

PUZZLES FOR PLAYERS



A COLLECTION OF PLAYER-ENGAGING PUZZLE IDEAS FOR FANTASY RPGS

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~ A Collection of Player-Engaging Puzzle Ideas for Fantasy RPGs ~

All puzzle concepts, write-ups, examples, and maps by Mark. Published in April 2020.
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Cover art by Cloverkin.
See more of her exceptional artwork at www.cloverkin.com

Example maps were created in Campaign Cartographer 3, which is a super amazing toolset.
Check it out at www.profantasy.com

Example images come from various free sites including unsplash.com, pexels.com, and pixabay.com, or are my original works.

Many thanks to John, Andre, Barry, and Stephanie for ideas, comments, encouragements, tools, playtesting, and game nights!

And finally, to my wife Becky for supporting me and contributing her artistic skills!

How To Use This Book

Thank you for purchasing this e-book and supporting creative play!

This collection of puzzle ideas is designed to supplement your game design toolkit, providing concepts and starting points to build challenges that will engage players, no matter how high (or low) their characters' levels may be. If you and your gaming group want more from puzzle solving than skill checks and dice rolls, these templates are here to help you out.

Puzzles are categorized at three levels of scale: encounter/room, module/dungeon, and campaign/world. This lets you know how much work you will have to do to integrate the idea into your game and how broadly the puzzle may impact your adventure.

- **Encounter / Room** scale puzzles require that players only figure out and solve a one-shot challenge. These can be easily dropped in to an existing dungeon or game night, perhaps an empty room on your map or a random encounter on the road, and will result in relatively small, quick payoffs.
- **Module / Dungeon** scale puzzles generally require solving parts in multiple rooms or floors, and then bringing them all together at some point. These will require extra work on your part to prepare; perhaps the final piece will be in the pocket of the 20th level mage located on the top floor!
- **Campaign / World** scale puzzles are designed to be built in to your large game world, with different parts taking place in different environments, continents, or even planes of existence. These will generally involve extended efforts by players that may continue during much of a party's lifespan, resulting in epic treasures, discoveries, and encounters that will enter the history books of your campaign.

Each template includes setting suggestions, examples terms to use with online image searches to stimulate your own creative work, presentation and gameplay tips, and additional ideas to make this your unique gaming experience. Each also includes an example map and script to guide you in integrating the puzzle into your game quickly. You should feel free to update, change, or add-on whatever you like for your own campaigns.

Finally, remember to enjoy the game at least as much as your players do!

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The Druid's Whistle

— *When a nature lover needs to dial Information* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a circle of trees, stalagmites, pillars, etc. that have large holes through them. There are also some tubes/pipes located in the area. Each tube has a different diameter or shape to match one of the tree holes.

When the correct tubes are placed in the correct holes, the breeze is channeled into a kind of natural whistle-song, which nearby animals recognize as a summons. A small, friendly non-magical animal (like a rabbit, owl, fish, etc.) will approach. Players may ask it any general question about the surrounding area, such as “can you bring us some healing herbs” or “where is the nearest city” or “have you seen any large treasures” or the like.

The animal will understand and answer truthfully (the answer may be “no”), or can escort the characters to a location, or will otherwise try to help within its ability. Characters who can actually speak with animals can engage in full conversation and dialogue. After fulfilling the call for help, or if the animal senses any danger at all, it will leave. The circle can be used once per day. A previously summoned individual animal will never return.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Trees in a forest glen
- Stalactites and stalagmites in a grotto or cave complex
- Rock stacks on a mountain ledge
- Thick vines hanging from a tall jungle canopy
- Carved columns around the garden of a country estate

⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- circle of trees
- ancient stone pillars
- stalactites grotto
- standing stones



The Druid's Whistle

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players will probably easily recognize that there is something to be investigated here. If they aren't catching on to the nature of the puzzle, perhaps describe a breeze blowing through the area and vague whistling sounds coming from the trees or tubes.

Once the players are investigating thoroughly, draw a detailed map so they can begin to solve the puzzle. If you have a diorama or physical models (such as paper towels for trees and dowels for tubes), this is the time to bring those out. Require the players to use their deductive skills to match the tubes with the holes.

⌘ Success ⌘

When a tube is correctly placed, use a kazoo or harmonica or electronic device/app to play the "note". This will lead players in the direction of understanding the nature of the puzzle. Once the entire music is played correctly, they have solved it and the friendly animal will come.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

If players place tubes in the wrong holes for incorrect notes or play a series in the incorrect order, play a discordant sound for the players so they know it is wrong. After a grace period of two or three, additional incorrect notes each have a 20% chance that hostile animals will appear after 1d4 rounds and attack the party immediately. These should be native area animals attracted by the disturbance, not something like a passing band of orcs on a raid.

If characters destroy a tree or tube, the whole construction will be broken permanently. If this destruction was on purpose, its creator (a druid or clan of druids, fey creatures, priests of a nature god, animal-oriented wizard, etc.) will immediately know and become an enemy to the party. Feel free to develop this in your campaign.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

If you require that players play a series of notes as a song rather than a simple chord, use music familiar to the players, such as a common, real world jingle. If you normally use background music to set the scene during your gaming sessions, perhaps the melody could be a chorus or refrain they have heard often in this music. You could even play the correct tune for them in advance and then require them to place and remove the tubes as appropriate. The point is that the players are solving the puzzle, not the characters.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Conceal the tubes in separate locations rather than in one pile.
- Hide the tubes in more difficult secret caches.
- Place some tree trunk holes higher than normal reach and out of line-of-sight.
- Make some tree trunk holes smaller in diameter and harder to find among knotted trunks.
- Require tubes to be placed and then removed in a certain order so that a full song melody is played rather than just a chorus of notes.
- Gradually escalate consequences to include hostile magical animals and fey creatures.

The Druid's Whistle

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Walking through the dense forest, you discover a break in the foliage and enter a small glade surrounded by thick brambles. The ground here looks like it may have been the site of an ancient lava flow. Carefully maintained boles are growing from the grass in a large circle, and each one has a large hole through the trunk. In the southern part of the clearing there is a pile of polished white rocks.

On the far side of the clearing the trail continues, beginning its ascent the into the mountains. A breeze blows by rustling the leaves and you hear some faint whistle-like tones.”

Fireplace Candles

— Be careful playing with fire —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a fireplace, near which is a candle holder with candles, some of which are lit. The candles cannot be lit or extinguished by external means. Rather, they are toggled on and off by activating hidden switches, which are located in specially shaped nooks and crannies in the hearth, mantle, firebox, and bricks of the fireplace. Each specially shaped hole will only fit one of the nearby fireplace tools.

Each time a hidden switch is activated by the proper fireplace tool, two or more candles will be toggled. If a candle is currently lit, it will go out; if the candle is out, then it will light. As players work to solve the puzzle, they will gradually learn which switches toggle which candles.

Once players correctly activate the switches so that all the candles are lit, a nearby secret door or compartment will open.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- The great-room of a forgotten castle
- The ballroom of a wealthy town merchant
- An old kitchen re-purposed by an alchemist
- A ceremonial fire-pit located near a sacrificial altar
- In the captain's quarters of a large ship
- A neglected study chamber

⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- castle fireplace
- holiday fireplace candles
- historical fireplaces
- forged fireplace tools



Fireplace Candles

⌘ Presentation ⌘

When the players encounter the fireplace, call out the variously lit candles to draw players' attention. Once they decide to investigate closer, draw the fireplace, tools, and candle holder, and mark which candles are lit. The drawing should include imperfections or details that the players use to find where the hidden triggers are located, perhaps like a hidden objects game. (If you have this pre-drawn before the game, it will be much easier.)

⌘ Success ⌘

Each time the players figure out that a particular tool activates a hidden switch, allow them to simply say they're using that switch and redraw the candle flames as appropriate. After they have found 2-3 switches, the nature of the puzzle will be clear. They may still need to find more switches! Once all candles are lit, they have solved the puzzle and the hidden door will open.

Here is an example of how you might present this game. The players find an L-shaped hole hidden in the fireplace drawing and place the L-shaped fireplace tool in it. You had planned that this switch will toggle candles 2, 3, and 5. Candles 1, 4, and 5 were lit before they hit the switch, so after they activate it draw orange X's on candles 2 and 3 (which "toggle on") and erase the orange X from candle 5 (which "toggles off"). Players can now see that candles 1, 2, 3, and 4 are lit while 5 is out and must figure out their next step.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

As players work through this puzzle, their characters will be generating noise unless they specifically mention quietly or carefully using the cast iron tools against fireplace metal and bricks. The noise will attract the attention of nearby wandering monsters and, if they are particularly loud, may even carry up or down through a multi-level brick chimney to other levels of your dungeon.

If players activate the same switch four times in a row, the candles will reset to their original state and the fireplace will burp out a small burst of non-magical fire doing 1d6 damage to whoever is standing within 5' of the front. The second time players activate the same switch four times in a row, the fire will do 2d6 damage. This will continue to increase to a maximum of 10d6. The entire puzzle will reset once per day, including the fire burp damage beginning at 1d6 again. The fire burp does no damage to the fireplace, candles, or any part of the mechanism.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

Pre-draw the hidden objects puzzle of the fireplace, with as much detail as you can muster on a large piece of paper. Perhaps take a photograph of an interesting fireplace you have access to, use some software to convert that photo to a sketch/drawing look, and go from there. Don't forget to include the fireplace tools so players can see what the end of each tool looks like and match it to a pattern in the drawing.

The candle flames can be done very easily with a dry erase board. Draw the candle holder and candles in black or brown, then use a bright red or orange marker to draw an X at the top of the lit candles. Whenever the players activate a switch, simply erase and draw new X's as appropriate.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Increase the number of candles.
- Increase the number of fireplace tools.
- Add extra details in the hidden objects drawing that match a tool but do not activate a switch.
- Locate the switches further away from the fireplace or behind burning logs, and wait for the players to specifically investigate that area to give them the additional hidden objects drawing.
- Schedule an encounter to take place 3d4 minutes (real time) after players begin with an enemy who himself has been working on the puzzle and is returning to try again.

Fireplace Candles

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Upon entering the common area you notice some tables and chairs, stools and benches, rugs and crates, and a fine brick fireplace that takes up the entire southeast corner of the room. A roaring fire is currently burning. Looking closer you see a series of three candelabras arranged before the hearth, and some of their candles are lit. They do not appear to be melting in the fire’s heat and produce very little light.”

What The Font

— *Read between the lines* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a document that contains writing in an unusual font. Spells and character skills will fail to decode the writing, as it is neither a foreign language to be translated nor a cipher to be decoded.

When the players figure out how to read the unusual font, they will be able to understand the hidden message contained therein and apply that knowledge into the game.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- An old crumpled parchment discarded into an unlit fireplace
- A paper discovered folded in between the pages of an old library book
- Slipped under the characters' door at the inn while they slept
- In a messenger bag among otherwise normal royal dispatches
- A mysterious handbill tacked to a tree in the center of town
- A strange scroll found in the ancient lich's research library

⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- heavy metal band logos
- negative space text
- perspective text optical illusion
- extreme captcha text



What The Font

⌘ Presentation ⌘

This puzzle will require a document that players can handle and actually work to read. The methods of hiding text are limited only by your imagination. Use your computer to get creative with the document any way you want in advance, and then print it out for players at game time. The important point is that the letters and words are in the regular language of your players, but are simply written down in a difficult- to-read format.

Players may not solve this quickly and can easily stash the document while continuing the regular adventure. Do not allow players to work on the document while their characters are engaged in combat, concentrating on stealth or other skills, or the like. Players should only be able to study the document while their characters are in down time, traveling through quiet areas, or similarly able to closely examine the document.

⌘ Success ⌘

Once players read the document correctly, characters have that information in-game. You should require every word and letter to be read, and not grant success from getting the “gist” of the message.

The document may contain useful information for the current adventure, a side quest, or optional knowledge that can be pursued later. Alternately, it may be forbidden literature that, once the players read it, puts them in danger from the local government, a conspiring cabal, or an antagonist trying to keep a secret.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There is no consequence for failing to read the document.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

The critical point here is that this is not a code or foreign language, but simply requires a particular kind of know-how to read it. There are many creative ways you can present this to players.

Some ideas include writing sentences in a very small font hidden in large illuminated letters; writing sentences with letters that are mirrored both horizontally and vertically; folding the paper so that sentences cross different parts of the sheet; have multiple papers that must be aligned in certain ways to read parts of the hidden message; write messages in circles from the outside to the center in one color ink, then intersperse gibberish between and among letters in 2-3 other color inks.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Write letters in an extreme form of calligraphy.
- Rotate and mirror letters in unusual ways on a computer before printing out the model.
- Use different colored inks to confuse the message.
- Build tricks into your physical model/document, such as that players must flip and fold the paper to read it coherently.
- Break the paper into different parts that must be constructed like a jigsaw puzzle before the players can truly begin to figure out the writing.
- Write so that the lines go diagonally along a square page
- Write in mixed vertical and horizontal lines resembling a mindmap.
- Combine more than one of these “difficulty” ideas into a large single document.

What The Font

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“At the far side of the scriptorium is the master scribe’s elevated platform, on top of which you see the usual tools: quill, inkwell, sealing wax, and rolls of paper. Unrolled on the desk is a paper containing strange diagrams that look to have been in progress when the writer went missing. Looking at it almost gives you a headache; this came from no well-adjusted mind. Could this unusual draft be a clue in his disappearance?”

Pull Toys

Testing your upper body strength

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters enter an area with many dangling vines, ropes, chains, twine, or other dangling articles, or a mixed variety. Some of these dangling items are connected to a mechanism.

When the characters pull the correct ropes in the correct order, a secret door or compartment will open.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Dangling chains in a torture chamber
- Ropes hanging down from tree houses
- A mix of thin chains and wires in a dungeon hallway
- Ivy dangling over a stone archway in a jungle ruin
- Seaweed and kelp overhanging the deck of a shipwreck
- Tangled vines in the trees of a bog
- Wrinkled twine and hair knotted with fetishes and bones in a voodoo hut

⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- haunted house chains
- seaweed forest
- jungle vines
- network cables disaster
- stage rigging



Pull Toys

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may miss this puzzle if they do not investigate the dangling items that you point out in your description, so if this sequence is critical for your game be sure to highlight or place them conspicuously.

Once players investigate the dangling items, bring out your visual aid. A dry erase board or pre-prepared drawing will work, but physical pieces of string, chain, rope, or even plant vines would be far more interesting and tactile. This will also make your solution mechanism far more interesting as players will be examining what you have built to figure it out.

The solution should be indicated to players by a design seen in the area, a riddle, or directly by the dangling objects. Be as creative as you want with the hint, for example perhaps some of the ropes have between 1-8 knots and players must pull in that order; perhaps the linen strips in the Egyptian tomb have inscribed hieroglyphics and the correct ones match the cartouche of this tomb's mummy; perhaps characters must pull the three chains scattered among the two dozen ropes. These hints should be built in to your visual aid so that players notice and work with them. A brute force type search for the correct ropes is not very fun and should trigger consequences.

⌘ Success ⌘

When players pull one of the correct ropes, make some kind of click or knock sound that players can hear. Don't draw undue attention to making the sound, but let players discover this audio cue as they are seeking the correct ropes.

Once players have pulled all the correct ropes (together or in order, depending on your design), the hidden door opens.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

Players may try to find all of the correct ropes by pulling everything and noting which make the click sounds. Discourage this by having spiders, bats, rocks and dust, mold and fungus, or other detritus and creepy things fall from the ceiling. If they continue, this can escalate to 1d6 large hostile spiders or bats, 1d4 fungus or mold monsters, or the like. Continuing further will collapse a layer of the ceiling, doing 1d8 damage and rendering the mechanism inoperable.

If players pull the ropes out of order, you should still

produce the clicking noise. Give them a grace period of three or four pulls out of order, but if they continue pulling out of order then a small trap will trigger from the floor beneath each rope doing 1d4 damage. The trap should be appropriate to your setting: a spike that shoots up and retracts, a short jolt of electricity, a small burst of steam, etc.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

In your visual aid, feel free to use whatever material is available to you. For example, twine or string are just fine even if your setting has something different such as chains as the pulled items.

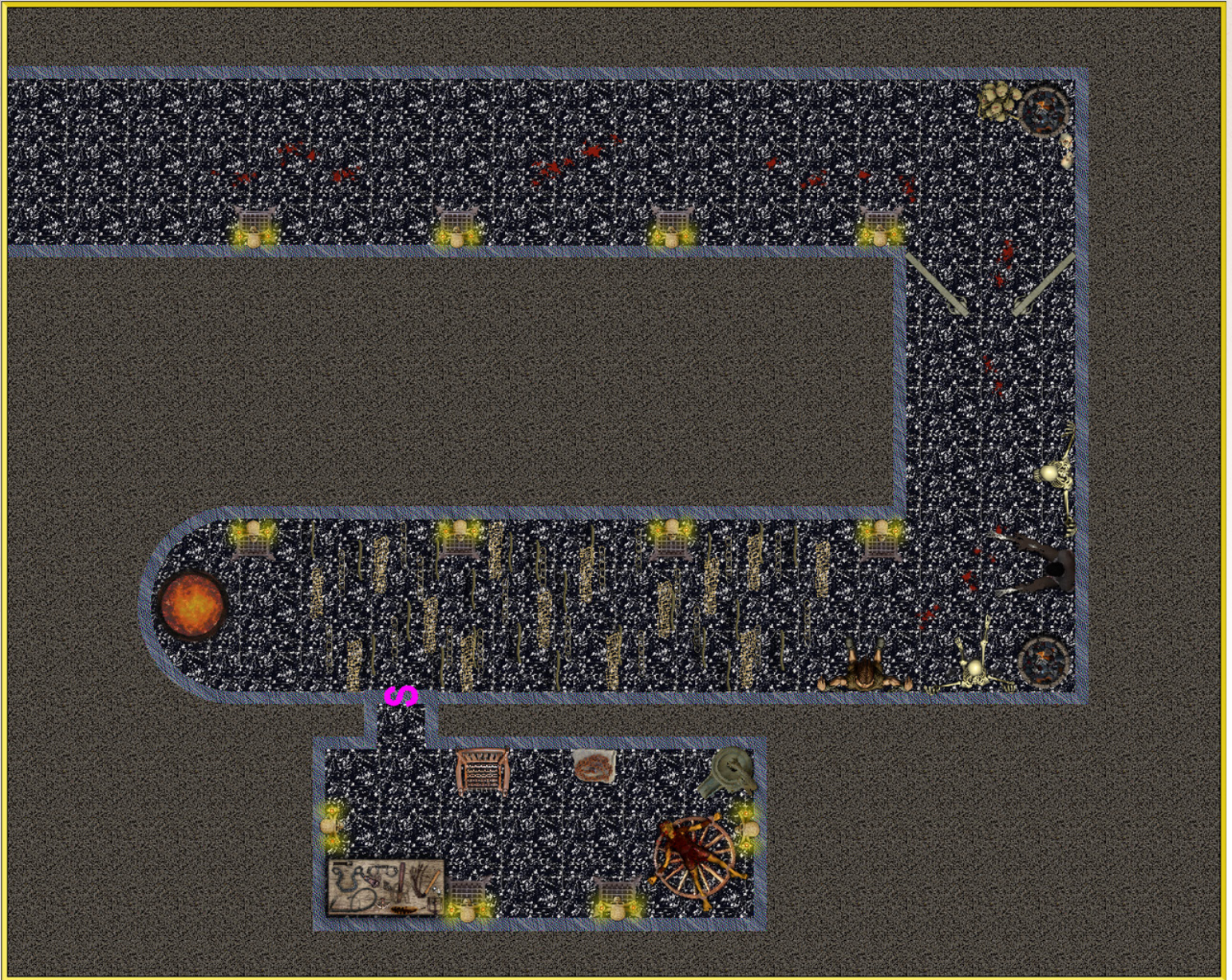
If you have the time and desire, find a room or area in your game space where you can attach actual pieces of rope from the ceiling before game time and have the players physically move there to solve the puzzle. You will still need to make the click (or other) sound to let them know when they've found one of the correct ropes but this could definitely produce a memorable time of interactive gaming.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require ropes to be pulled in a certain order.
- Require multiple ropes to be pulled all at once, utilizing total party cooperation.
- Some incorrect ropes will pull a heavy object down onto the character's head.
- Certain ropes must be pulled multiple times in a row.
- Some ropes are very thin while others are fatter, and if a thin one is pulled by a strong character it may break instead of engaging proper tension on the mechanism.
- Disguise the single correct dangling string to pull by having it among a tangle of natural spider webbing, all of which is actively monitored by a giant spider of course
- Pulling dangling chains makes noise that attracts the undead in the area.

← Pull Toys →

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“The rounded hallway looks like a dead end, but you are sure that the master torturer emerged from this direction earlier. Hanging from the ceiling for the last 25-30 feet of the passage are chains and ropes of various thicknesses and lengths, some reaching the floor, and all of which no doubt enhanced the terror of anticipation that victims felt when they were brought through here. A couple of the chains look like they’ve recently been used on some poor soul’s back. What was he doing down this otherwise featureless hallway?”

The Smashed Gearbox

— *Shifting brains into high gear* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a collection of wooden, metal, and stone pieces: gears, rods, pins, and other parts, to a strange looking mechanical box.

If they can assemble all the parts together in the proper order, the final product will act as an elaborate mechanical key for an even more elaborate lock elsewhere in your game.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Discarded in a monster's trash pile
- Stored in a leather bag found on the belt of a dead adventurer
- On the shelf in a tinker's shop
- Scattered on the floor near the appropriate lock (by the last frustrated party)
- Secured by guards in two separate transports to the city bank

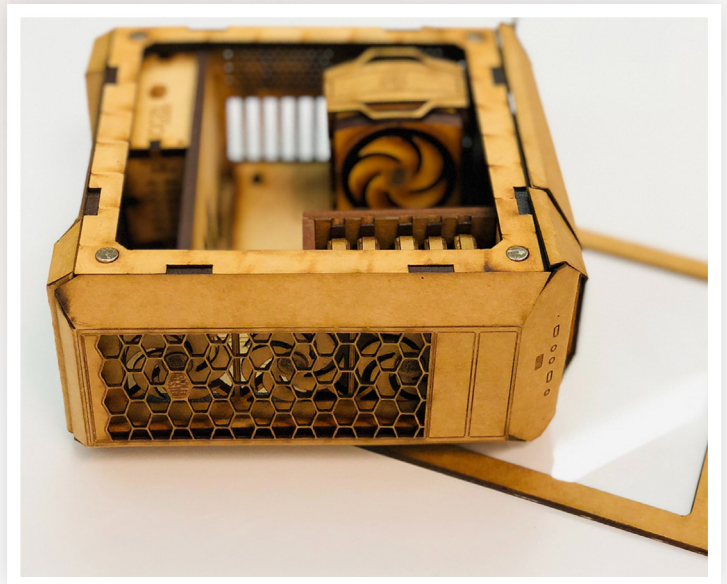
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- gears puzzle box
- mechanical puzzles
- knex puzzle box
- marble machine



The Smashed Gearbox

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players will almost certainly investigate a pile of mechanical parts if conspicuous in your game description. When they do so, bring out the pieces and parts required.

This puzzle will require extra preparation in advance, to construct a box with various levers, gears, and shafts. Store bought construction toy sets such as Lego, K'Nex, or Engino provide a great foundation for you to plan this. When players then encounter the puzzle, give the players the pieces they need to connect it all together. More complicated toy sets that use magnets, levers, and cables are encouraged.

Alternately, you can construct a less expensive version by cutting out cardboard, paper, or dowels in various shapes and sizes. Require players to place these on a pre-printed schematic such that paper gears, shafts, and levers operate properly to attain the final goal.

⌘ Success ⌘

Once the gearbox is properly built and engaged, a delicate shaft emerges from the in-game box. This shaft is the key-shank for a complicated, or unpickable lock elsewhere in your game.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

This puzzle is non-magical but some parts may be very delicate. If players become frustrated while working on the mechanism, throw down parts, or parts fall off the table or otherwise drop, there is a 10% chance that the in-game part will bend or break and render the mechanism inoperable. Take back any broken parts so that players cannot continue to work on the puzzle.

Inoperable parts can be fixed by a master tinkerer, smith, woodcarver, or appropriate artisan. This may become a side quest of its own to find an appropriately skilled worker and to pay the cost. It may also draw attention that a group of adventurers are looking to pay top dollar to quietly craft an unusual widget out of expensive material. Once repaired, return the part back to the players.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

This puzzle can be difficult to run as players may want to work on it while their characters are engaged in other activities in-game. If the game is currently in combat or characters are otherwise busy, players should not be allowed to also work on this puzzle.

This gearbox puzzle can be extended to any combination of gears, sprockets, and levers that you want players to solve in your world: opening ancient doors, repairing a clock tower, breaking into the city vault, etc.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require additional missing parts to be found or crafted to complete the gearbox.
- Have one (or more) pieces broken when found, requiring the players to construct a replacement or find a craftsman who can.
- Make the mechanism extremely delicate so that incorrect operation has a 10% chance of damaging a random part.
- Design the gearbox large enough (e.g. 1'x1'x1' on a side) or ceremonially decorated so that it cannot easily be concealed when players use it to open the lock.

The Smashed Gearbox

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Carefully unwinding the bundle you found secreted in the floor under the workshop bench, you find a collection of small, worked pieces of stone and an oddly shaped chunk of wood. It appears to have a variety of slots and holes bored in, along with oddly shaped tapers and points sticking out. You can’t immediately tell if this is someone’s strange woodcarving cast-off or a deranged contraption, although the care with which it was packed suggest the latter.”

The Water Must Flow

— *Indoor plumbing really is under appreciated* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a maze of pipes, funnels, tankards, sumps, and dials that appear to funnel liquid from multiple sources, through multiple intermediate contraptions, and into a final container.

Once they have directed the proper amount of each liquid through the correct path of plumbing, a special draught of some kind will be produced.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Hidden chamber behind a waterfall
- Part of a decorative temple fountain
- Blood channels carved in the side of the sacrificial altar
- A magical or alchemical laboratory
- A deranged merchant's shop
- Near an endless lava flow in the plane of fire
- An alchemist's laboratory

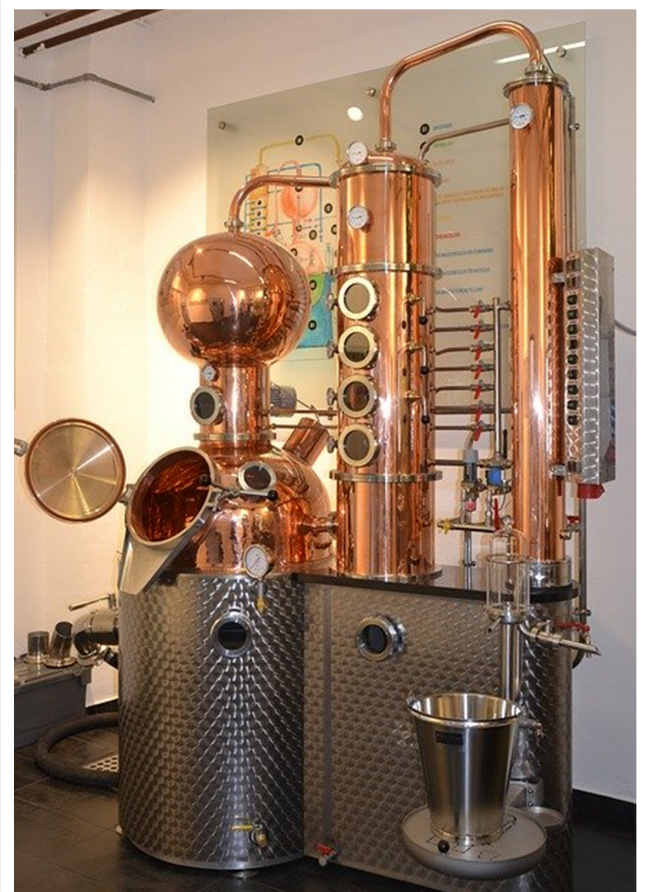
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- commercial plumbing
- mad scientist chemistry
- craft distillery
- water treatment



The Water Must Flow

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players should be easily attracted to this unusual construction. Once they step closer for a look or begin manipulating dials, bring out the visual aid.

A dry erase board works great for this puzzle. Draw out the maze of pipes, dials, funnel, spigots, etc. on regular paper and tape it to the dry erase board, including gaps and “window” cut-outs to the dry erase board itself. Have the players use this paper to indicate where they are going to redirect pipes, turn knobs, bend tubes, etc. When players activate whatever “on” spigot(s) is indicated, use colored dry erase markers in the cut-out windows and gaps to show the flow of liquids through the plumbing. Use different color markers for each, if there are multiple liquids.

If players have not properly combined the liquids, the spigot turns “off” after 15 seconds of real time so they can refine the flow and try again. Players should make notes where they see liquids flowing during the brief time, so they can make changes between each attempt.

Cluing players on the successful mix requires giving them a recipe. This can be presented as a riddle, on a parchment folded between pages of an ancient book, or even a children’s song or nursery rhyme.

⌘ Success ⌘

When players have flowed the correct liquids in the correct order to the final container, a special liquid will be successfully created. This could be an unusual potion, a “lost” historic drink, or a rare ingredient for creating a magical item. After the liquid is created, the source ingredients are expended, and the players will not be able to create more.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

This puzzle may take a long time to solve. Random encounters may occur often during this time. In addition, if players mix reagents improperly the final mixture may be useless, malign, or result in an immediate effect ranging from an explosion to a poison gas filling the room

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

Despite its apparent complexity, this puzzle is really just a kind of maze. It should be fairly easy to GM as you will not need any special tracking of player activity or pieces. Like any maze, it simply involves steps proceeding from input(s) to output.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require different liquids to be mixed together into the final container.
- Include pipes/channels that go over heat sources to be boiled/steam up into higher pipes.
- Improper mixes of arcane ingredients may explode if mixed incorrectly.
- A limited amount of source liquid give the players limited chances.
- One critical pipe/channel is broken and players must construct a replacement on the fly.
- Require the players to follow a riddle/recipe for successfully creating the final output.
- Require players to provide their own amount of a particular liquid as one of the inputs to the final mix.

→ The Water Must Flow ←

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Your dwarven captor brings you to an isolated room filled with arcane devices, hewn into the very roots of the mountain. ‘If you truly know the secrets of creating our ale, prove it!’ he bellows before unlocking your manacles. He sits on a nearby bench while the two guards post by the entrance door.

Looking at the various equipment in this small brewing chamber, each of you earnestly hopes you can recall the procedure overheard at the tavern last week; and that it works.”

A Connection Is Made

— *The tingle means it's working* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters enter an area containing various unusual metal plates, knobs, or bars mounted on the ceiling, walls, and/or floor.

When players connect the metal plates using a “human chain”, they will feel a slight tingle and a hidden door or compartment will open. The characters making the connection in game must have bare skin or metal on their fingers, as leather or thick cloth will block the connection. Larger gaps could be overcome if characters have lengths of chain, wire, or even corpses to touch between them.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- The sacred catacombs of long dead priests
- Antechamber of a treasury room
- A protected safe room in a dungeon abandoned to unintelligent creatures
- Trap room in a haunted mansion
- Hidden walkways in sewers beneath the city

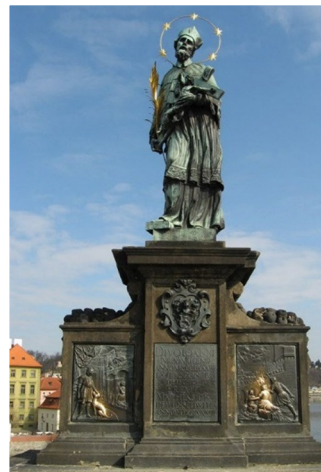
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- human circuit
- hands across america
- static electricity touch



A Connection Is Made

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may not notice this puzzle in the description of a room unless they are put in a position where they must investigate. This could include gates that close automatically trapping them in the room, two walls of a hallway slowly crushing inwards, or the like. They may also notice if you call out the specifics of the metal parts, like describing polished rings in an otherwise dusty and grimy ruin.

If presenting this as part of a slow-moving trap, give the players 2d4 minutes in real time to figure out the solution. If players completely miss the puzzle in a non-trap situation, you might provide clues elsewhere that they need to go back to this area and look more closely; for example, finding a tapestry showing the castle's young prince touching a similar metal plate.

Unlike other puzzles in this collection, no visual aid is really required for this. Players must simply figure out to connect the metal plates via “human chain”. However, you can provide visuals to make it more interesting or if you are using variations such as multiple metals or multiple embossed images.

⌘ Success ⌘

When players solve the puzzle and specifically position their characters to connect the correct plates, the compartment or door will open. If you have presented this as a slow-moving trap, the trap will stop and reverse itself into a reset.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

If players do not solve the puzzle in time during a trap situation, they suffer the consequences of the trap. This could range from 4d6 crushing damage, to falling into a pit, to instant death.

If players use any kind of electricity spells on the metal units, the operating mechanism will blow out from too much voltage and become inoperable.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

Be sure to avoid scenarios that don't make sense, such as placing the metal objects underwater, unless you are designing the puzzle as magic rather than electricity. Players can be rewarded for exceptionally clever solutions such as unwinding golden thread from a cape, tying it to a grappling hook, and swinging that up to hook into the metal eyelet on the ceiling.

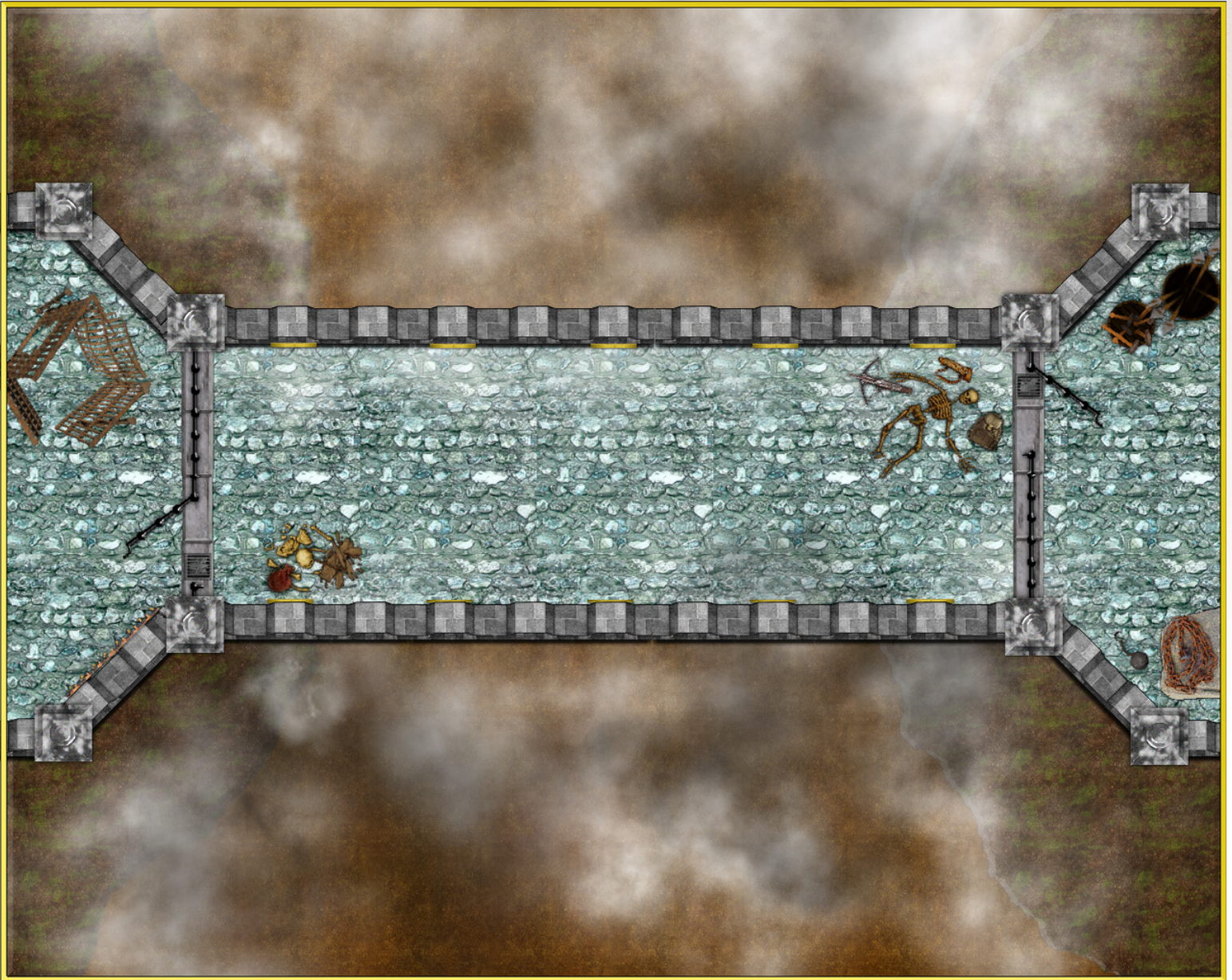
One key to integrating this puzzle in your game is giving it a world/story reason for being in this location. Did priests have to stand in a semi-circle and hold hands as a ceremonial rite to open the floor compartment? Was this constructed by a clever bandit in a dungeon filled with slimes or zombies, to prevent mindless creatures from ever entering his secured area? Were the original inhabitants required to prove their devotion to gods of weather by controlling static discharges? Does the guild teach cooperation among new members by requiring feats of cooperation among rookies?

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Include metallic objects of different metals that must be connected only to each other (connecting different metals incurs a shock of electricity for 1d6 damage).
- Require sets of metal objects to be connected in order.
- Place some metallic plates out of normal reach.
- Require characters to hold the “human chain” for 1d4 rounds before the circuit is complete.
- Place different sets of circuits around the room that characters must individually complete (hands and feet) all at the same time.
- Place one metal plate behind a pile of rubble.

→ A Connection Is Made ←

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Approaching the bones at the far end of the hallway near the portcullis, both heavy gates close seemingly on their own. Sharp points of cast metal begin descending from holes in the ceiling and will eventually pierce through every square foot of the room. This is clearly a devious trap!

Unusual metal panels are located at various points along the two walls of the room: some look like hammered iron bearing the castle’s emblem and others like polished brass with an embossed human handprint.”

Playing Co-op

— You mean we have to talk to each other? —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters enter a room in which a large box or container sits in the center. One side is lined with small wooden doors and the other side contains small peepholes. Inside the box is a mechanism that must be manipulated to open a door or container.

When the internal mechanism is properly manipulated, a drawer will open up from the side of the container revealing valuable contents.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Inside an ancient king's tomb
- Holding the necromancer's most valued treasure
- Part of the mercenary guild's training room
- On display at a circus of curiosities
- The city urchins' clubhouse

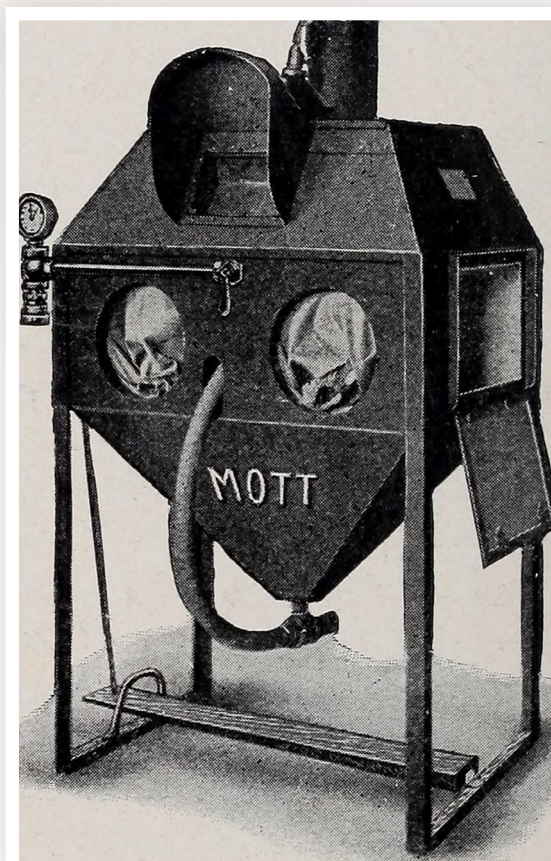
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- whats in the box game
- halloween mystery box
- diy sandblasting cabinet
- raree show



Playing Co-op

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players will immediately recognize this as a machine to be investigated, and possibly someone will be familiar with the idea. Players must decide who will be placing their characters' hands into the box and who will be looking into the peepholes. Characters can only place their hands in the box if they fit in to the holes, doors, or gloves that are available in-game.

Once this has been worked out, physically separate the players so that those who are placing their hands in the box cannot see your visual aids. This can involve putting them in a separate room, on different sides of the game table, behind a large screen, or whatever works. Players whose characters are looking into the box should be able to see your visual aids, which can be drawings on a dry erase board, physical objects, or otherwise.

The player(s) who can see must tell the other players what they need to do. The players whose hands are in the box will tell you (the GM) what they are doing, and you will update the visual aid accordingly.

It may work better to construct this puzzle by cutting holes in one side of a large box and covering inside the holes with black cloth. Inside the box, place the objects that the viewing player(s) will see: wood blocks, dowels, dials, gears, cups, or whatever else may be required. As mentioned in a previous puzzle, store bought construction toy sets such as Lego, K'Nex, or Engino will work well for this. This will allow players to interact in such a way that you don't have to do any manual tracking or middleman work between players.

⌘ Success ⌘

When players have successfully completed the required task in the box, the unlocking mechanism will activate, and the drawer compartment will open.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

If players operate the mechanism for more than 10 minutes real time, gauntlets inside the box clamp down over characters' hands forcing them to complete the box before moving on. If an additional 10 minutes of real time passes, an annoying alarm begins to sound off attracting wandering monsters or enemies in the area. Use an electronic device or app to play an annoying sound (like a fire alarm) while the players continue to work on it.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

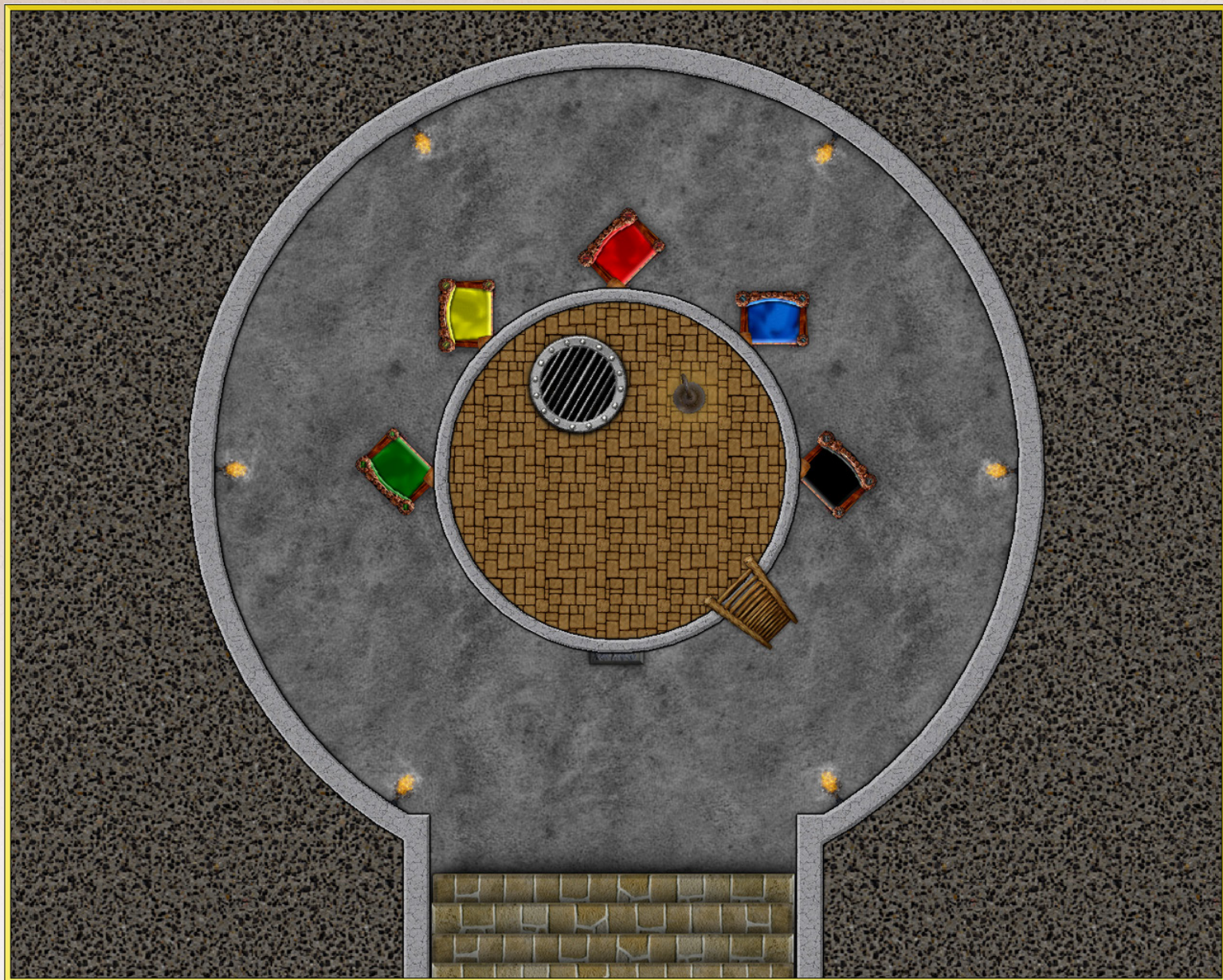
The critical part to this puzzle is blocking line of sight and requiring players to coordinate and communicate between each other. If you have built a physical model, feel free to enhance game immersion by requiring players to speak and act as their characters, including using character names, as they solve the physical model.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- The pieces inside the central box are scattered, and must be passed between characters who are positioned furthest apart.
- Each character must hold down two buttons that show certain runes and all characters must do so at the same time before time runs out and the solution runes reset.
- Leather gauntlets reaching in to the box are of different sizes, and characters can only use ones that fit.
- Connecting incorrect pieces together causes 1d4 piercing damage to the character's hands.

Playing Co-op

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Looking around the dark room, you see five different-colored chairs encircling and facing towards a central pillar, which is about twenty feet tall and has a ladder leaning up alongside. A dimly lit lantern hangs from the ceiling directly above the pillar. Each chair is secured to the ground and has one long armrest extending to a dark, arm-sized hole in the pillar. A room with furniture like this could not possibly have been banal or unimportant, but what is it for?”

The Clickist

Ratchet up a notch

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a series of vertical columns that contain rotating sections. These rotating sections used to have some kind of writing, but that has long since worn away over time. Since there is no way to read the old sigils, players will need to discover that when a section is rotated into the correct position, a soft “click” noise is heard.

Once the characters rotate the sections into the proper combination, a secret door or compartment will open.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- In the pillars of a monument
- Hidden around a stately antechamber
- On the vault door of a treasury
- Attached to a series of statues
- A series of mausoleums belonging to members of an outcast family
- In several rooms located above one another in descending levels of a dungeon

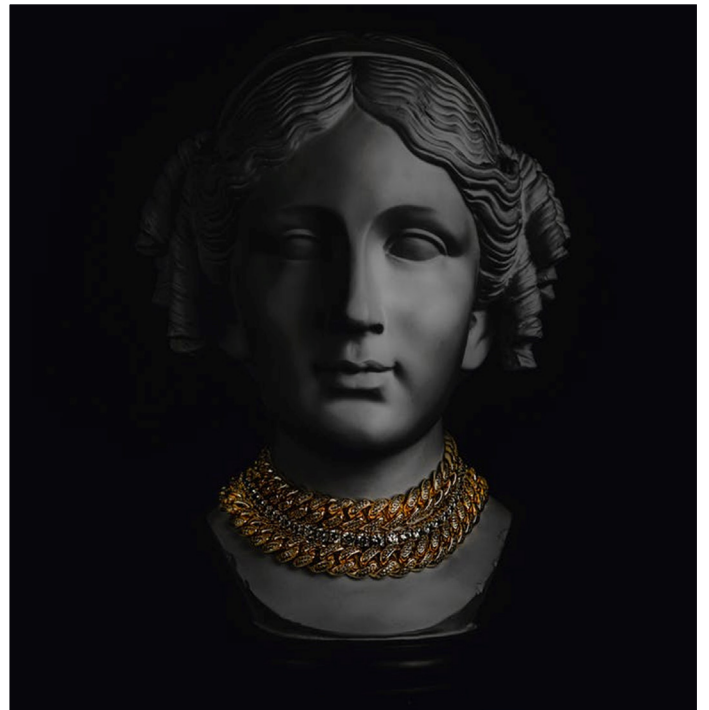
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- prayer wheel
- ancient statues decoration
- cryptex ring
- decorative column base capital



The Clickist

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Depending on your setting, players may or may not easily recognize there is a puzzle to be solved here. If they go by too quickly this puzzle will work best with a visual aid. Players will concentrate on manipulating a pre-built model or direct how they will spin a pictured dial, and you must softly play an audible “click” sound when the dial lands on or goes past the correct position. If the area in-game is quiet or noisy, your click sounds can be louder or softer. If one of the characters has advanced hearing or the players specifically mention listening carefully, your sound can be louder. You can tap the table with a fingernail or pencil, or play a pre-recorded sound.

If anything loud is going on in the game world, such as combat or nearby chanting or the like, the click is inaudible. Do not make the clicking noise at this time. If the players are making too much noise to hear your clicking noise, don’t make it louder for their sake. This is an audio puzzle.

⌘ Success ⌘

Once all the dials have been rotated into the correct positions, the secret door opens. If a player subsequently rotates the dials off the solution, the door immediately closes and will not open again until the dials are put back onto the correct combination.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

As players rotate the dials, there is no built-in consequence for incorrect combinations. This puzzle does not operate like a combination lock that has to be reset or spun back to zero before trying again. However, it may take some time for players to find the solution. After ten minutes, there will be a random encounter with a wandering monster or patrolling enemy, as appropriate to your setting.

If any of the rotating rings are destroyed, the delicate mechanism that operates the hidden door breaks. If the door is closed when this happens, it remains firmly locked in place. If the door is open when a ring is destroyed, the door is freed from the puzzle mechanism and swings freely with no latch or locking capability.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

This puzzle is similar to a cryptex lock, except without numbers or letters on the surface. Once players realize that sounds are the clues, the solution should come relatively easily. You may also make this solvable by characters with an extremely delicate sense of touch who can “feel” the soft clicks if using bare hands, especially any character like rogues or tinkers who specialize in lock picking or small tinkering.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require rings to be unlocked in a certain order, perhaps with a number of clicks at each revealing the order.
- Require rings to be spun back and forth multiple times like a modern padlock.
- Place rings on a long vertical shaft between levels in the dungeon with the door revealed at the bottom.
- Require rings to be set in a certain time limit or they will all reset by self-spinning.
- Place one ring in a hard-to-find location.
- Place misleading or meaningless sigils that have not been worn off the dials.
- Place this puzzle in a location with earthquakes or loud noises that cause the rings to spin off of the setting if not held in place or make it hard to hear the soft clicks.

The Clickist

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“As you closely examine the six marvelous statues, you notice strange carvings in rings and circlets around many of their limbs. The details have weathered away but it appears there used to be runes or letters on each ring. On the golden statue vaguely resembling a cat-creature with humanlike arms and bird wings, the rings look looser, as if they might rotate. What possible reason would there be for spinning bracelets on a statue?”

Lighting The Way

A lamp unto my feet, A light unto my path

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters enter a passageway with lamps, lanterns, torches, or other lights sources mounted down its length. Some of the lamps are lit and others are unlit.

When the characters light and snuff the lamps into the correct configuration, a secret door opens.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Along any dungeon passage
- In a mysterious side alley on the shady side of town
- Along the circular staircase ascending a tower
- Across a crystal bridge leading to the fairy city
- Down the center aisle of the ceremonial arena
- Descending into a crypt of undead
- Besides a cobblestone pathway entering the wealthy merchant's estate

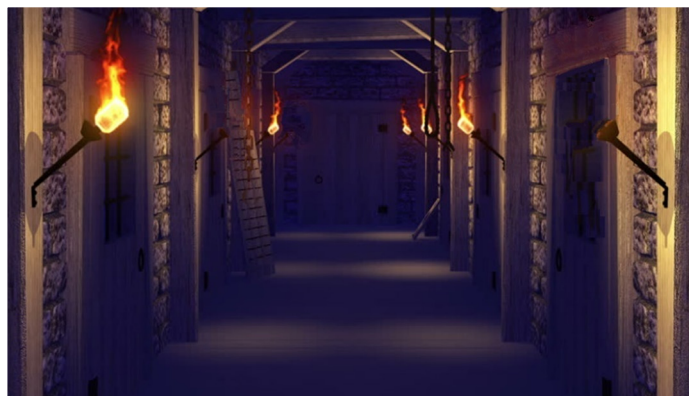
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- hallway flickering lights
- candles dying out
- candles votive altar
- gas lamps fog



Lighting The Way

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players will take notice of an odd or random on/off pattern to the lights but may not recognize this as a puzzle to be solved. You can guide players to this either through a situation, such as a fleeing enemy who just disappeared down this hallway or a key sentence in your description that calls attention to the lamps.

This puzzle can use a very simple visual aid, such as a dry erase board indicating the light sources with a large orange X drawn on those that are lit. Require players to draw or erase X's as they attempt to solve it.

There should be enough light sources in your puzzle to make a “brute force” search untenable. Twelve lamps ($2^{12}=4,096$ possible combinations) is the minimum recommendation to discourage this. Do not allow players to declare that their characters are going to spend as much time as it takes and then “speed up” time.

You can provide a clue to the correct combination many ways: a riddle, a painting with the correct pattern in its background in another room (players will need to go back and look closely at it), or a variation in the sconces that players may notice when looking closely at your map/drawing of the area.

A riddle clue could read like a poetic story of how a previous explorer discovered the secret entryway:

*I traveled from the city of Kel-gang
A long three days and then one night of rest.
The rest much needed got me on my feet,
And two more days of travel did I walk.
The journey getting difficult and long,
I spent three nights in hiding from the wild.
With two more days I knew I did approach,
And on the last night found the hidden door.*

In this poem, days represent lit torches and nights represent unlit, along a cavern wall of twelve total.

⌘ Success ⌘

When the correct pattern of lamps is lit, the hidden door will open.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

While characters are lighting and snuffing the lamps into the correct pattern, they may produce some noise depending on the design of the lamps, for example a bell mounted on the conveniently located candle snuffer that characters might use, creaking glass doors on the gas lamps, the clanking of flint and steel to light a new fire, or the hiss of brazier fires being put out with water.

Flickering lights have a 100% chance of attracting the attention of any wandering monsters or enemies who happen to look down the passageway, even if they are well out of audible range. Lights as small as a candle can be seen hundreds of feet away down a dark passage!

If characters were pursuing someone down this passage, then however many minutes of real-time it takes to solve the puzzle is how many rounds of lead time their quarry has gained. It is up to you if they used this time to continue to flee, secure a better hiding place, or summon reinforcements to mount a defense.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

This puzzle requires a good reason for players to engage, and a solid clue is absolutely critical to them enjoying the puzzle rather than giving up or falling back to trying every possible combination.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require a special tool to extinguish lit lights such as a specially shaped snuffer in the room.
- Require a magical or especially hot non-magical fire to light the torches.
- Require all to be lit and extinguished at the same time.
- Have one or more sconces empty so players have to first find the candle/torch/oil required for that spot.
- Have two sets of lights, each one with its own required sequence.

Lighting The Way

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“There is very little light on the shipping dock, as only a few small whale-oil lanterns are lit. The area is piled with shipping containers and equipment, but completely empty of other people or activity. You are positive that the bandit who fled the battle ran here, but you do not see any other way in or out except where you entered. The water does not look recently disturbed and there are no immediately obvious places she could be hiding.”

You Can Ring My Bell

— *A ring-a-ding-ding and a ding-a-ling-ling* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a series of bells. Each one can be rung and emanates a different tone or sound.

When the players play the correct bells in the correct order, a door or gate will open.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Inside the mad wizard's study
- Near the sacred altar of a temple
- Spread along hilltops in a hidden mountain range
- Along the inner court balustrade of an old castle ruin
- Hanging from the grasp of a megalithic hand
- At various heights from the vaulted ceiling of a ceremonial great hall
- Along a snow-covered trail to the mountaintop monastery

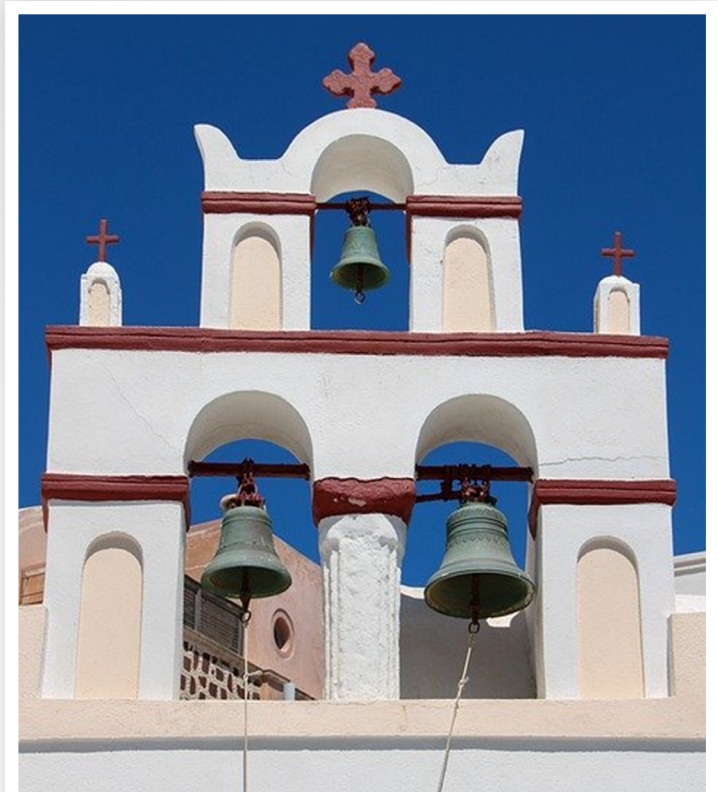
⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- multiple church bells
- gong training
- mark tree
- bell tree handbells
- large ceremonial bell



You Can Ring My Bell

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may suspect this is a puzzle, depending on how the bells are displayed on the visual aid. You should include a detailed drawing or map layout of the bells both to draw player attention and to enable them to work on the puzzle.

Once players investigate the bells closely, describe to them (verbally or through detailed drawings) any hints you have prepared for the proper play order. Hints can include numbers embossed inside the bells, which indicate the correct order of play; runes marked on the yoke or bell holder that match runes on a found map; or a riddle.

Players may ring one or more of them while searching, based on the interest level in your visual aid, which will incur the consequences listed below. In addition, they may also be willing to risk the consequences to “brute force” determine the proper order to ring the bells.

It will help immersion if you have actual bells the players can ring. If you don't have any bells, use a tone/musical note app on your electronic device so that when players indicate which bell to ring you can play that note for them on your device. Play the volume very loud when they are played out of order, as below.

⌘ Success ⌘

Once all the bells have been rung in the correct order, the door or gate opens. If a player subsequently rings any of the bells again, the door immediately closes and will not open again until the bell is completely silenced, resetting the puzzle, and rung again in the correct order.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

If players ring any bells in the incorrect order, they will play at significantly louder than usual volume: small bells (for example, the type attached to a pet's collar) will be audible 20' away, medium size bells (for example, old style dinner bells or door bells) up to 250' away, and large bells (for example, the size used on trains or ships) can be heard up to 1000' across open space.

Huge bells, the size of church bells or gongs, will ring loud enough to cause echoes and 2d6 vibration damage to nearby structures and rooms with an additional 10% chance of minor cave-ins or avalanches. This high volume occurs even if the players tap the bells very lightly.

Enemies and monsters will hear the noise and come to investigate. Wandering monsters will be attracted twice as often as normal for the location; roll twice on your wandering monster encounter table. This may result in large, multi-group melees, and stray arrows and bolts may ring even more incorrect bells!

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

Due to the consequences, this puzzle has the potential to become almost ridiculous with enemies, monsters, random encounters, and destroyed buildings. Should you use it on a large scale, for example large bells located in statues around a town, be prepared for those potential outcomes.

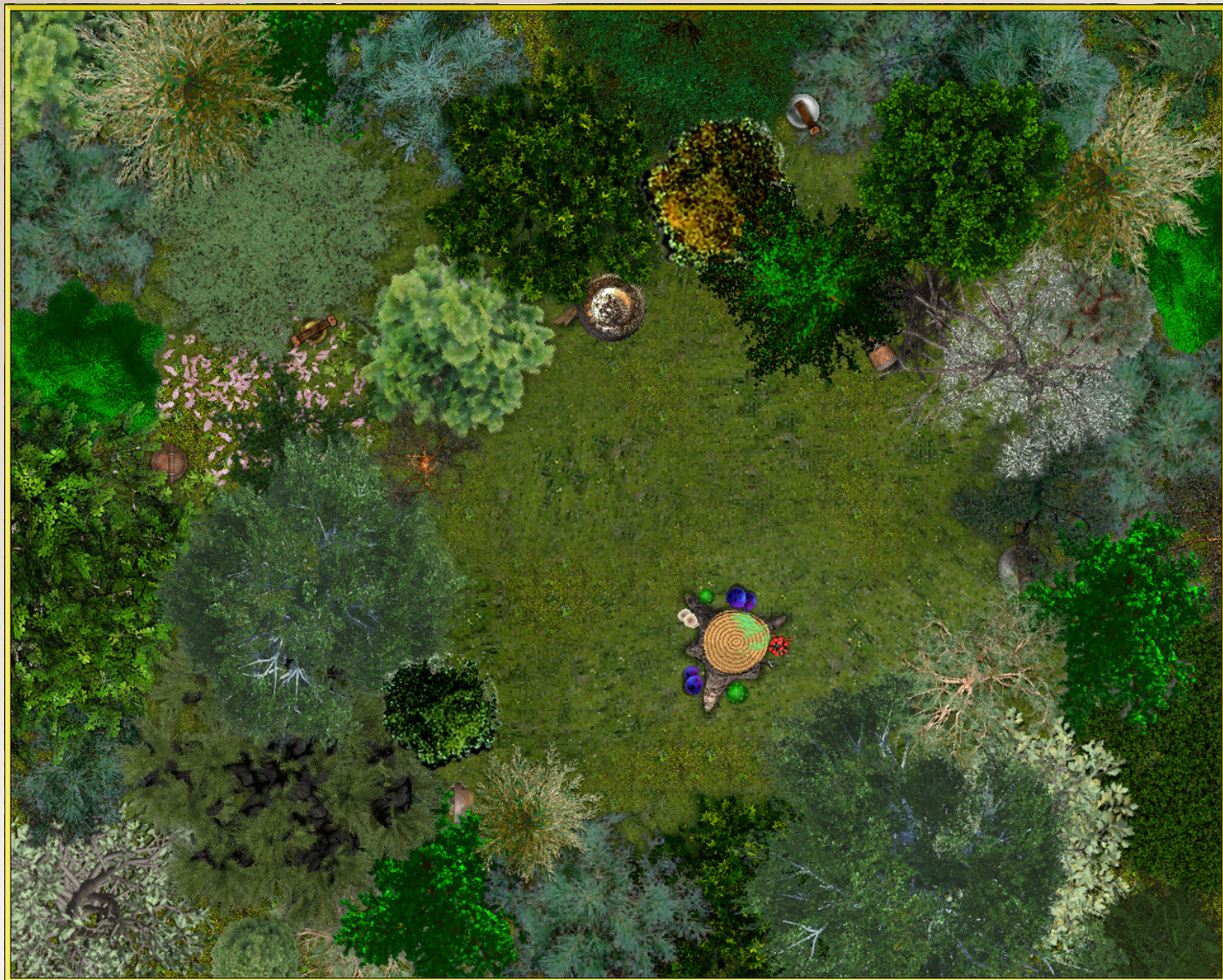
If it gets out of control, have the bells “shut off” for a day or fracture. Remember this is a puzzle for opening a sealed door rather than a way to cause chaos in a city or collapse a dungeon. Unless you're OK with chaos!

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require a specific clapper/ringer be used to chime the bells, which can be hidden nearby or must be found.
- Require some bells to be played more than once in the tune.
- Require a certain rhythm of beats between chimes.
- Require bells that are spaced far apart to be rung all at the same time.
- One or more bells have fallen from their hangers or are missing and must be found.
- One bell is cracked and must be repaired.

— You Can Ring My Bell —

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Arriving at the glen indicated on the wood elf map, you see nothing unusual except a half-dozen bells of various sizes hanging from different trees. The bells are made of different materials, from finely carved wood to polished metals, but show no other indications of their provenance. There is a perfectly leveled tree stump in a small clearing surrounded by brightly colored mushrooms.

A random branch from one tree breaks off and knocks into one of the bells, and you hear a beautiful pure note as if it had been cast by a master silversmith.”

Browse The Mosaic

— *So many tiles, so little time* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across an elaborate tile mosaic on the floor, a wall, or piece of furniture. The individual tiles come in a variety of shapes and colors, which viewed together produce a beautiful picture. Most tiles in the mosaic are normal, but a few are attached to mechanisms underneath so that they that can be pushed down like buttons.

When players push the correct buttons, a nearby secret compartment or door will open.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Under the water in a fountain
- A decorative floor at the base of a grand stairway
- On the wall in a priest's chamber
- Decorating the lid of a large chest
- Outlining the doorway into a treasure room
- Making up the carved jewelry of a statue
- In a cave located below the high tide of an ocean shoreline

⌘ Scale ⌘

Encounter / Room

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- mosaic box
- glass mosaic art
- ancient roman wall tiles
- pixelated painting



Browse The Mosaic

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players are not likely to recognize the mosaic is a puzzle unless it is called out. For example, the mosaic may be located at the end of a hallway with highlighting braziers, might look like important heraldry for your adventure, or could be surrounded by some valuable gems that the players make an effort to loot.

Once players decide to look closer, bring out a visual aid. You can draw or print out a mosaic or stencil to show the players exactly what they see. Adult coloring books are another great source for this kind of design. This does not need to be an interactive print-out, simply an illustration of the tiles and colors in the mosaic. For added interactivity, cut out pieces of colored paper into the various shapes and require them to be placed on the template as part of the puzzle.

Here is an example of a riddle that could be used to clue players on which tiles to push and in what order:

*Among the thousand points of light,
that outdoor creatures see at night,
Virgo alone shines perfect white.*

In this example, the mosaic visual aid looks like the night sky and the solution is to push the white star-shaped tiles that are part of the constellation Virgo, a name which at least one player will probably recognize.

⌘ Success ⌘

When players push the correct tiles, a hidden compartment or door opens. The solution of which buttons to push should be indicated to players by a design seen in the area, a riddle, or other explanatory mechanism. Hunt-and-peck is neither fun nor requires actual player interaction.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

If players push an incorrect tile, a hidden needle pokes the character's fingertip and they must save vs poison or take 2d6 damage. The needle also conducts an electric shock for 2d6 damage. Certain gauntlet materials or pressing the tiles with a tool rather than finger may negate these effects at your discretion.

If players destroy any of the solution tiles, the underlying mechanism will be ruined and the secret compartment or door will no longer respond to the puzzle.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

The key to this puzzle is a proper clue. Perhaps the mosaic looks strangely similar to a painting in the main gallery except that certain pieces were of a different color. You should present a visual aid of relevant information when the players explicitly investigate them, so they can put the ideas together.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require tiles to be depressed in a certain order.
- Extra tiles can be pushed in but are not part of the solution.
- Some of the needed tiles are missing and must be recovered from the enemies currently occupying the location.
- The mosaic is room sized with 2'x2' floor tiles and players must stand on these to activate.
- Polished wooden tiles on a jewelry box are very small and require fine tools such as lockpicks to manipulate.

Browse The Mosaic

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Brushing aside the parched vines and dead branches in the archway at the end of the brick road reveals a dust-covered stele decorated with a mosaic made up of colorful bricks and tiles. The image looks like some kind of astronomical or astrological representation. This kind of exquisite artwork seems out of place in a primitive desert ruin, and you wonder what it was used for.”

Broken Tablets

— Piecing it together —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come to a place where there used to be lots of writing on the wall. Pieces of the wall have broken off, been scattered around, crumbled into dust, and are missing.

Once the players find all the pieces of the wall, they should assemble it. At that point they can read whatever was written, revealing critical and previously unknown information.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Along a wall leading to the cursed tomb
- At the base of columns in the throne room
- Inside the burial chamber
- Along a side wall near the bloody altar
- On foundation stones of the ruin's broken outer wall
- Along the side and railing of the rotting wooden bridge
- On the metal door leading in to the rumored hoard
- A pile of smashed clay tablets near the site of a recent battle
- On a stone stele displayed in the local museum

⌘ Scale ⌘

Module / Dungeon

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- cuneiform tablets in situ
- papyrus fragments
- damaged hieroglyphics
- broken ancient inscriptions



Broken Tablet

⌘ Presentation ⌘

This puzzle will require a visual aid, which is made up of whatever pieces of writing are still attached to the original surface and the remaining pieces that the players must find and put in place. The simplest way to do this is write the final completed “document” on a heavy paper, foam core, or even cardboard and then cut it into pieces. Make sure none of the free pieces that need to be found are blank, else players may not care to find every piece.

Place the remaining pieces of the document wherever you want in your module, perhaps even adding some intrigue: who would have a piece of a random document stashed on their person, in their gear, or in their lair?

⌘ Success ⌘

When the players have all the pieces assembled in order, they should be able to read the resulting document. This could provide a critical clue towards defeating the final boss of the dungeon, a riddle that directs players to a legendary artifact, the recipe for a new type of spell ritual, or even a story hook to a greater part of your campaign.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no consequences to putting the document together incorrectly, except that players should not be able to read it until it is complete.

If players attempt to infer missing sections of the document and follow the incomplete writings there, lead them into clearly undesirable results: they create a cursed magic item, find the boss invulnerable to the supposed weakness, or they encounter a hostile group of adventurers who followed the same wrong inference.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

This puzzle is more or less a jigsaw puzzle, but without a box top that shows the final picture. Once players have found all the parts of the document, the solution should be relatively easy (if time consuming). Players should not be allowed to work on the puzzle while their characters are engaging in activities in-game. Solving should take place only during character rest or down times.

The document itself could turn out to be written in code or some unknown language, requiring an extra step by the players to complete it. However, if the players really struggled with completing the puzzle over multiple sessions, be cautious about frustrating them when they find out it isn't truly completed.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Require players to guess missing parts that are lost forever with the potential for incorrect inferences.
- Have the underlying writing itself be in code that players (not characters) must now decode separately.
- Have the message simply direct them to another message.
- Have the writing act like a scroll that casts a baneful spell or summons a challenging monster once read.
- The writing is in pictures like cave drawings making it harder to interpret or understand.

Broken Tablet

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“Continuing down the hallway towards the fabled crypt, you enter an oddly shaped room with highly polished walls of shining metal reaching from the floor to the ceiling. It appears the metal was engraved with writing that has since been broken or chipped away in various pieces.

On the eastern side, a pile of metalwork tiles has been kept, each tile containing various words and letters. On the western side, some parchments have been laid out as if being used to study the walls. There are some recognizable letters in parts above the parchment, which read: BEWA. . . .EREIN LIES T. . . .O SAFELY PA. . . .R ELSE”

A Handful Of Rings

— *So many Preciouses* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters come across a statue with an outstretched hand in an unusual pose. The fingers on the hand are spread widely in a strange gesture, like the somatic configuration of some spell. Rings that fit on each finger are located throughout the module.

When all rings have been found and placed on the correct fingers, the rings themselves become permanently integrated into the statue and an item appears in the statue's outstretched hand.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- A memorial statue of the mayor located at the center of town
- Two hands on a mad wizard's headstone extending out in an unknown spell pose
- The unused mannequin at the back of a curiosity shop
- A skeletal hand reaching out of a forgotten dungeon crawlspace
- A bronze casting of the vampire lord in the entrance of his former castle
- Along a wall of creepy stone hands that are posed as if grasping at anyone who walks down the hall

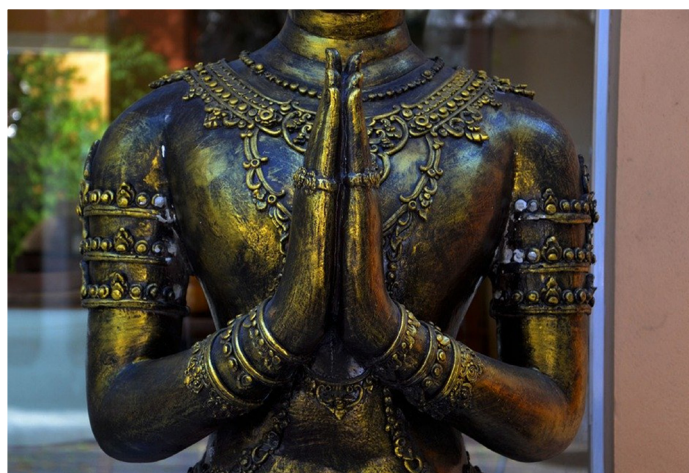
⌘ Scale ⌘

Module / Dungeon

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- hand ring holder
- hand sculpture
- wall of hands
- claw rings



A Handful Of Rings

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may miss both the hand and the rings of this puzzle, unless you emphasize certain aspects that draw their attention. For example, when they first encounter the statue you might call out a ring located on the floor beneath the statue's outstretched arm; or players may find a high-level enemy with powerful magic and wealth, yet wearing a simple and tarnished ring on a necklace.

Distribute the rings wherever you want in your module. As rings are discovered elsewhere in the module, highlight that there is something familiar about the ring and let players take it from there. You may also emphasize the rings when they appear in unexpected places, such as the example previously given of the high-level enemy who clearly kept it close by.

Once players have figured out this is a dungeon-wide puzzle, produce your visual aid confirming the puzzle. You may use a mannequin hand or jewelry hand display. As characters find the rings in game, give them physical rings. When they go back to the hand to work on the puzzle, let them go to work on the props.

Hints can be provided in-game as decorations on the hand, fingers, and rings. You can write a full riddle if you like. Another idea is to have an old manuscript or tapestry elsewhere in the dungeon depicting the person the statue is of, on which characters can see which rings were worn on which finger.

To enhance the player's experience, paint or decorate the hand as if it is stone or wood. To add to the physical puzzle, consider a physical hint system such as runes, colors, or physical marks on the fingers that correspond to the physical rings, and which matches the in-game hints you developed above.

⌘ Success ⌘

When the players have placed all the rings in the correct positions on the hand, the rings change into the statue's material and permanently fuse into the hand. Then the hand opens up and a valuable item appears in it. This can be a scripted item needed to complete the adventure, an extremely high value gem, or even a roll on the random magic item table. Both the statue and rings then become permanently non-magical.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no consequences for players not placing rings on the hand. If characters try to sell the rings, no one will purchase them even for any base metals. If any rings leave the vicinity of the statue, defined as the total regional land-map of your module, then the statue will disintegrate into dust one year later.

If players place one ring on the wrong finger, there is no consequence and it can be removed freely. If players place two wrong rings, then both become stuck on the hand until all remaining rings have been placed. (This may require players to find more rings before continuing this puzzle.) Once all have been placed, the rings will vanish and reappear back where they were first picked up by characters.

In addition, each location has a 100% chance to spawn a random encounter when players return there.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

When players solve this puzzle, they should receive a high-quality reward. The puzzling itself may not have been very intense, but the amount of time spent searching and probably re-finding vanishing rings has earned them something worthwhile.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- The rings are non-magical and must be found by mundane exploration.
- The statue has two (or more) hands to place multiple rings on.
- More than one ring goes on finger.
- The required jewelry also includes one or more bracelets.
- Another adventuring party who is currently located in the nearby town has one of the rings.

A Handful Of Rings

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



“No one recalls when the oaken swashbuckler figure was first installed near the door of the tavern, but it looks to be in remarkable shape. Locals call him ‘Whiskey Willy’ because of the bottles he appears to be defending to the death, posed as if striking mightily with his saber. His left arm is pointing a flintlock pistol towards the tavern door. Legend has it that Willy use to hold something else in his gun-hand.

The barkeep claims that the cedar ring he wears around his neck originally came with this statue, but the cedar wood it is made of is different from Willy’s oak.”

Beam Of Sunlight

Do you see the light?

⌘ Description ⌘

Near the top of the dungeon, characters find a room containing a large ceiling skylight, which is throwing a bright sunbeam into the room. Later in the dungeon, whenever they carefully search an area (for traps, treasure, etc.), characters notice unusual holes placed in certain locations along the walls and ceilings. Looking closely, some of these contain strange colored glass and reflective surfaces.

Many of the holes have been filled with detritus or overgrown plants and fungus over the years. Others have been covered up by items placed in storage or a heap of garbage. Still others require reflective surfaces that have since been broken or lost.

When the beam of sunlight is directed from the top of the dungeon through all the intermediate holes, lenses, and mirrors into a target located lower in the dungeon, a secret door opens.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Through the canopy of a dense forest
- In a natural caverns complex
- In the rooms of a castle lost to the undead
- Embedded in the walls and floorboards of an eccentric apothecary's lab
- Around the buildings and architecture of a formerly-happy-now-gloomy town

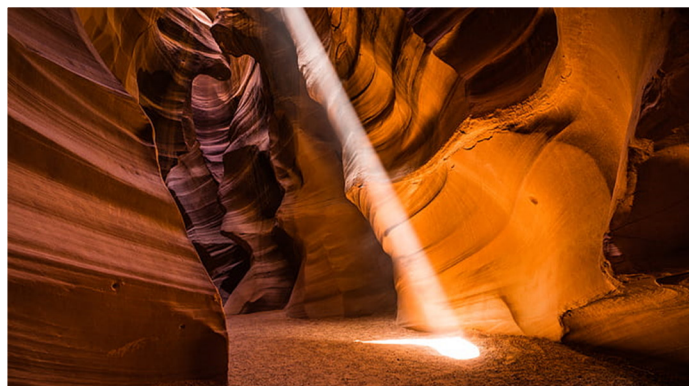
⌘ Scale ⌘

Module / Dungeon

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- attic beams of light
- ray of light cave
- light beam puzzle
- laser experiment



Beam Of Sunlight

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Any time players search an area intentionally, draw any hole, mirror, etc. that is nearby whether or not they find anything else from their search. Anyone playing a character that automatically searches due to racial traits or magic will find and notice the holes, mirrors, etc. automatically. This may become part of your regular mapping cadence.

Players may begin to piece together the nature of this module-wide puzzle as you indicate the location and direction of these holes on the game map. However, they may come to other conclusions, such as the holes being used for drainage, gas or liquid traps, communication, rodents, etc.

Avoid drawing special attention to the original beam of light until players have found a number of the lenses, mirrors, etc. and have intentionally cleaned up holes or fixed broken lenses and mirrors. The first part of this puzzle should be recognizing that it is a puzzle.

Whenever players find and fix some holes, mirrors, and lenses, even in the first sunbeam room, you should draw the resulting beams of light going through into other rooms or lower levels of the map. Players will immediately understand there's something going on with this, but they should also see the future risk of alarming future enemies who will notice and investigate unknown lights showing up.

⌘ Success ⌘

Once players have found and cleaned up or fixed every part of the light's path, a secret door will open near the end target. The target could even be the door itself! Depending on how much of your dungeon contained this puzzle, the door could open to anything: the final boss's lair, an extravagant treasure trove, or the gateway to a completely different and unrelated adventure.

Directing a sunbeam spell or magical item directly into the first holes or even the final target will not trigger the solution. The beam must be natural sunlight and must be focused, bent, colored, and split by the puzzle path into the precisely correct pattern to engage the target properly.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no consequences from failing to solve the puzzle.

As players continue in the module, if they clean and fix parts of the puzzle before venturing further, they may be alerting monsters and foes in other areas.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

This puzzle can suggest or introduce a wonderful story: Was the light system set up to seal a door accidentally opened into a realm of undead? Was it used as a security system for a secret druid meeting place deep in the forest? Was it an ingredient in arcane research performed in the lowest underground level? Did the beam originally represent a forgotten ruler's majesty reflecting through his domain?

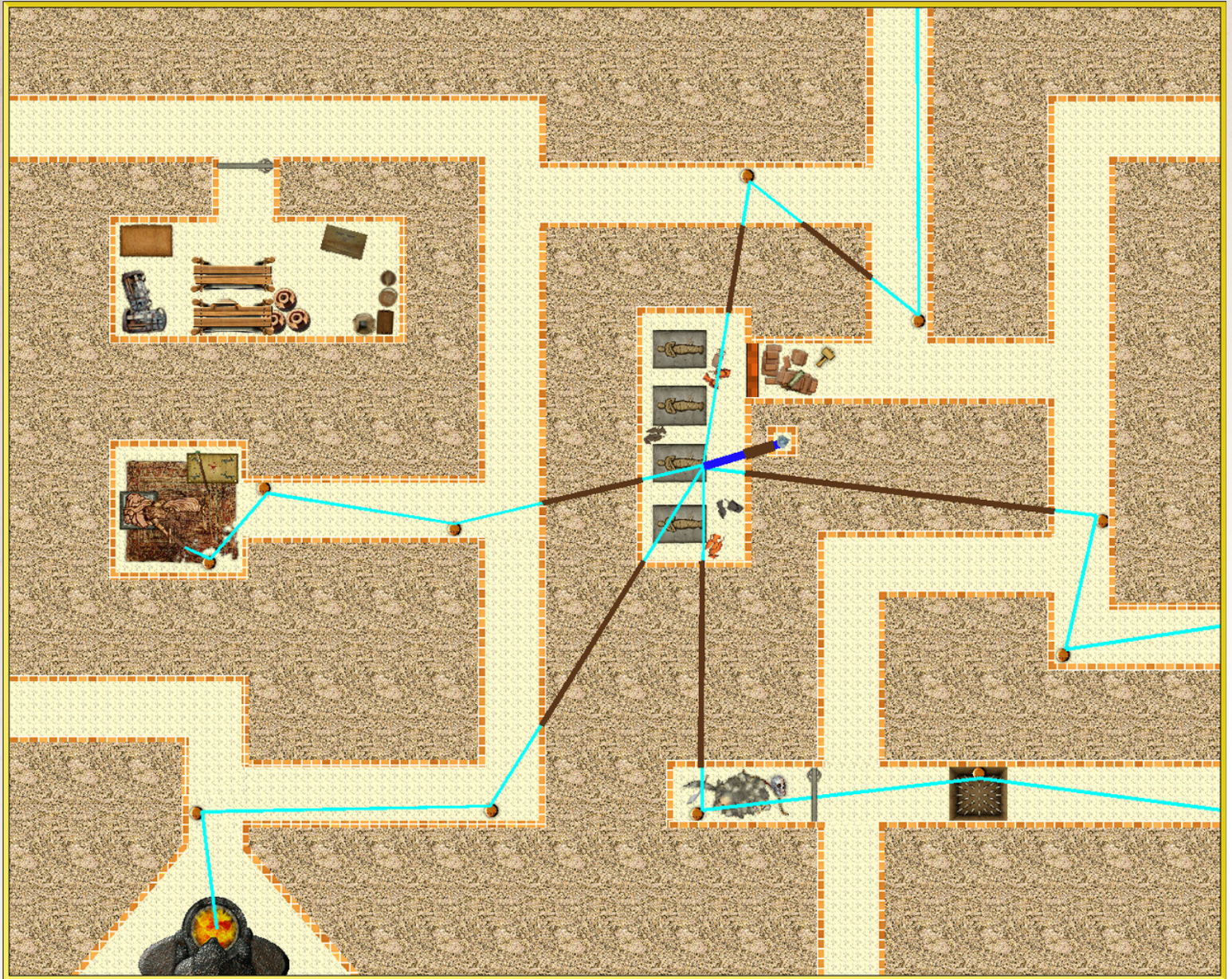
This sunbeam puzzle can trace a path through just about any environment. On your GM's map, indicate holes, lenses, mirrors, etc. so that you know where to draw on the map when players search, clear rubbish, polish something shiny, remove covering plants, rotate a glass cylinder into place, move furniture aside, etc.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- A lens needed for the puzzle is cracked and must be repaired.
- A lens resembles a kaleidoscope and must be spun to the correct color to trigger the target.
- One mirror splits the beam into multiple beams that travel in different directions but must come back together at the target.
- One part is a hammered concave drum with multiple sections that can reflect the beam in numerous directions.
- One piece is a large disc that must be held in place by characters for the beam to continue to the next section.
- The sunbeam only enters the ceiling hole for five minutes a day at high noon.
- The required light is moonlight instead of sunlight.

Beam Of Sunlight

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



(In the above map, the blue lines indicate rays of light that have been properly channeled through various holes, mirrors, and lenses. The brown lines are holes going through the walls.)

“Breaking through the lately bricked up wall, you enter the resting chamber of the royal court. Several beams of light matching the ones you have been directing meet near the foot of the second sarcophagus. There are various pieces of jewelry and polished metal in this room, including yet another hand mirror.”

Get Some Perspective

— What I said is true, from a certain point of view —

⌘ Description ⌘

While adventuring through the dungeon, characters occasionally notice unidentifiable markings on columns, doorframes, corners, ceiling edges, and other architectural features. Sets of these markings can be lined up together and viewed from certain angles. As characters view these sets from the correct angle, they identify whole sigils or pictograms, that can be noted down.

Once players have discovered all the completed symbols, they can be used to open a strange lock on a hard-to-find door.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- In the older, built-up area of a city
- Scattered among the colonnades and arches surrounding a large courtyard
- Between the highest canopies in a fairy-populated thicket
- Among cells and passageways in an infamous dungeon
- Providing clues in the twists and turns of a labyrinth
- In the Escher-like dreamworld of another plane of existence

⌘ Scale ⌘

Module / Dungeon

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- photos forced perspective
- optical illusion angles
- viewpoint illusions



Get Some Perspective

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may come to understand the module contains these perspective puzzles either slowly or quickly, depending on how you indicate them on their map. If you use full 3D dungeon terrain, it should be recognizable much sooner.

As players investigate each piece of each symbol, draw it simply on a piece of scrap paper as if it was being viewed from wherever the character is. If the symbols are located near interesting doors, statues, or anything else that warrants its own detailed drawing, you should definitely include that portion of each symbol so players see it as part of that drawing.

Otherwise, allow players to describe on the map exactly where they are going to stand and how they are going to look, specifically to see the whole image together. When a player is specifically standing in the correct place and facing the correct direction, draw the completed symbol.

Once players solve this once, they will be on the lookout for similar split perspective puzzles for the rest of the module. Feel free to make these more complex, including three or more parts to each or even sections where they must look somewhat up or down and not just straight across. This can be harder for you to present on a 2D map, so have a plan set out in advance for your visual aids.

When players find the unpickable lock to which these symbols belong, have a prepared visual aid ready. You can use a dry erase board to draw out the various patterns, or you can construct a kind of “cryptex” lock from paper and an empty paper towel roll. Operating the lock could be a mini-puzzle itself.

⌘ Success ⌘

Once players have found all the symbols and operated the lock into those symbols, the door will open. As the “story” of this puzzle probably came after the original location (brigands who secreted a stash in an already-abandoned castle, a secret society who concealed a new lair inside an existing city, etc.) this door might lead to a completely different adventure or discovery than the storyline of your main module.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no consequences for dialing in an incorrect combination to the lock.

The lock cannot be picked or magically opened by any means other than the correct solution. Brute force guessing also will not work, even if the players have all but one symbol and try to guess the last one. Attempts to defeat the lock without having the combination will result in a blast of force doing 4d6 damage and knocking back anyone within 10’ of the lock. The blast itself is almost completely silent since the creators of this secret door want to keep it that way, and so will not attract the attention of enemies or wandering creatures.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

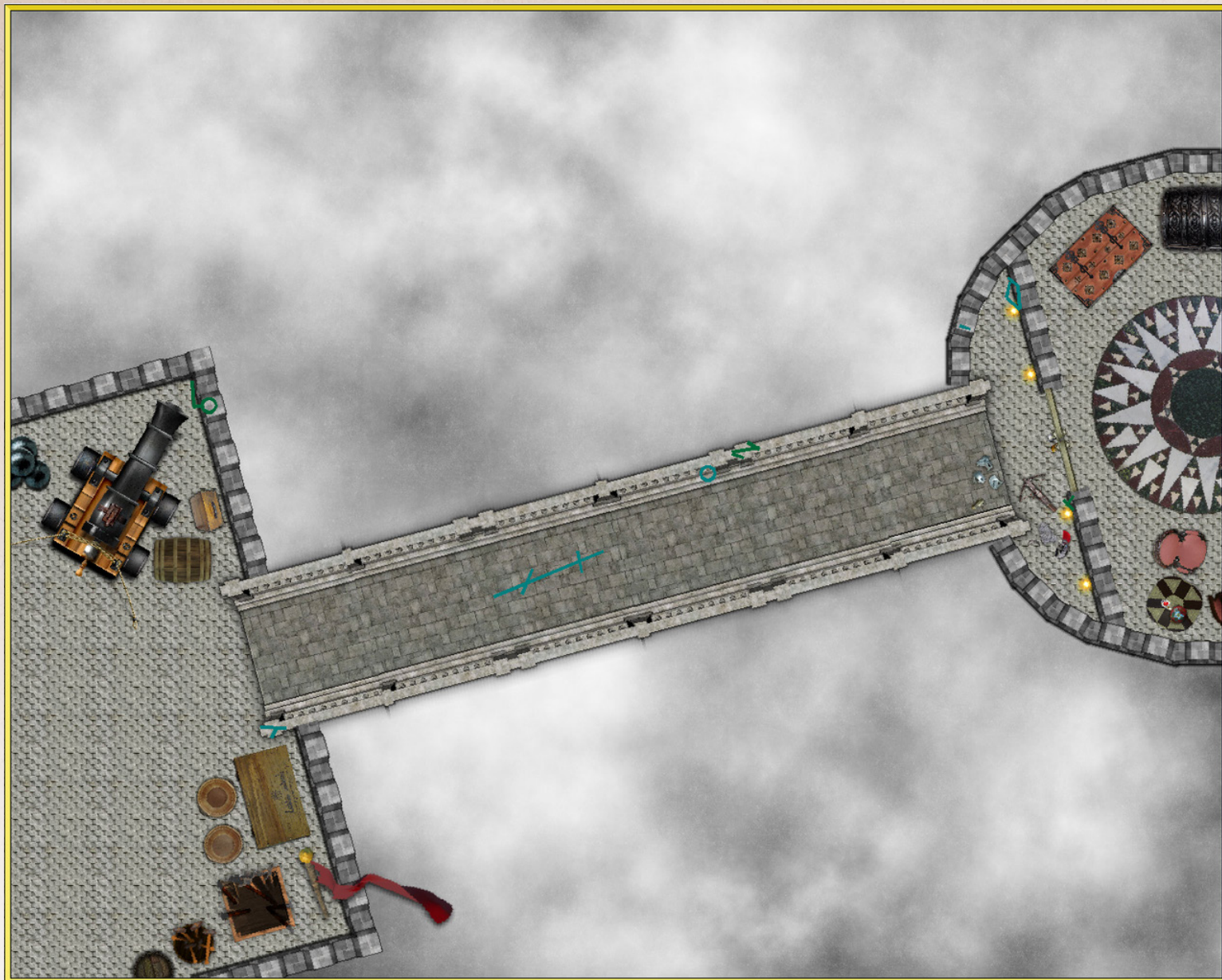
This is a kind of “hidden object” puzzle and so can be difficult to implement without good visuals.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Do not mark the final patterns on the PC map unless the players specifically say they are writing them down.
- Have one completed image that requires looking down from a very high point above.
- Make some of the symbols rather similar to each other so that players must notice fine details to correctly enter them on the magic lock.
- Require players to mimic the symbols by waving their hands around as if the lock is a motion sensing device, or to draw the symbols from memory on blank spaces you’ve indicated on the dry erase board.
- If players attempt to defeat the lock without the combination enemies emerge from within the door after the force blast, gaining initiative and attacking immediately.

Get Some Perspective

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



(In the above map, the faint turquoise and green lines would need to be viewed from left to right reaching across the bridge, from the proper locations to see complete symbols: the green from in front of the cannon and the turquoise from the buckets near the flag.)

“Before stepping out onto the bridge between the two towers, you see a carving in the stone railing that resembles part of the mad sorcerer’s mark, set askew. Stopping to look, you also notice a similar, larger version on the far tower, except that it looks like another part of the mark. This strikes you as an unusual arrangement of décor, even for this particular mage’s insanity.”

X Marks The Hex

Curses are made to be broken

⌘ Description ⌘

While adventuring through the dungeon, character skill checks and combat rolls seem to be “off” somehow. During play, you have been penalizing players’ rolls, which they may not notice until a very good attack misses a relatively basic enemy, for instance. As they continue further into the dungeon, these minuses accumulate. Pretty soon, even natural 18s and 19s might be missing just about every foe.

Also while adventuring, characters have seen various side rooms or quiet corners that contain intentionally grotesque displays. Each contains cursed items, evil iconography, and the remains of an unholy sacrifice all bundled up into a disgusting but intentional heap. These shrines were set up by the defenders of evil in the dungeon, and together they act as a wide, network-like curse on anyone who opposes them on their territory.

If the characters start to destroy or desecrate the “nodes” of this grand hex, they cause breaks in the magical curse and their rolls start getting back to normal.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Any dungeon with enemies who worship evil deities
- The wealthy tyrant’s castle overlooking the town
- Among the trees in a haunted forest
- Spread throughout the lich’s ruined keep
- At various points in the town’s long neglected sewer system
- Numerous locations in the city’s ancient graveyard

⌘ Scale ⌘

Module / Dungeon

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- fantasy evil altar
- conspiracy maps washington dc
- magical ley lines art
- maze secret word



X Marks The Hex

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may get frustrated if they have descended significantly into the dungeon and their minuses have accumulated significantly, and they have no hints whatsoever to the reason. Therefore, it is important to place these shrines on your dungeon map in a configuration that looks like a symbol or pattern that players can recognize, and then mark them on the players' map like you would a door or statue or other notable piece of the map. Feel free to plan multiple hexes that accumulate in your module, perhaps one per dungeon level, and give some larger negatives than others.

You might also use phrases such as “you were positive you were well hidden” or “that felt like it should have struck the goblin easily” to draw their attention to something affecting their rolls.

Players may avoid disturbing the detestable sites for many reasons, but will probably eventually give it a try. Having broken one up, tell them that the clumsiness or weakness (or otherwise, as appropriate to this particular curse) their characters have been feeling seems a bit lighter, they'll understand completely. Write these clue-phrases down in advance so you don't have to come up with something on the spot!

Once players recognize a potential pattern of sites on the map, they may infer, seek out, and target additional cursed spots in the module, one room over or even one level below. This could lead them to explore for secret rooms and passages. Encourage this, as they are starting to reap the reward for a successful solution!

⌘ Success ⌘

Once players cleanse at least 75% of the locations for any given hex, that particular curse is broken and any minuses to dice rolls or disadvantages are no longer applicable.

If players destroy every evil shrine from every curse in the dungeon, all remaining evil enemies in the dungeon suffer significant harm to their rolls as they had become overconfident and dependent on the defensive mesh, and lazy in their patrolling, training, etc. (Evil party members are not affected.) Losing the defensive network reflects a curse back on them, and they are at disadvantage on every skill check and -2 to every combat-related roll (attack, save, dodge, damage, etc.).

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no additional consequences for failing to solve the puzzle; only the oppression against characters/player dice rolls which is present from the outset.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

This is more of a logic puzzle for players, in determining where their penalties to-roll are coming from and how best to eliminate the threat.

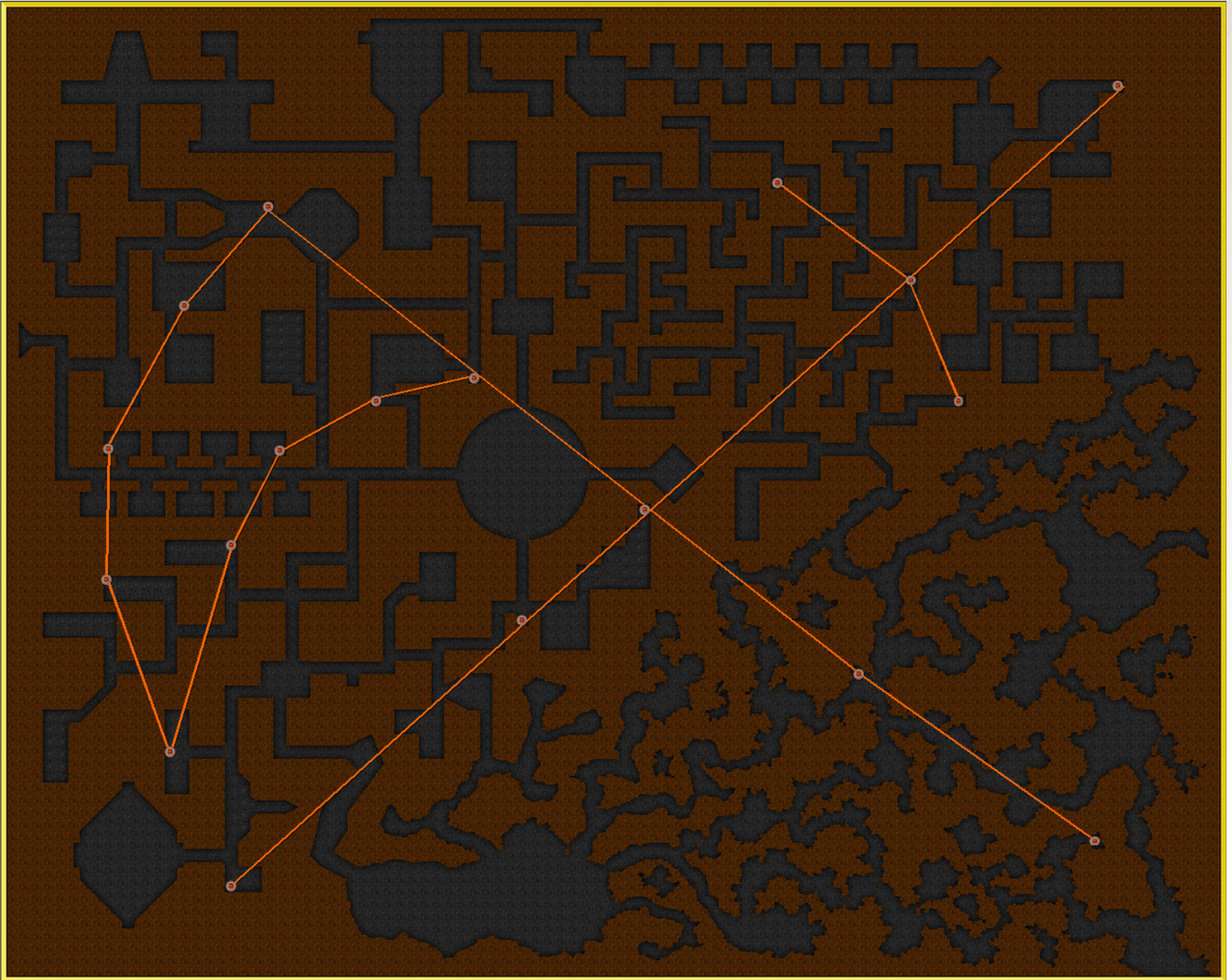
Applying cumulative negatives to players behind the screen can become burdensome. Instead of saying “minus three!” or similar after a player's roll, it will be easier to track these as if enemies had a higher armor class, more powerful spells, etc. For example, if all players have a -3 to hit, simply adjust the NPC enemies as if they have a +3 to their armor class. Or if all players have a -2 to stealth checks, simply track this as a +2 to NPC enemies' passive perception.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Hexed spots may be located on traps or guarded by enemies.
- Destroying a site may trigger an alert to its creator who will send minions to investigate.
- Extremely good characters may be severely impacted seeing these desecrations and sent into a frenzy of holy, but noisy and reckless, purging.
- Enemies may patrol and repair these sites during the course of a longer module, once a week or even once a day.
- Breaking the curse at each location may require a spell of blessing (or greater) in addition to physically cleansing the items.
- Hex sites can be different each time rather than all looking like the same kind of construct.
- Breaking a very powerful or special purpose curse may lead to the evil deity paying direct attention

X Marks The Hex

⌘ Example Map & GM Script ⌘



(In the above map, the orange lines indicate the shape of a sword and sickle; this symbol could match the enemy's flag or shields or other icon that players may recognize when looking at the map.)

"At the bottom of the staircase is a small landing and door to the next level of the seemingly endless catacomb. Next to the door is another of these disgusting displays, containing random bones and patches of hide from various woodland creatures nailed roughly around the lid of a wooden trunk. Your guess is that the contents of the box are similar to the last few you have opened; the smell certainly is.

You all experience a sense of dread as you come nearer to the door, as if losing a little more confidence. Even the sketchy mercenary rogue who joined up agrees, this place is becoming more and more disconcerting the deeper in you go."

Through The Looking Glass

— *Anyone can pretend to be Sherlock* —

⌘ Description ⌘

Characters discover an oddly shaped magnifying glass carefully wrapped in a quality case. When used to examine particular items and sections of wall in the dungeon, it reveals writings and drawings that cannot otherwise be seen. The hidden writings are not visible without the magnifying glass, although characters may search for the location of writings by looking for faint traces of magic in a general area.

Players must record and piece together the various writings and drawings they find, themselves. Gradually they will discover a map that will direct them to great treasure or other secret in the region of the module.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

- Inside the city's insane asylum
- Scattered among the books in the library's basement
- On the base of every statue carved by a famous, peculiar sculptor
- On ceremonial headbands worn by the ten priests of the new demon cult
- Across the lintels on the seven grand staircases leading down to the great chamber

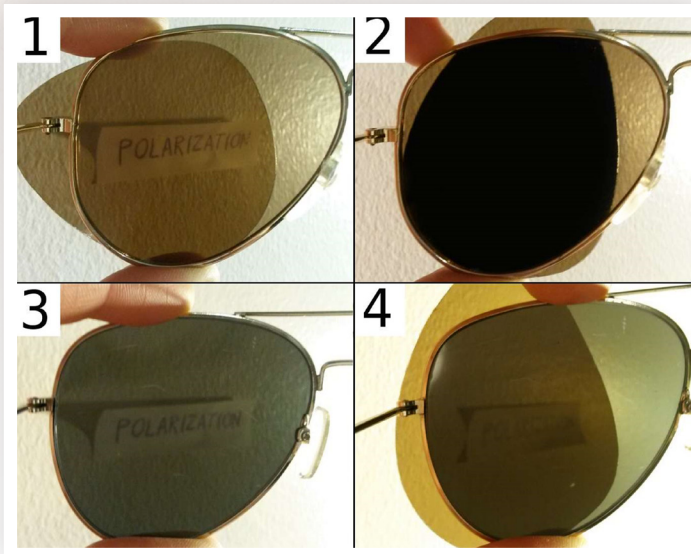
⌘ Scale ⌘

Module / Dungeon

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- red reveal decoder
- polarized screen diy
- x-ray hidden painting



Through The Looking Glass

⌘ Presentation ⌘

This puzzle will require pre-drawn sketches, words, or symbols showing what characters see when they use the magnifying glass at the correct places in the dungeon.

As players discover each part, show them the prepared drawing that matches what they're looking at but do not give them the paper you've made. Instead, they should have to copy/record it down as characters would need to do inside the game. If they stop examining the mark through the looking glass, take your prepared drawing away as well. The purpose is to also engage the players in solving the second step: putting the various pieces together, which side of each goes where, matching sets of words to form sentences, and the like.

To create a more engaging visual aid, use polarized film, red acetate filters, or magnetic field viewing film. When players look at a spot with hidden figures, give them your pre-prepared physical "secret message" document and let them use the film or filter on it to read the message themselves.

If the hidden messages are drawings or images rather than letters and words, it will provide additional puzzling for the players to solve. Perhaps it will require a player noticing that some of the lines on one symbol match major roads in your module's regional map?

⌘ Success ⌘

Once players have found enough hidden writings, they can piece together the message or image. It is up to you if they must find every hidden writing or if you allow them to infer missing sections.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no consequences for failing to solve this puzzle.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

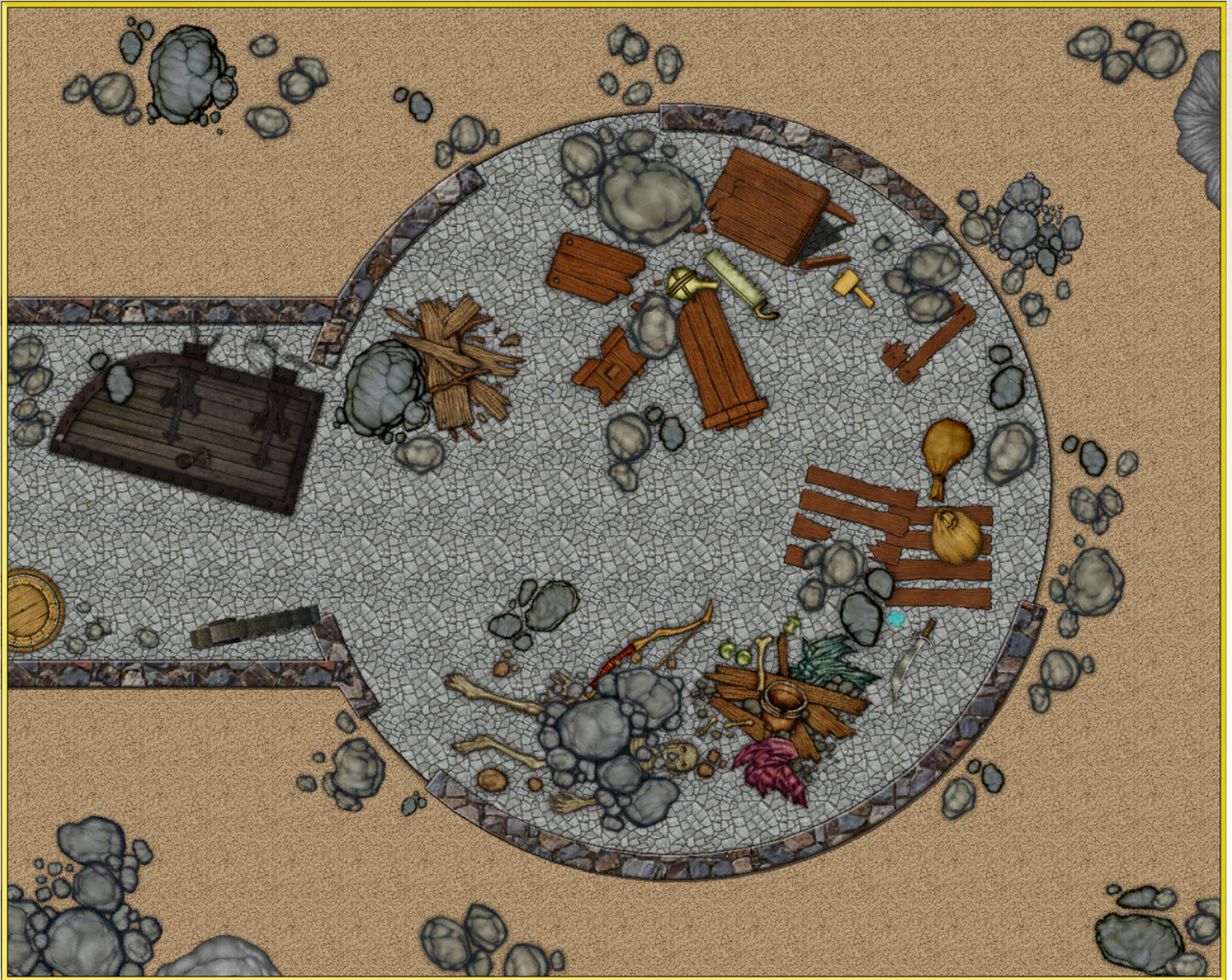
As with other puzzles, this is a form of "hidden object" search that requires good visuals.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- Characters have to examine objects closely and cannot simply "scan a room".
- The looking glass is a large device located in a museum that cannot be moved so that characters have to bring suspected messages to it to examine.
- The hidden text is itself a riddle or coded map that characters must then solve separately.
- The magnifying glass must also be used at the location given by the hidden map to read/decode a final step.
- The hidden texts are pointers that require characters to activate clearly visible buttons or levers in a certain order across an entire dungeon.

Through The Looking Glass

❧ Example Map & GM Script ❧



“Walking carefully through the rubble and rotten timber from the long-ago collapsed roof of the tower, you notice the remains of someone who was caught here when the structure came crashing down. Various tools of alchemy and herbalism are strewn about, either completely broken from the destruction or rotted by the years that have passed since.

Looking at the debris near one collapsed table, you see a small, light blue carving of the same mystical symbol that you saw on the handle of the glass looking device displayed in the city's local history museum."

Forgotten Constellation

Everyone cheers for an underdog

❧ Description ❧

While wandering off the beaten path, characters come across a small monument, clearly forgotten and worn by years of neglect and the elements. A cracked plaque on the front contains praise to some long-forgotten minor deity, alongside a primitive stick figure drawing. Nearby on the ground, a medallion shaped like a star lies almost completely covered in the overgrowth. In the center of the medallion is an oddly shaped hole that appears to match a short peg emerging from the center of the top of the monument.

When the characters place the star on the peg, the plaque is magically restored into pristine condition. At the same time, the stick figure shapes itself into a zodiac-like drawing, of which one star is marked larger than the rest. The characters can read the name and a glorious description of this forgotten deity, and the favor granted upon those who remember.

If the players can find and restore every other monument in the constellation, their characters will gain the favor of this deity and permanent, relevant bonuses.

❧ Suggested Settings ❧

Any setting, since the constellation-marking monuments may be located in underground dungeons, mountaintops, ocean floors, and even on different continents.

❧ Scale ❧

Campaign / World

❧ Image Search Terms ❧

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- broken monument
- headstone cleaning
- ancient constellation map
- stars aligned buildings



Forgotten Constellation

✂ Presentation ✂

Players in any fantasy game should be immediately drawn to this mysterious forgotten object located off the beaten path.

This puzzle will require a visual aid illustrating the constellation. Show it to the players so that they can copy or record it for themselves. In addition, allow players to mark the location of this and future monuments on their copy of the world map (if possible).

You will need to prepare for where the rest of the monuments are located in your game world and what each looks like. Consider how you might attempt to draw players' attention to them. Since it may have been many gaming sessions since they last encountered a part of this puzzle, key phrases such as "something about this large rock looks vaguely familiar to you" may help them take a second look.

After discovering two or three monuments during their travels and figuring out that they match a constellation, clever players may intuit methods to calculate the locations of the remaining "stars". For example, if they can figure out which stars they have already seen, they can measure their drawing of the constellation to compare to the world map. Allow them to succeed and hook them into new adventures in these other places!

✂ Success ✂

As players find each crumbling location and replace the star medallion, each monument will be magically restored to look brand new.

Once all monuments matching the constellation have been restored, characters receive the favor of that minor deity and a permanent bonus to relevant stats without regard to the usual race, class, or level requirements. For example, a minor deity of magic may grant every character one first level spell per day at will; a minor deity of martial skills may grant every character to have a supernatural mastery of any weapon of their choice; a minor deity of cleverness may grant every character a permanent +3 to all Charisma/persuasion checks; a minor deity of the region may permanently grant automatic success on all relevant history or knowledge checks.

In addition, the deity does pay attention to the party in their future endeavors. Every party member who participated in restoring more than 75% of the stars in the constellation is able to call on the minor deity with a 10%

chance of success, to intervene or aid in any situation. This "god call" can be used once per month, whether it succeeds or fails.

Construct the reward as appropriate for your game, but it should be a significant and interesting reward considering the time and distance to collect. The bonus should be remarkable but not game breaking, and should celebrate how much effort your players put into pursuing the solution over the course of many sessions.

✂ Consequences ✂

There are no consequences for not solving this puzzle, and it may even take years of real-life gaming time over multiple characters to complete.

✂ Play Tips ✂

This idea presents a long-term side quest for your gaming group. The puzzle itself isn't terribly difficult but should build a memorable story arc for players who, after three or four of the monuments in your campaign, will always try to remember to keep an eye out.

✂ Increasing Difficulty ✂

- Place a monument in a dungeon the characters already cleared out but have to go back for and discover their former foes plotting revenge.
- Give the constellation a dozen or more stars in a complicated configuration.
- Each monument marker may have a somehow different shape (mirror image, larger or smaller scale, stretched, less precise "tooling" on the plaque, etc.) so the players have to figure out which is correct.
- The monuments were damaged by adherents of a rival deity so players have to reconstruct shapes of broken medallions.
- A rival minor deity sends out the occasional zealot to foil the party's current adventure.

Forgotten Constellation

Example Map & GM Script



(In the above map, the orange constellation pattern between shrines is designed to somewhat match the real-world constellation of Taurus, which some players may recognize.)

"In the floor of this shallow oceanside cave, you see a short, cube shaped rock worked from the stone. It is covered in barnacles and starfish, clearly submerged in water when the tide is in. On the top, a metallic plaque is attached alongside a short rod sticking out of the cubic stone. Neither appears to be very rusted even though they spend much of their time immersed in salt water. The plaque has a bunch of five-pointed stars arrayed on it, with a single sentence: 'we honor you Tau-Rai of the plains'. No one in your party has encountered any kind of shrine to a land deity under water before.

In a tide pool near the base of the cube, half-embedded in coral, you find a metal figurine shaped like a buffalo or bull or some other large land creature with a hole in the center."

Use The Right Lens

— Every rainbow ends in a pot of gold —

⌘ Description ⌘

While adventuring, characters find an unusually large gemstone colored an extremely deep and vivid red, yet rough and uncut as if only recently mined from the earth. NPCs will consider it low value and are uninterested in buying or stealing it.

If one of the characters looks through the gem purposefully over an open landscape, not just holding it up to the light but intentionally gazing through it like an eyepiece, they will see faint flutters of red light traveling in one direction, hovering above a distant path or trail, leading to some unknown destination. This line of small lights can be seen whether miles away or nearby.

There are other uncut gemstones of a similar aspect in the world, but colored orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet, that players can find over the course of your campaign. Once characters find all the gems, gazing through each they will see that the color wisps are following a trail to some unknown destination. The red wisps lead to a path of orange light, which eventually lead to yellow lines, and so forth.

If the characters can reach the eventual end of this rainbow path, they will find a granite slab in the ground in a remote and hard to reach location. The slab will have six divots cut into it, which match the six uncut gemstones placed at the correct angles. Once the gems are set, a door will form in the slab and open up, revealing stairs to a forgotten treasure.

⌘ Suggested Settings ⌘

Any setting, since your path can travel through dungeons, across continents, and even pass through multiple planes of existence.

⌘ Scale ⌘

Campaign / World

⌘ Image Search Terms ⌘

Try using the following phrases in an online image search. The results can help get your creative juices flowing on integrating this puzzle with your game:

- glowing algae beach
- time lapse light road
- holding gem to eye
- sparkle trail
- gemstone dispersion fire



Use The Right Lens

⌘ Presentation ⌘

Players may recognize that there is something to this uncut gemstone, when no NPC wants to buy it despite its respectable size and beautiful color. However, they should have no other clues until someone specifically gazes “into” or “through” it while in a large space. This will trigger the first path of red lights and will let the players know there is additional work to be done here.

The first gem should always be red to begin the rainbow color palette properly and you might allow it to see the first path from anywhere in your game world. Draw the part players see in red on the world map, and extend it as they follow. Players should be required to follow the path while mapping, rather than simply map large sections of your world through flying, viewing from a high plateau, scrying, etc.

Future paths from later gems may lead them into mountains or dungeons, and is a very easy hook for other modules, and you can update your world map appropriately each time.

⌘ Success ⌘

Players must collect all six gems and must completely map the path from red to violet to arrive at the destination. Once all six gems have been placed in the granite slab at the end, the door will open and stairs to the bottom will be revealed.

Depending on the length of time and level of effort required to acquire these gems, the reward to players should be significant. This would be an appropriate place for a large treasure horde lost to historical myth, a library of arcane knowledge, extremely rare magical items and relics, or some ancient test of worthiness now solved for the first time in millennia.

⌘ Consequences ⌘

There are no consequences for not solving this puzzle, and it may even take years of real-life gaming time over multiple characters.

⌘ Play Tips ⌘

As with the previous campaign/world scale puzzle, this is not designed to be solved in a few gaming sessions but should be treated as a broader side quest throughout your campaign. As players clear out dungeons or modules, they may want to draw on those maps if and where these colored lines were seen, to get a better idea of where they might go. It may become the driving motivation for character life stories, so feel free to weave the gems and colored paths in and out dungeons doors, directly through mountains and caves, along an ocean floor beyond the known realm, or even through interplanar doorways.

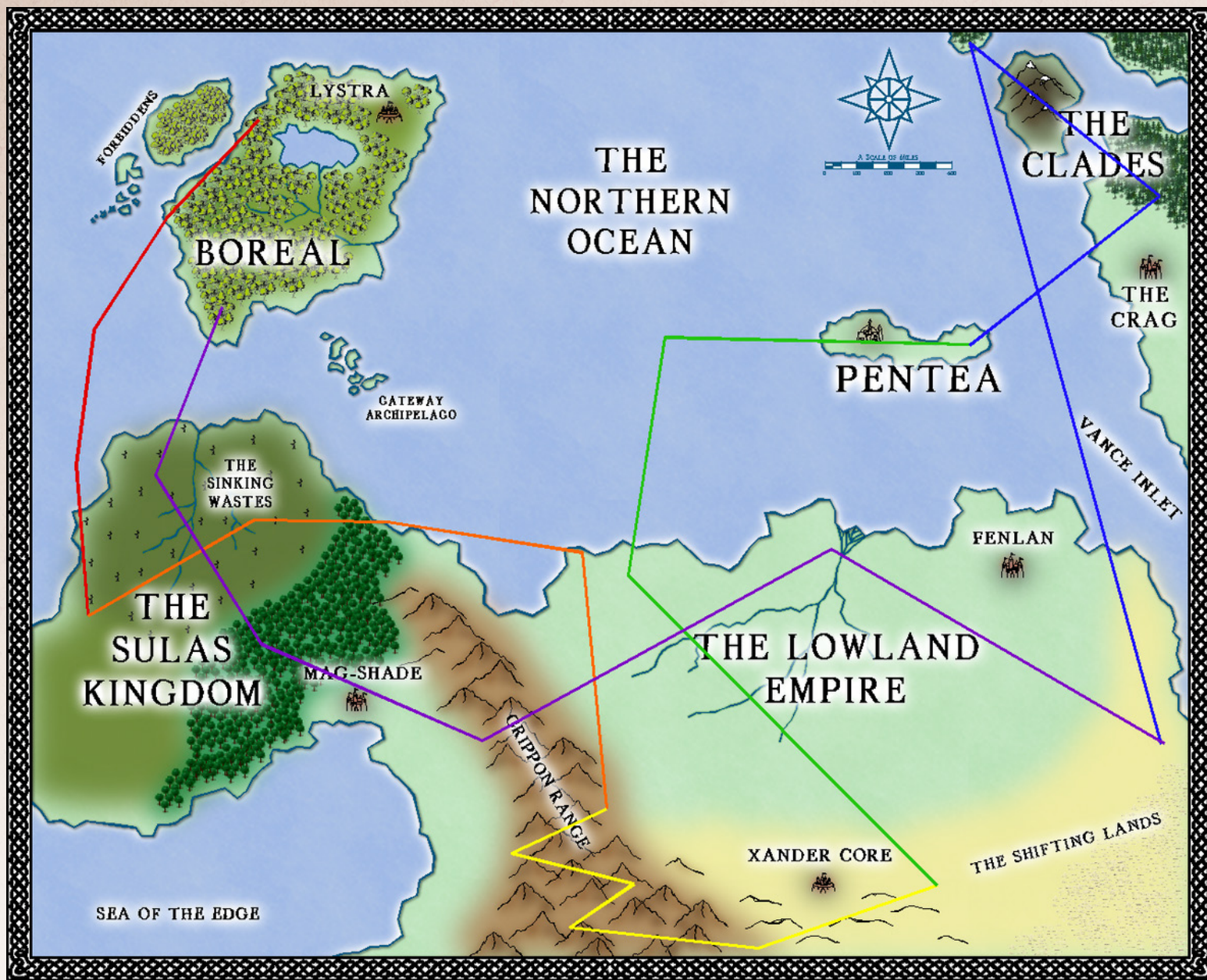
The enjoyment of this quest is the ongoing process of following breadcrumbs to new discoveries rather than “puzzling through” the solution. Players will be discovering whatever encounters or events you have placed in their path while they follow it.

⌘ Increasing Difficulty ⌘

- The rainbow path changes color in a sequence other than red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet.
- One of the gems was worked and finished by a jeweler and so characters must be closer to the line to see it.
- Each gem will only reveal the wispy line to the first character to view through it until that character dies.
- The rainbow path does not run along the ground on well-worn roads but directly through mountains, under water, and above clouds, changing direction frequently.

Use The Right Lens

Example Map & GM Script



(In the above map, the rainbow-colored lines indicate where the players need to travel while looking through the appropriately colored gems to follow the complete path.)

“Sifting through the wealthy baron’s ill-gotten gains, you find a bland, uncut gemstone that seems strangely out of place among polished jewels. It does refract a deep red from the inside, so any of you might guess that it is translucent jasper or red topaz. No doubt the miner who uncovered it thought it exceedingly beautiful, but why did an esteemed baron set this unremarkable stone into a rich amulet alongside all his other valuables?”

Puzzles For Players

~ Thank you for playing! ~