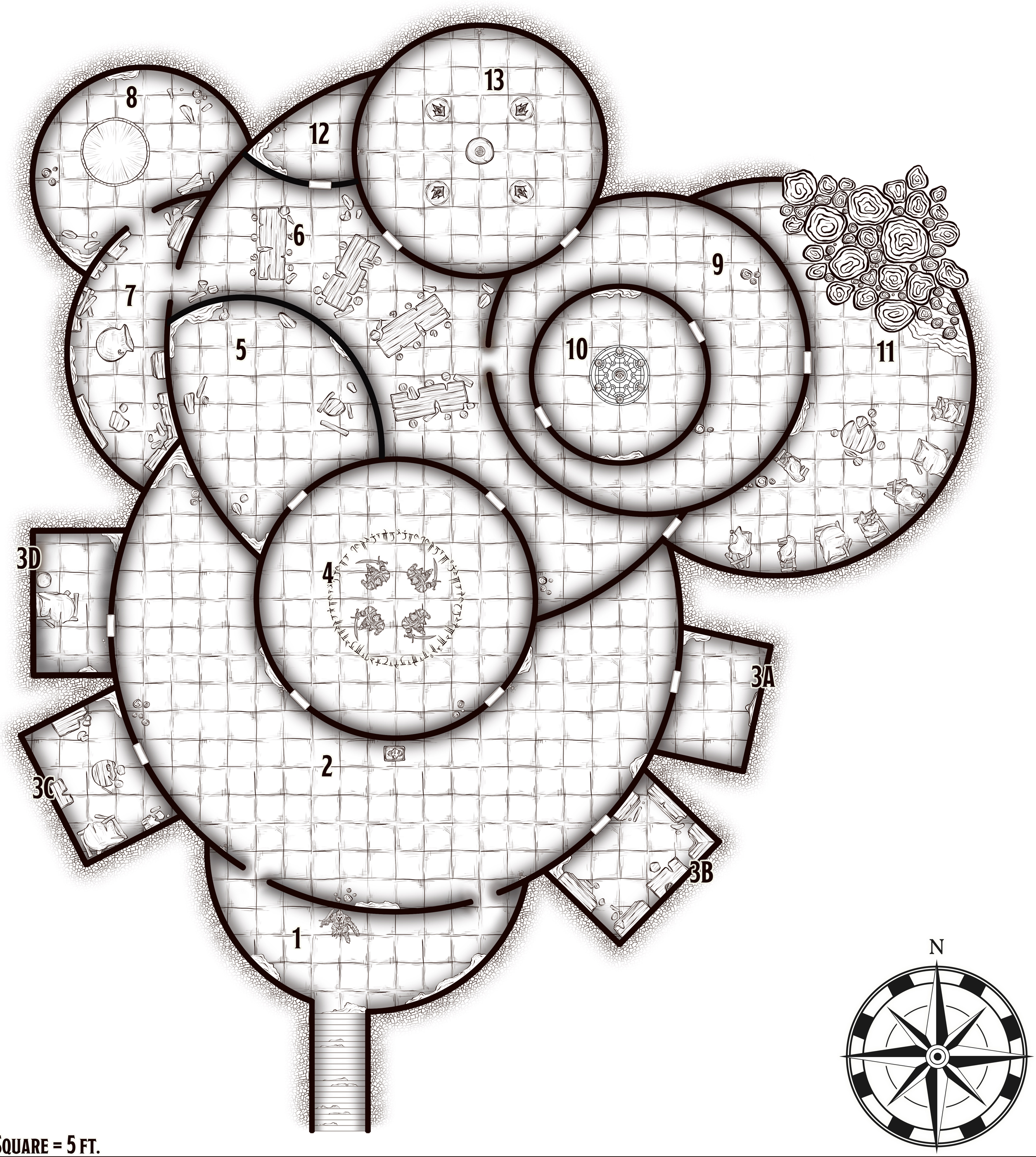
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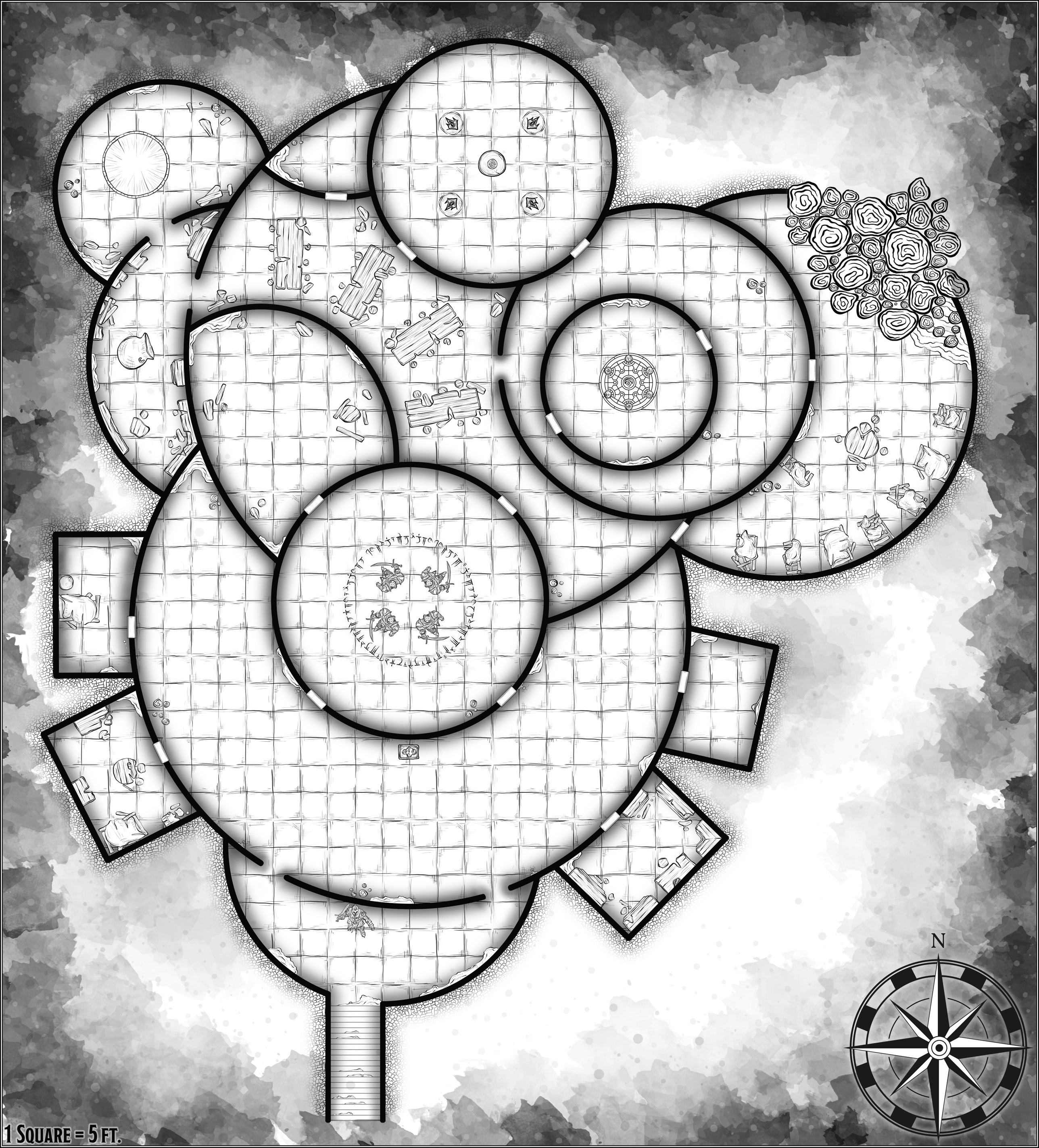
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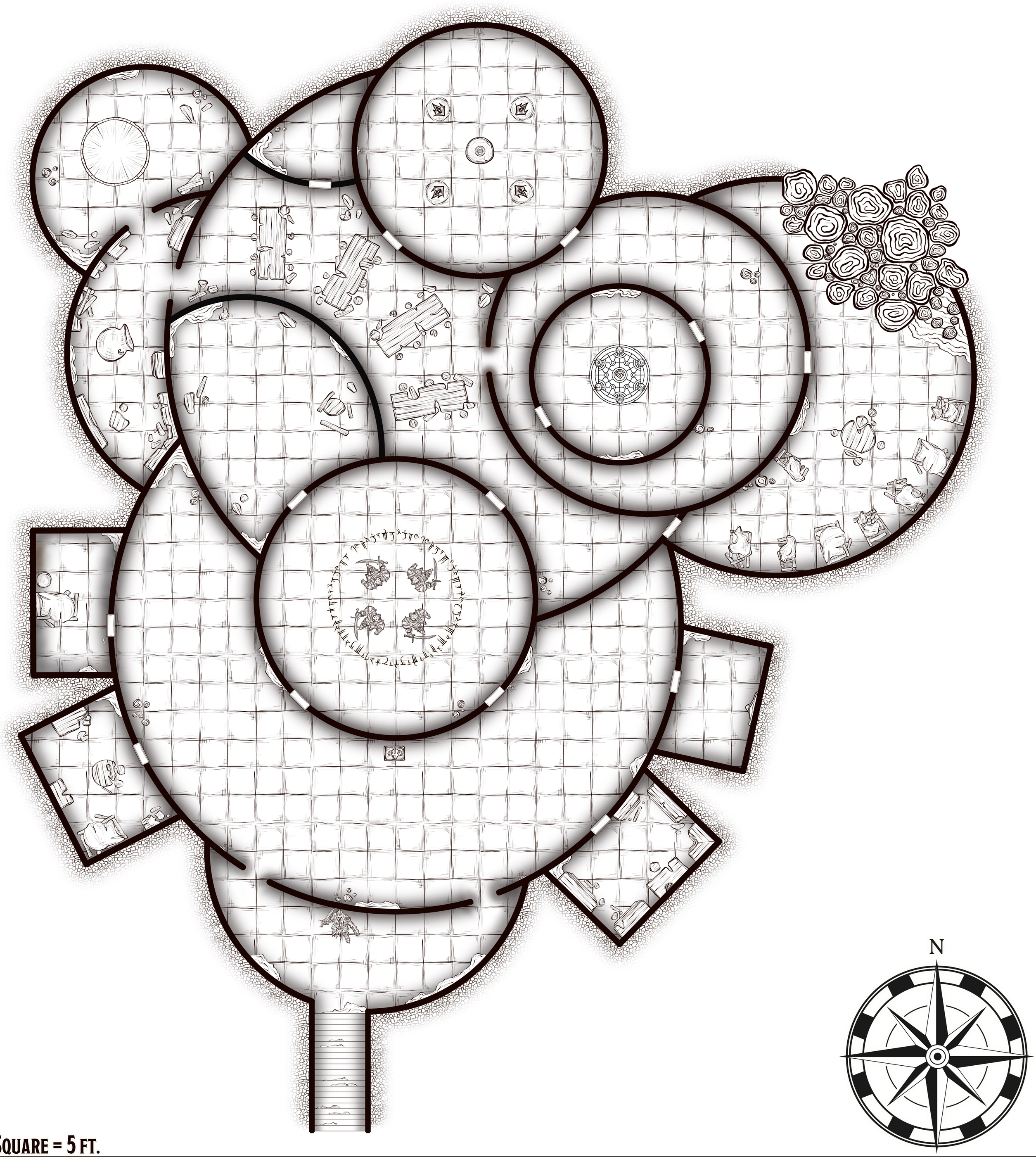
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