ARTIFICES,
DECEPTIONS
AND
DILEMMAS:

Killing Characters Fairly

Special Reference Work

A compiled volume of information for players of Classic Fantasy Role-Playing games, Including: Contents of empty rooms, guidelines for impartial adjudication of unusual circumstances, hazards, benefits, and puzzles, and creating interesting encounters.

By Courtney C. Campbell
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Dedicated to Rick Loomis,
honored chronicler
of the never-ending war
between cocky characters
and devious dungeon masters
who taught me to always wear
gloves when reading books

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Author's Introduction

I have been many years running adventure games called tabletop role-playing games. From youth my heart has been inclined towards adventure games.

When I was twelve, we would play all weekend, collecting gas money and fighting hydras built from dice. When I was sixteen, the internet began, and I met many other people who also thought deeply about adventure gaming. When I was twenty-one, I played horror games: groups of eight or more, focused on improvisation, sometimes with an audience. When I was twenty-three, I kept refreshing the page of EN world, waiting news of this new edition. When I was thirty-one, I joined the chorus of web logs, a community of classic role-players. When I was thirty-four, I joined the sea of google+, and ran and played in many games with many great game masters.

Since then I have given great thought to the past. The successes of my previous games were not due to me having mastery. Perhaps it was natural technique, the forces of the universe, or circumstances that allowed success without knowledge.

I have spent many hours considering role-playing games, searching for the principle of the game, and have come to realize its nature.

There are many who will tell you a way. But I have lived without following any particular way. Thus, I practise many arts—all things with no teacher.

The room is a space that the game takes place within. Familiarity with that space is what grounds the game.

Traps are threats within those spaces. Handling them impartially should be the same for every referee. It is necessary to have this knowledge as a part of your normal life.

Tricks have an essence of quicksilver. They allow change and creativity, both in the encounter and in the game at large.

Playing a fair game with deceptions and dilemmas requires a certain spirit, one of service to a role, with no beginning or end. When you gain this spirit, you will know the rhythm of any situation. It will be effortless.

Humans are natural storytellers; we all live in a continuous narrative constructed by our mind as an illusion to stitch together all our sensory input. There is a story of us, as a species. It is by turns funny, touching, and tragic. It is the meet-cute, the journey into the cave where you face yourself, the trickster of nature making a fool of us, meeting the monster among us, and most importantly, leaving the safety of the known, journeying across the dark threshold into the mystical unknown, facing great dangers and learning even greater truths among the darkness and chaos, and returning with riches and knowledge to strengthen the order we have lain upon the earth.

This is what we do when we play Dungeons and Dragons®.

This is what we have always done, telling and enacting the mythic forms in our lives, which then themselves become the myth.

People are doing, have done for thousands of years, exactly what you do when you run a game. Did they discover nothing in those years? No. There are many concrete skills that can improve your role as guide. In this way you share the vision of an adventure. A realm augured from the ocular power of the dice, a mythic tale told and lived.

These skills, they can be taught. Look within these pages for the knowledge that will make you master of a grand adventure.

THE ROOM

Running a fantasy adventure game requires both knowledge and skill. Anyone can do it, but it is a skill. Do not fear learning a skill. There are many arts and styles. Each person games as they feel inclined. Many people broadcast their games and you can see the truth of this for yourself.

We begin with these. Do not just read, but imagine these as real spaces and present them as a place you know. To know and understand a place is necessary to communicate the space.

Table I: Room Types

1	Rooms of Specific Utility
2	Rooms of Deities and Worship
3	Rooms of Pleasures and Relaxation
4	Rooms of Public Assembly
5	Rooms of General Function
6	Rooms of Containment/Imprisonment
7	Rooms of War and Conflict
8	Rooms of Learning and Knowledge

Table Ia: Rooms of Specific Utility

1	Barn	1	Stable
2	Kitchen	2	Treasury
3	Forge	3	Garage
4	Meeting Chamber	4	Smokehouse
5	Mine	5	Tannery
6-7	Office	6	Work Pit / Workshop
8	Pool / Water Room		

Table Ib: Deities and Worship

1	Chantry
2-3	Chapel
4	Crypt, Human
5	Crypt, Animal
6	Confessional
7	Crematorium
8	Embalming Chamber
9	Meditation Chamber
10	Monk Cell
11	Mass Grave
12-13	Robing Room
14-15	Shrine
16	Scriptorium
17-18	Temple
19	Tomb
20	Vestiary

Table Ic: Pleasures and Relaxation

1	Arena
2-3	Banquet
4	Combat Pit
5-6	Den
7	Game Room
8-9	Gallery
10	Harem
11	Maze
12-13	Museum
14	Music Room
15	Pool
16	Sauna
17	Seraglio
18	Statuary
19	Torture Chamber
20	Trophy Room

Table Id: Rooms of Public Assembly

1	Assemblage
2-3	Antechamber
4	Amphitheater
5	Audience Hall
6	Courtroom
7	Great Hall
8	Throne Room

Table If: Rooms of Containment/ Imprisonment

1	Aviary
2	Bestiary
3	Cage
4-5	Cell
6	Kennel
7	Oubliette
8	Padded Room
9	Pen
10	Prison
11	Stockade
12	Zoo

Table Ig: Rooms of War and Conflict

1	Armory
2	Arsenal
3	Barracks
4	Guardroom
5	Gymnasium
6	Interrogation Room
7	Mess Hall
8	Training Room

Table Ie: Rooms of General Function

1	Bathroom
2	Bedroom
3	Cistern Room
4-5	Closet
6	Dining Room
7	Dressing Room
8	Foyer (Entry Room)
9	Hall
10	Lair
11	Larder / Pantry
12	Lounge
1	Map Room
2	Privy
3	Planning Room
4	Reception Chamber
5	Salon
6	Servants Dorm
7	Storage
8	Vault
9	Vestibule
10	Waiting Room
11	Wardrobe
12	Well Room

Table Ih: Rooms of Learning and Knowledge

1	Classroom
2	Conjuring Room
3	Divination Chamber
4	Inscription Chamber
5	Laboratory
6-7	Library
8	Morgue
9	Observatory
10	Solar
11	Study
12	Summoning Room

ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

Following are visual illustrations, written descriptions, and common contents of each room type. The list of contents is not exhaustive, nor prescriptive, but instead represents the most common "unimportant" items and things found in a room.

The ability to conceptualize a space is a crucial skill for referees. It is easier to explain something understood. Many of these common items are foreign to modern players. They may not have any frame of reference for how a 'loom crank' or an 'aspergillum' is used.

It is your role as a referee to facilitate play. This requires clarity. Your players should understand the game situation the same way you understand the game situation. Confused players cannot make choices that enact their agency.

The way of the referee is not an agon between one spirit of improvisation versus a spirit of preparation. It is of resolute acceptance of the verity of the adventure.

The game possesses a dual spirit. Players alternately take strategic and tactically infinite action to discover information and then they decide how to act on that information. This conversation is the entirety of the process of role-playing.

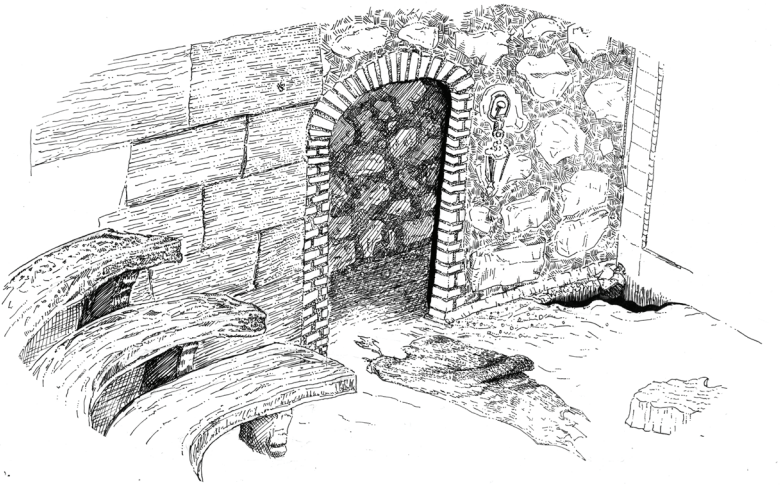
Your spiritual bearing should be calm, not tense nor reckless. You will have urges, feelings, and desires. Do not let these impulses influence your attitude. When we go on a journey, we may encounter the unpleasant or unexpected. Your spirit must remain open and unconstrained, and see things from a high point of view.

These rooms will contain the encounters. These spaces are not flat planes. The players must understand the space in the way you understand the space. If you think or say a thing in isolation, it is ephemeral. If you say it to one person, it is more true. When a thing is done or said in a group, it is a real thing.

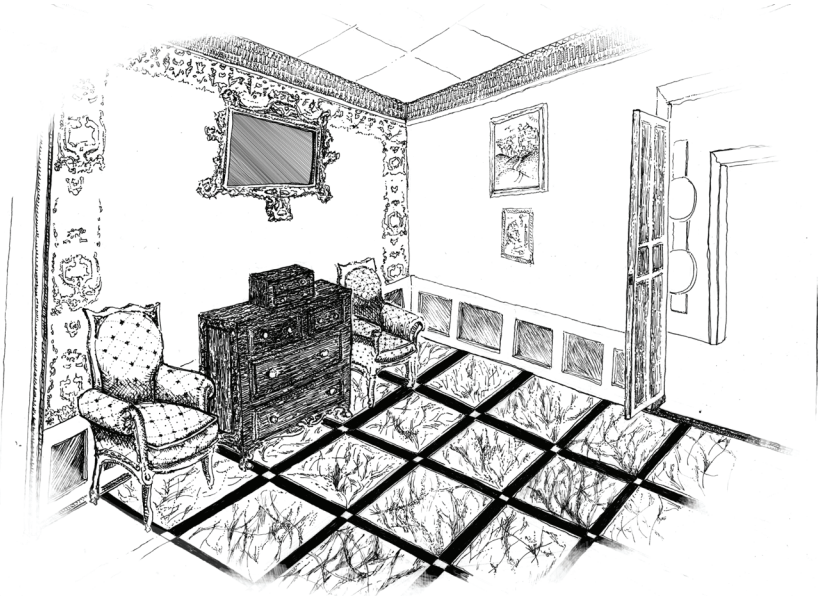
You don't know what will happen; what does happen is real because it was observed by all.

Room vs. Chamber

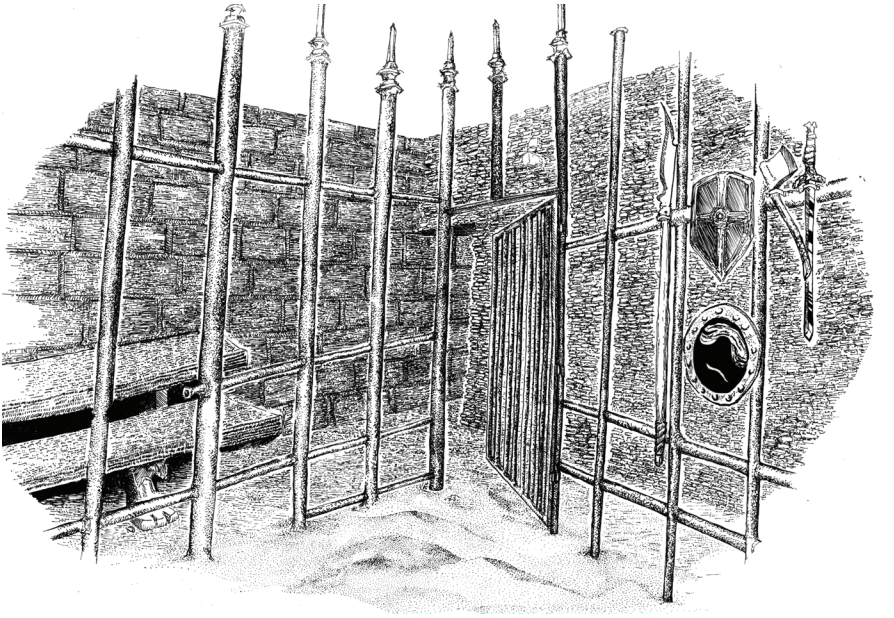
> *A room is any sort of walled enclosure inside a dwelling. Chamber literally means room, but sounds florid and carries several connotations. A chamber will more often have unblocked entrances and will generally be larger and have a higher ceiling than a room. A chamber can refer to a natural enclosed space, whereas a room refers to an artificially partitioned space.*



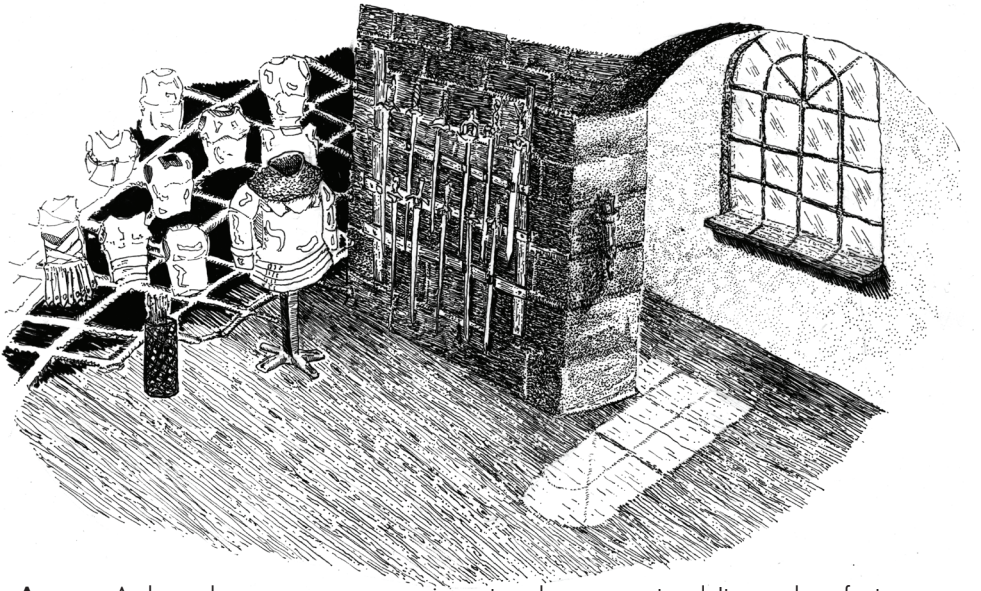
Amphitheater: This is an oval or round room filled with seats around a central open area. The general idea is that spectators surround the central area, which is often used for combat. (*arch, armorial bearings, drapery, flag, relief, dirt/mud, dome (ceiling), brazier, coals, torches, scratches, coins, earthy odor, blood, fingers, toes, legs, arms, curtains, manacles, chains, depressions, balcony, tapestry, trash/refuse*)



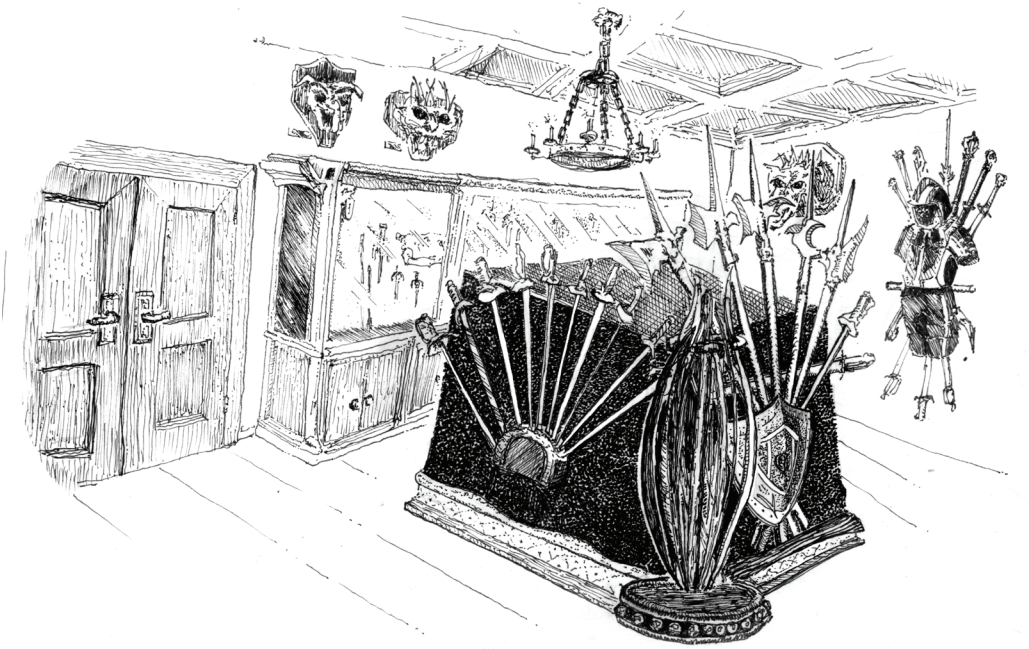
Antechamber: This is a room or chamber that serves as a waiting room or entrance to a larger room or apartment. (*arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under comprehensive list of things in rooms)*)



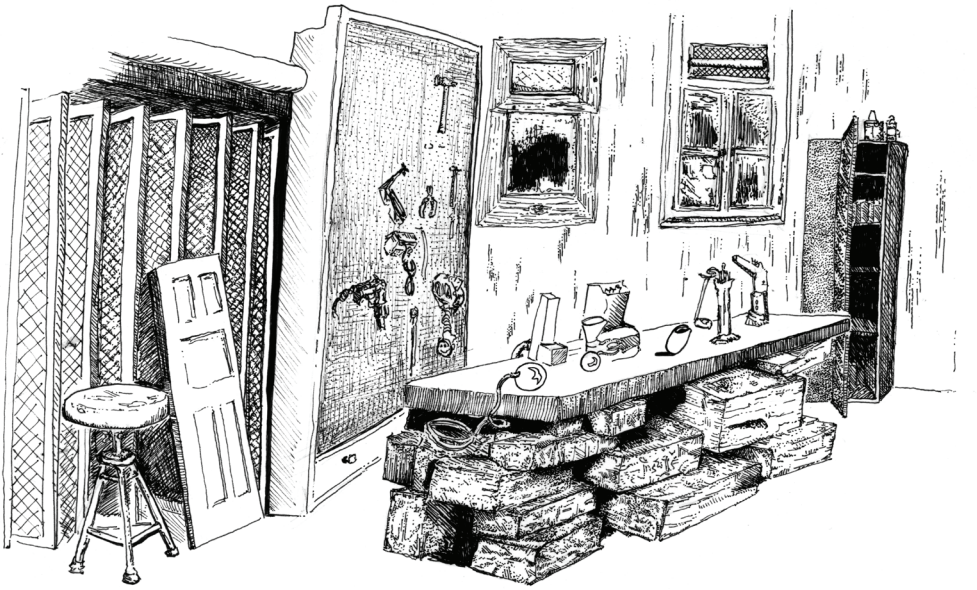
Arena: This is a central stage, ring, or something similar used for entertainment, often surrounded by seats. Historically this area was sandy and was a place of conflict. (*arch, armorial bearings, drapery, flag, relief, sand, dome (ceiling), brazier, coals, torches, scratches, coins, earthy odor, blood, fingers, toes, limbs, curtains, manacles, chains, depressions, balcony, tapestry, trash/refuse*)



Armory: A place where weapons, war equipment, and armor are stored. It may also refer to a headquarters or center for military drills (*practice*) of a military unit, or more explicitly a place where arms and armor are manufactured. (*shelves, racks, weapons/armor (all), mat, practice targets, forge, hammer, tongs, furnace, anvil*)

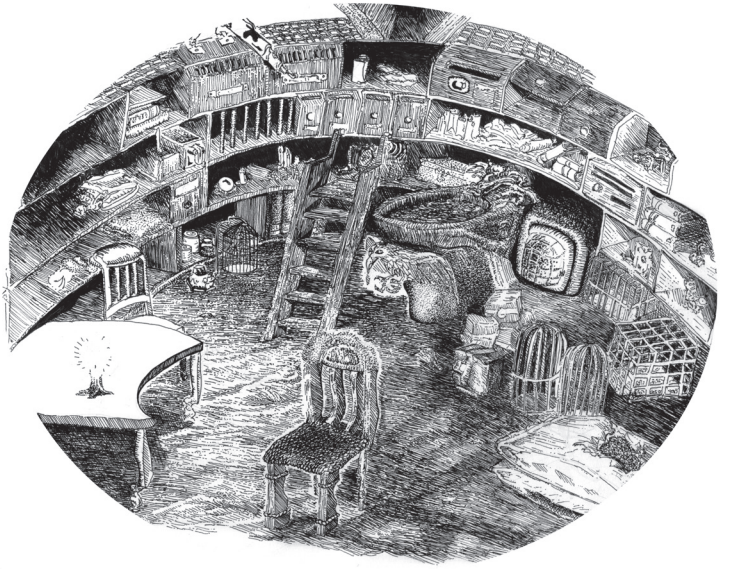


Arsenal: A place for the storage and collection of weapons, arms, military equipment, and munitions for military service. (*shelves, racks, weapons/armor (all)*)

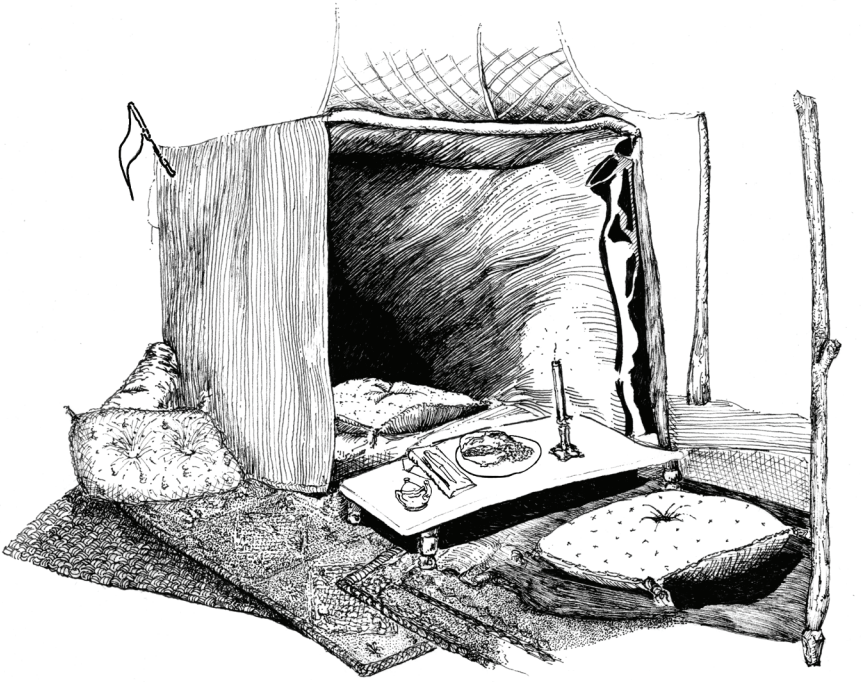


Assemblage: This room can either be a place where people may assemble or gather, or it can be a room where a system of components are assembled together for a specific or particular purpose. (*podium, lectern, benches, carpet, desks, tables, chairs, clock (wall), tapestries or arras, dias, stadium seating, lamps*)

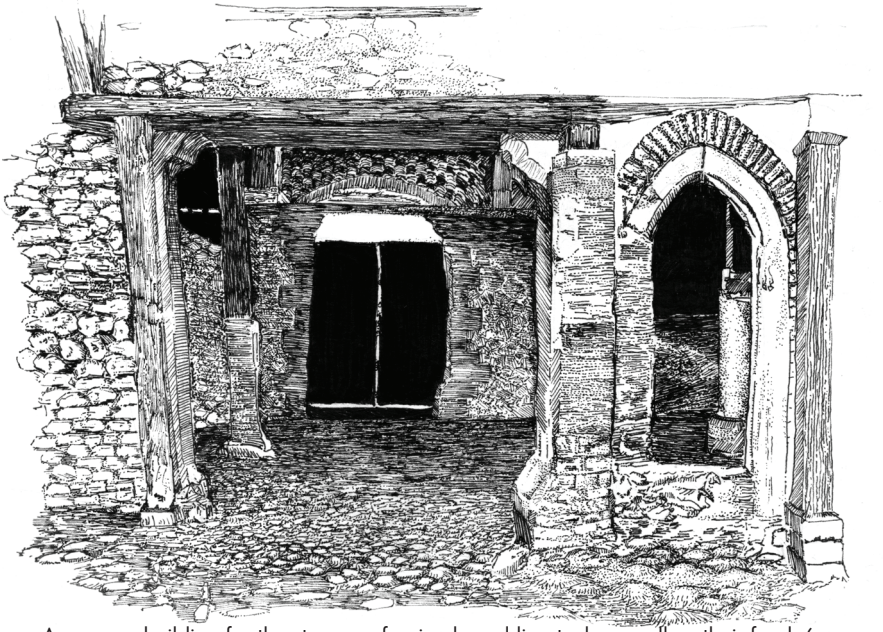
Audience Hall: This is a room for holding formal interviews or hearings. (*clock, arras, flags, map, relief, painting/fresco, benches, chair, lectern, podium, lamp, candles, books*)



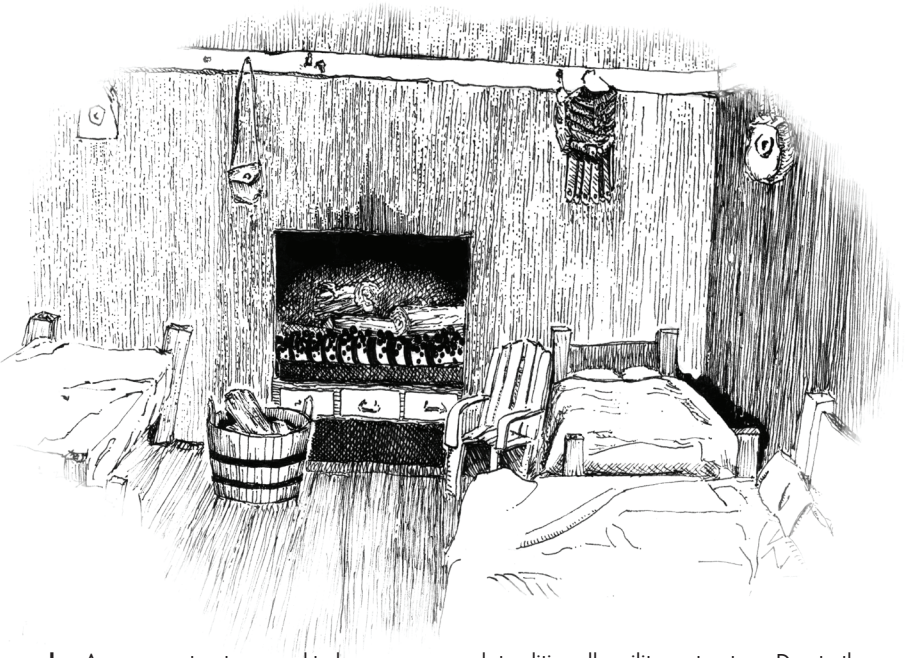
Aviary: This room or chamber is a place where many birds are kept. (*cages (bird), sand, sundials, birdbath, bags, barrels, bins, basin, bowl, decanter, chest, apron, gloves, smock, dome, font, fountain, chair, cupboard, cabinet, mat, wall basin, workbench, grain, candles, lamp, acrid odors, feathers, birds*)



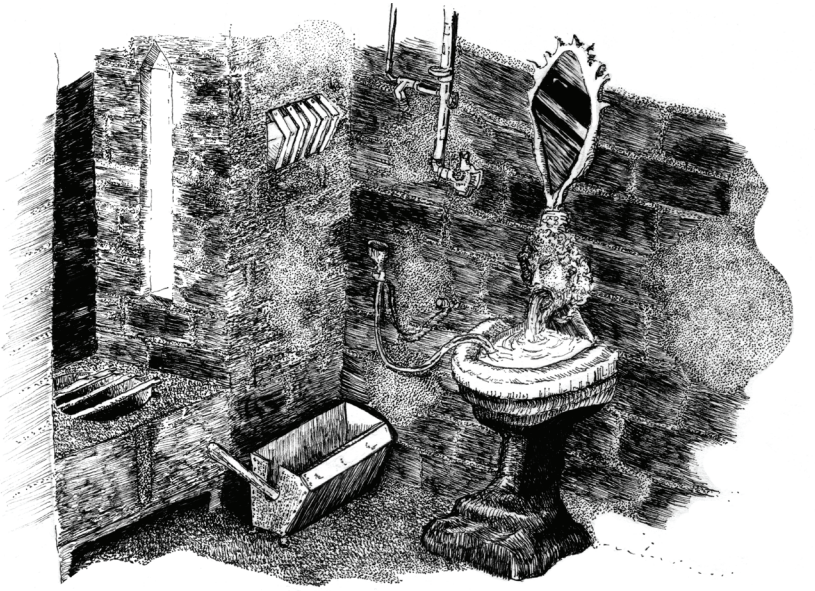
Banquet: This room or chamber is designed to accommodate banquets and dining. (*chalice, goblet, vase, flowers, table, bench, chairs, tablecloth, fork, spoon, knife, platters, plates, china, arras, alcohol, food, candles, chandelier, brazier, torches, tapestry, mug, pitcher, tablecloth*)



Barn: A room or building for the storage of animals and livestock as well as their feed. (*cages, bestiaries, dias, pedestal, walking paths, benches, statues*)



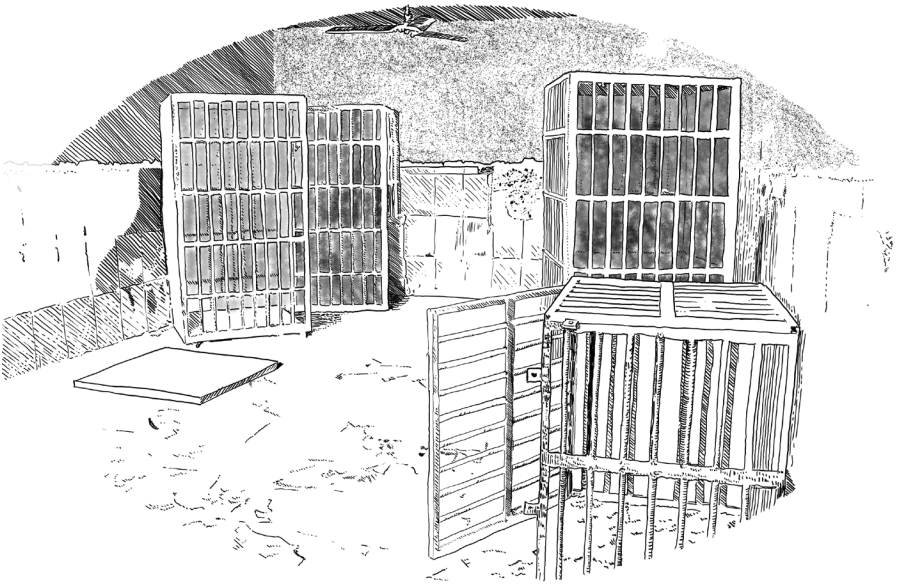
Barracks: A room or structure used to house personnel, traditionally military structure. Due to the unaesthetic nature of these buildings, they are often used to refer to any structure that is large and bleak. (*bed (bunk/single), blanket, trunk/foot locker/sea chest, weapons/armor*)



Bathroom: This is a room or chamber designed for taking a bath, shower, or toilet. (*toilet, wall basin, bath, leaves / corncob / sponge on stick in salt water, paper, rope, perfume, cloth*)

Bedroom: This is a room or chamber used for the purpose of rest and sleep. (*altar, bed (all), basket, cabinet, chest of drawers, foot locker, hamper, pill box, powder box, vase, clothing (all), closet, furs, blanket, comforter, quilt, tapestry, carpet, rugs, armoire, bookshelves, end table, pillow, stool, lamp, candles*)

Bestiary: This room or chamber is a place where a group of magical beasts or creatures are kept. (*cages (animal), butchery, fish, meat, sand, sundials, birdbath, bags, barrels, bins, basin, bowl, decanter, chest, apron, gloves, smock, dome, font, fountain, chair, cupboard, cabinet, mat, wall basin, workbench, grain, candles, lamp, acrid odors, feathers, animals*)

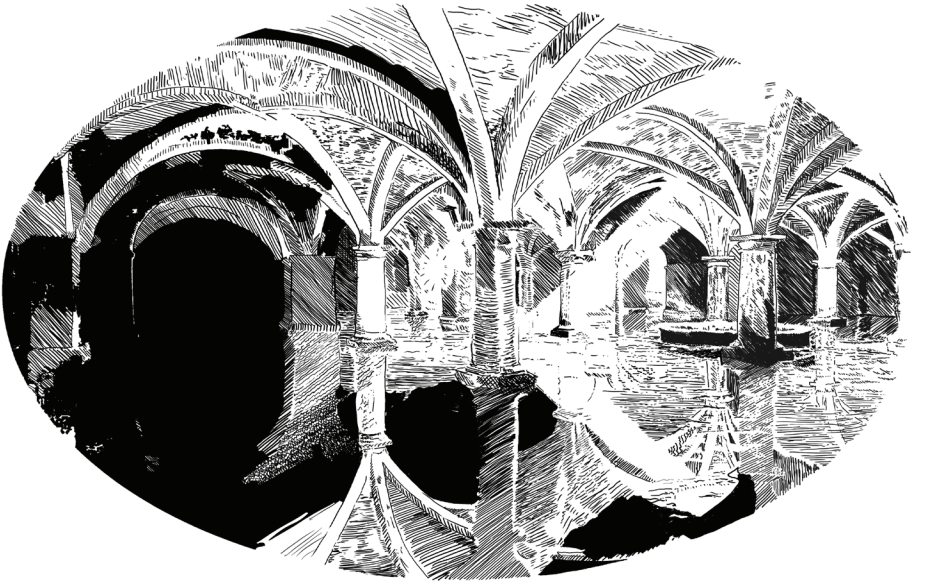


Cage: This room is an enclosure formed of wires, bars, or the like for displaying birds, animals, or people. (*bench, privy, straw, cot, stool, waste, stale or urine odor, blood, skeletons, manacles, wall cressets, trash/refuse, jug, plate, fork, spoon, file, barred window*)

Cell: This can refer to any small room, but most often refers to a grouping of small rooms. (*pallet, bed, desk, quill, paper, scrolls, books, bench, privy, straw, cot, stool, waste, stale or urine odor, blood, skeletons, manacles, wall cressets, trash/refuse, jug, plate, fork, spoon, file, barred window*)

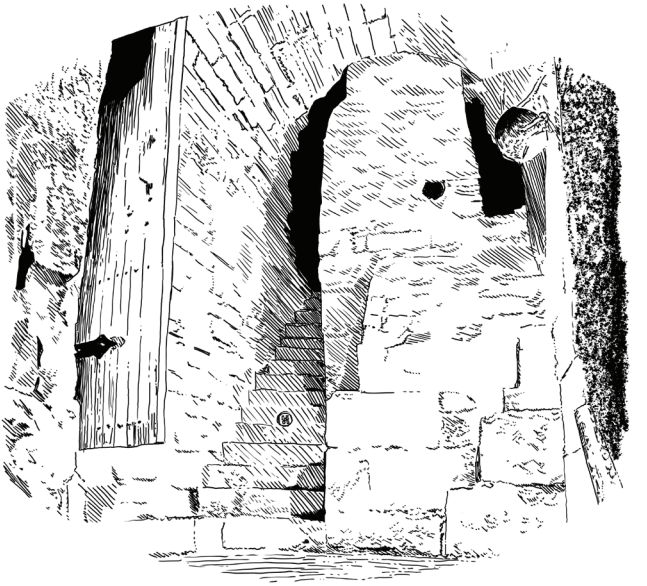
Chantry: This is a place for the singing, mass, or reverence for the souls of founders. (*i.e. 'chant'ry*) It can refer to a chapel endowed for this purpose. A more general usage is a church used for minor services. (*Altar, arch, drapery, gilt, inlay, relief (all), dias, dome, font, fresco, mosaic, painting, pews, podium, idol, magic, candelabra, lamp, torches, pedestal, pillar, column, tapestry, offertory container, reliquary, offertory dish, oil, perfume, alcove, glass window, incense burner, alcohol, holy symbols*)

Chapel: This is a room used for private worship. It is often a separate dedicated part of a church and may be used for special services. (*Altar, arch, drapery, gilt, inlay, relief (all), dias, dome, font, fresco, mosaic, painting, pews, podium, idol, magic, candelabra, lamp, torches, pedestal, pillar, column, tapestry, offertory container, reliquary, offertory dish, oil, perfume, alcove, glass window, incense burner, alcohol, holy symbols*)

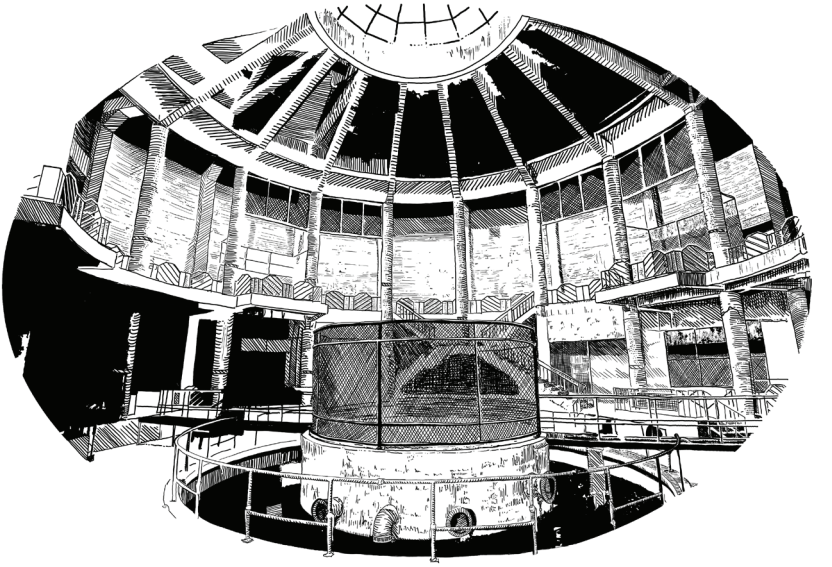


Cistern Room: This is a room or chamber containing a tank, reservoir, or container which stores or holds some kind of liquid. It can also be a room with access to an underground reservoir for water. (*dirt/mud, bang/slam, hissing, bubbling, pipes, protrusions, trash/refuse, wrench, puddle, trickle*)

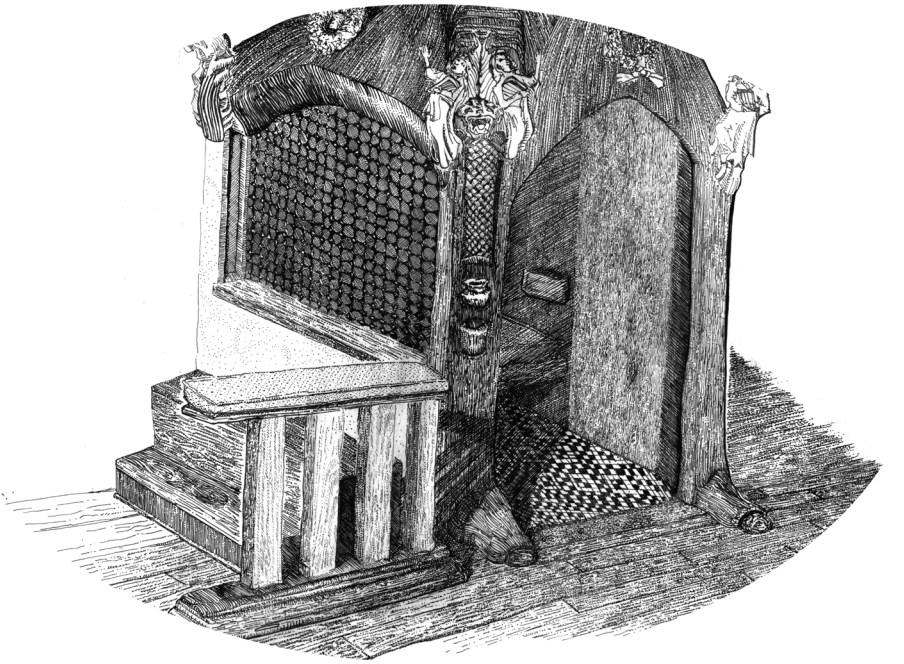
Classroom: A room or chamber where classes are held. (*chalkboard, sticks, chairs, desks, chalk, books, bookshelves*)



Closet: This room or chamber is characterized by being small, often enclosed and recessed within a larger room, used for clothing or the storage of food or goods. Sometimes it refers to any small private room used for study or prayer. It is literally a small enclosure. (*bin, hamper, chest, chest of drawers, iron bar, hangers, clothing, tools (any), things (any)*)



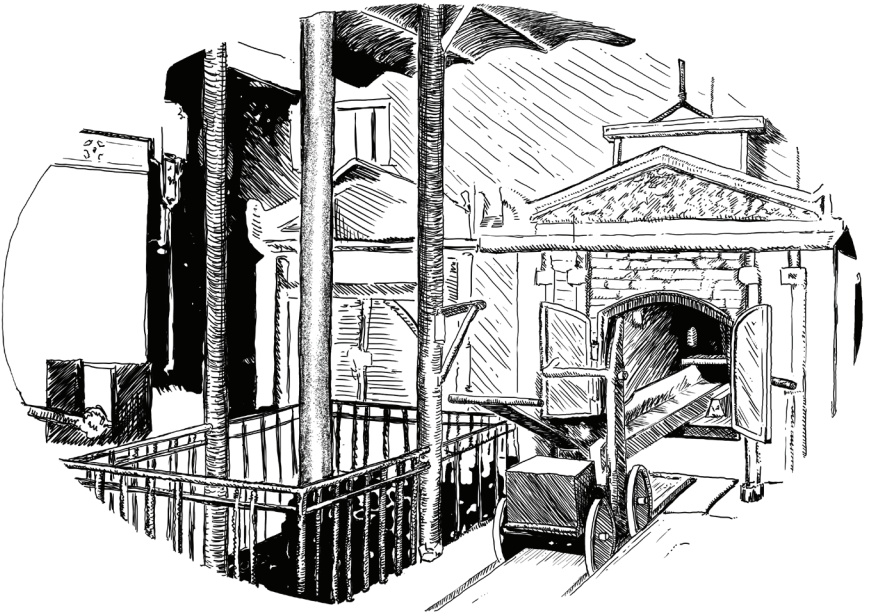
Combat Pit: This is a lowered area often with a dirt or sand floor where fighting takes place. A combat pit is more likely to have animal or monster opponents than an arena. (*clay/dirt/mud/sand, brazier, torches, scratches, coins, blood, limbs, bones, skeletons*)



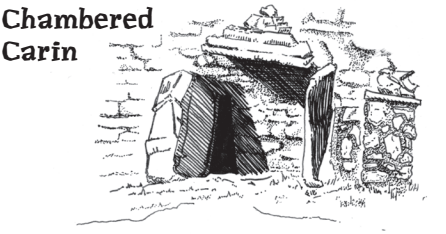
Confessional: A place designed for the hearing of confessions by a priest. (*bench, screen, closet, cushion, drapery*)

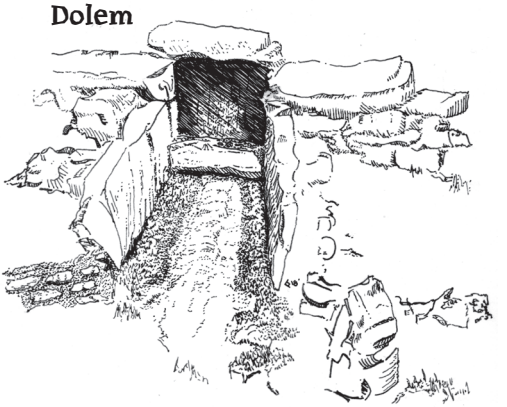
Conjuring Room: A room or chamber devoted to the purpose of summoning and binding extra or intradimensional items or forces. (*chalk, runes, summoning runes, brazier, dome, magic, summoning circle, salt*)

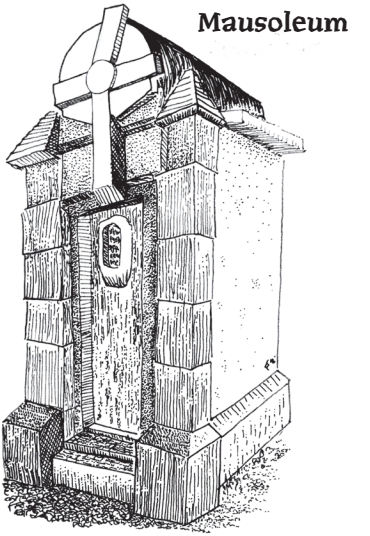
Courtroom: In this room sessions of legal proceedings occur. (*gavel, wall clock, grandfather clock, arras, flags, map, relief, painting/fresco, benches, chair, lectern, podium, lamp, candles, books*)

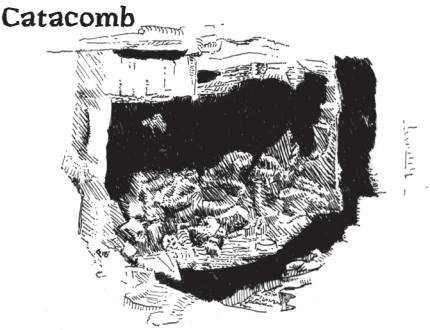


Crematorium: A place where bodies are cremated (*i.e. burned to ashes). (fireplace, furnace, fire poker, broom, urns, shovel, coals*)

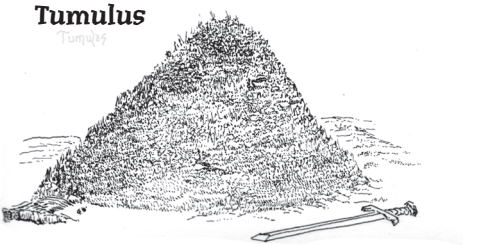


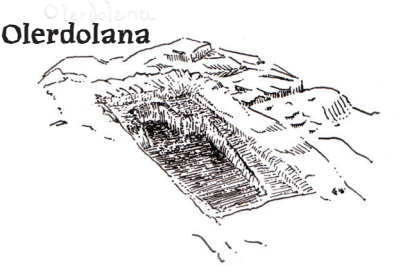


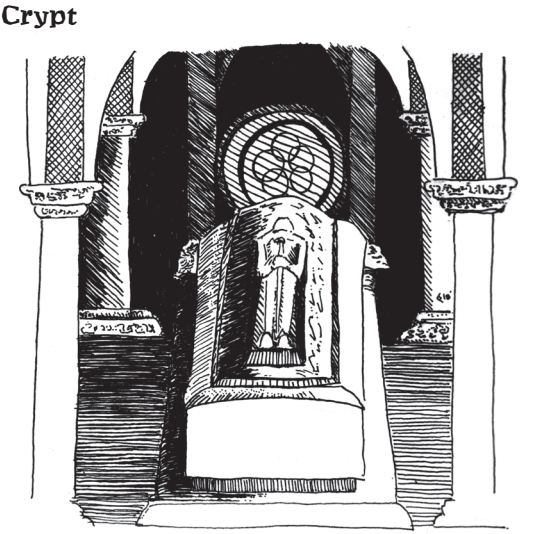




Crypt, Human: This is a chamber or vault that is underground, often beneath a church, used as a burial place or a place for secret meetings. (*coffin, casket, urn, things (any), corpse, skeleton*)

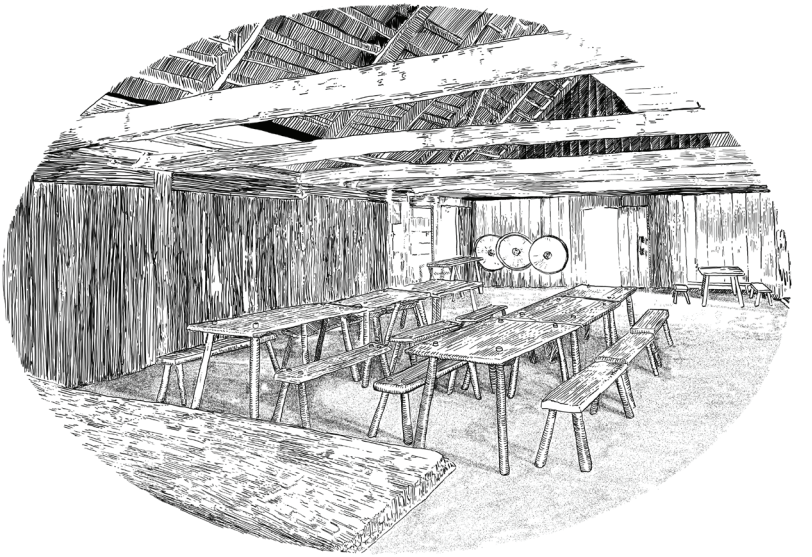






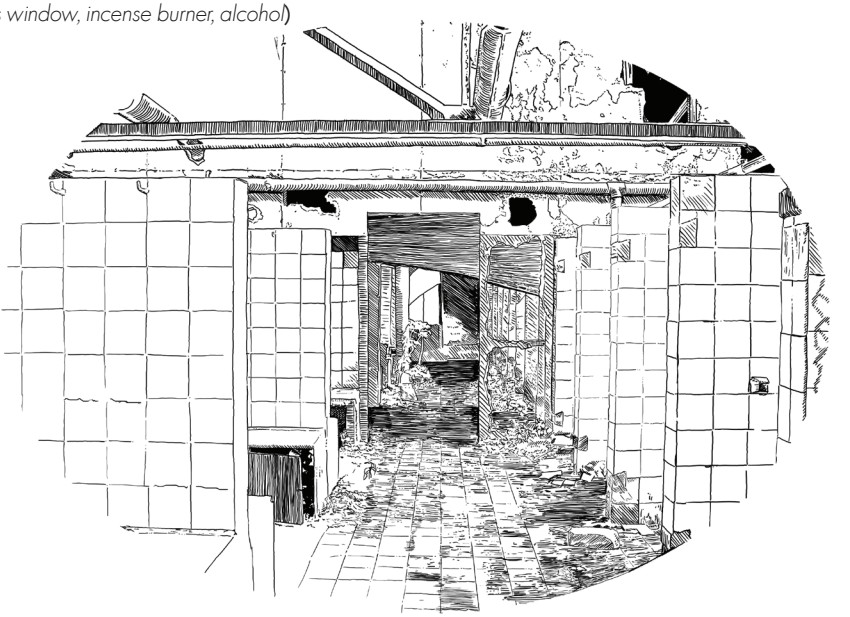
Crypt, Animal: This is a chamber of vault that is underground, often beneath a church, used as a burial place for animals. (*coffin, casket, urn, things (any), corpse, skeleton*)

Den: This room or chamber is designed to provide a quiet, comfortable, and informal atmosphere for conversation, reading, writing, and other quiet activities. This room is often secluded. (*basket, bin, box, cabinet, chest, chest of drawers, foot locker, lock box, music box, tinder box, trunk, vase, clock (any), cloak, cowl, coat, boots, cap, hood, purse, scarf, mirror, armchair, armoire, blanket, bookshelves, chair, coat-rack, couch, cushion, desk, divan, end table, fireplace, mat, sofa, shrine, table, alcohol, coca, coffee, nuts, candles, lamp, books, hourglass, coins, musical instruments, pets, plants, tapestries, carpets, rugs, paintings, ashtray, cards, comforter, cover, humidor, ice chest, feather duster, file, finger-pick, fire poker, shovel, brush, broom, game pieces, mug, curios, masks, weapons/armor (display), statues, statuary, figurines, oil, trophies, dice, drinking jack/horn*)



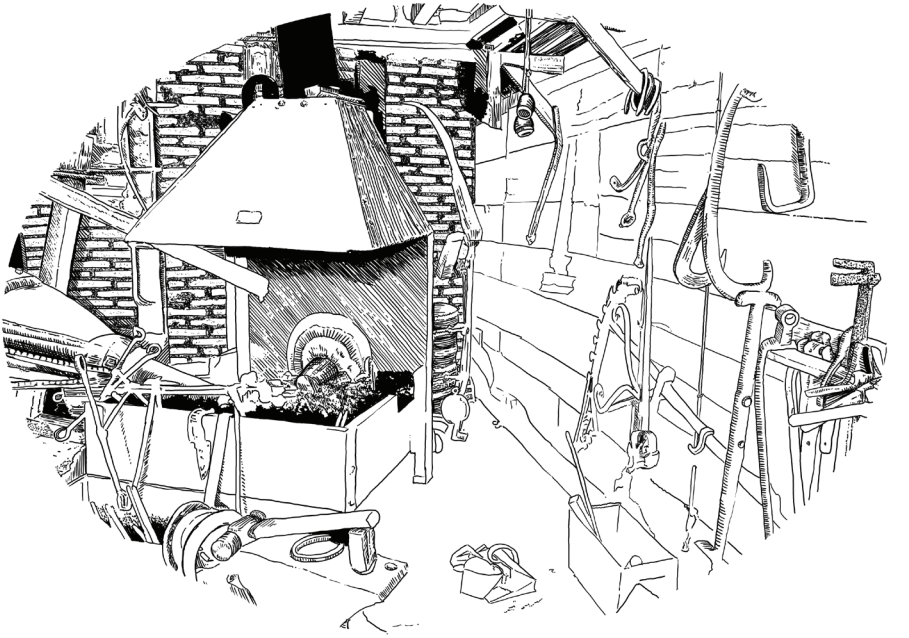
Dining Room: This is a room or chamber in which people take their formal or primary meal of the day. (*chalice, goblet, cup, jar, jug, pans, chairs, tables, alcohol, food, lamp, chandeliers, candles, decanter, spoons, forks, plates*)

Divination Chamber: A room or chamber devoted to the purpose of augury, divination, prophecy, soothsaying, aeromancy (*air/sky)*, **tasseography** *(tea leaves)*, **astrology, and haruspication** *(inspecting the entrails of animals*) as well as many dozens of other methods of predicting the future. (*arch, drapery, gilt, inlay, relief (all), dias, dome, font, fresco, mosaic, painting, podium, idol, magic, candelabra, lamp, torches, pedestal, pillar, column, tapestry, oil, perfume, alcove, glass window, incense burner, alcohol*)



Dressing room: This is a literal room or chamber for getting dressed. It is often found where clothes are changed often, backstage at a theater, etc. (*stool, clothes (all), desk, mirror, pin, clothespin, clothing rack, chest of drawers, closet, chair, lamp, candles, perfume, oils, make-up*)

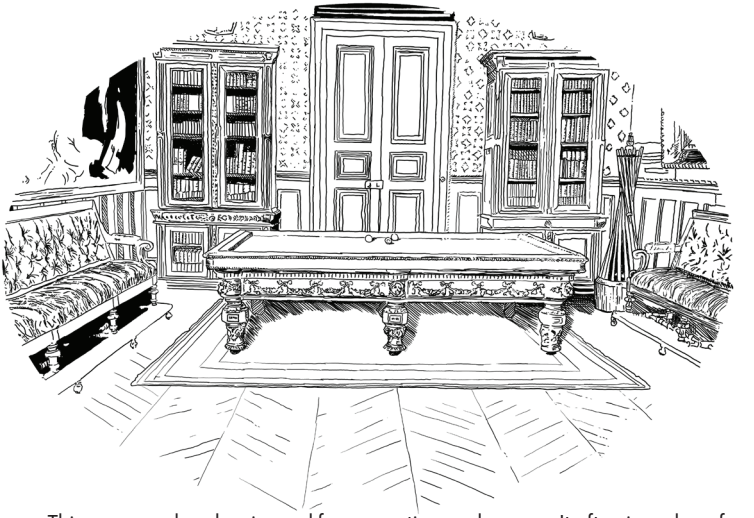
Embalming Chamber: A room set aside for the embalming of bodies. This process prevents decomposition to assist in the viewing of the body. (*table, embalming machine, chemicals, tools, hook*)



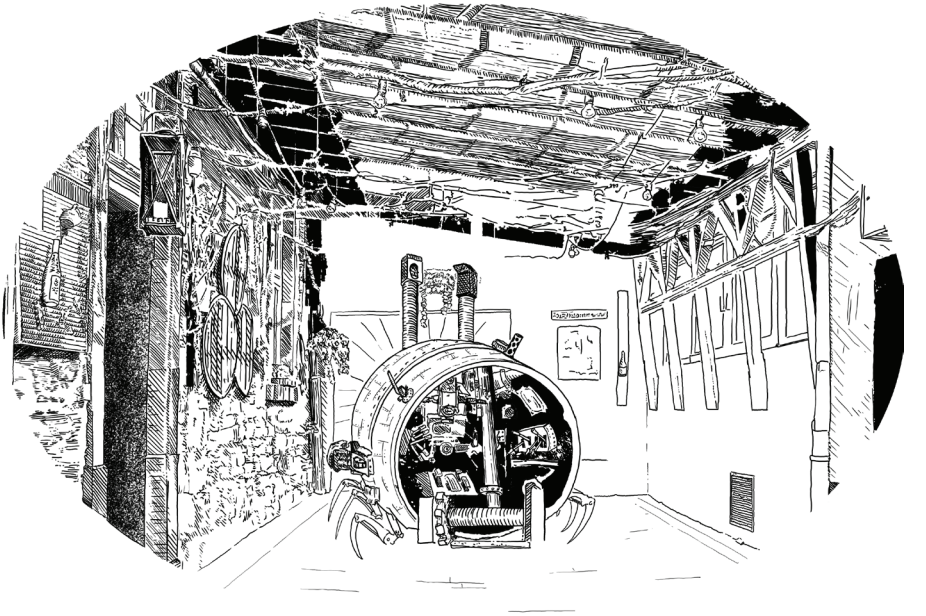
Forge: A room or workshop that contains a special fireplace, hearth, or furnace where metal is heated before shaping. (*forge, furnace, anvil, hammer, tongs, font, chisel, slack tub*)

Foyer: This is a lobby, vestibule, or entrance chamber to a house, apartment, theater, or hotel. It is a gateway between the interior and exterior of a building. It often has a fireplace. (*arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under Comprehensive List of Things in Rooms)*)

Gallery: This refers to a variety of rooms and chambers with similar purposes. It is often a raised area with a sloping floor or stairs to accommodate either spectators or an exhibit. It can also be a series of rooms dedicated to the display of art objects or statuary. Corridors of architectural importance are also considered galleries, and finally it may be a raised balcony passage or platform running along an exterior wall of a building. (*box (display), arras, curtains, drapery, dias, dome, fresco, mosaic, painting, idol, braziers, candles, chandelier, lamp, pedestal, pillar, column, plant, alcove, balcony, catwalk, tapestry*)

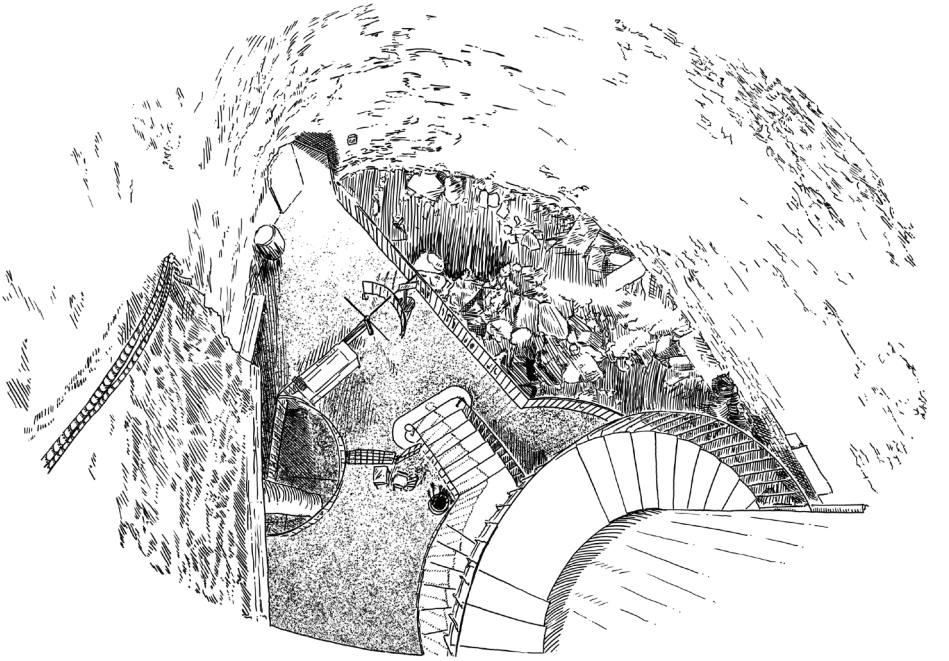


Game Room: This room or chamber is used for recreation and games. It often is a place for noisy activity and games played on tables or sand tables. It is sometimes referred to as a rumpus room. (*bags, boxes, baskets, cabinets, chest, chest of drawers, trunk, curtains, arras, fresco, mosaic, painting, bench, bookshelves, chair, cupboard, cushion, table, candles, lamp, manuals / books, carpets, rugs, balls, beads, blocks, chalk, dolls, doll houses, figurines, marbles, mask, mobile, puppets, ribbon, sand, toys, toy soldiers, trophies, cards, game pieces*)

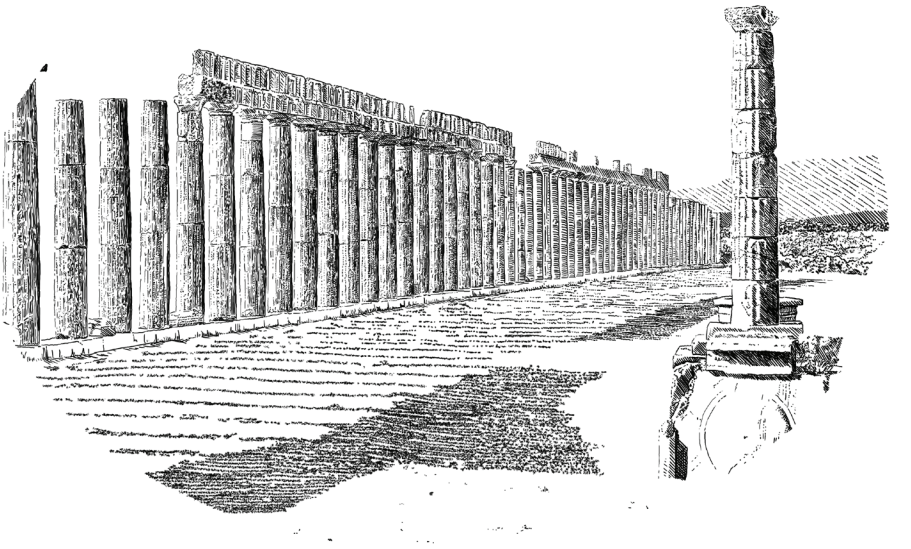


Garage: An indoor area for the storage of vehicles or transport equipment. The root word means to provide shelter. (*vehicle (any), things/tools (any)*)

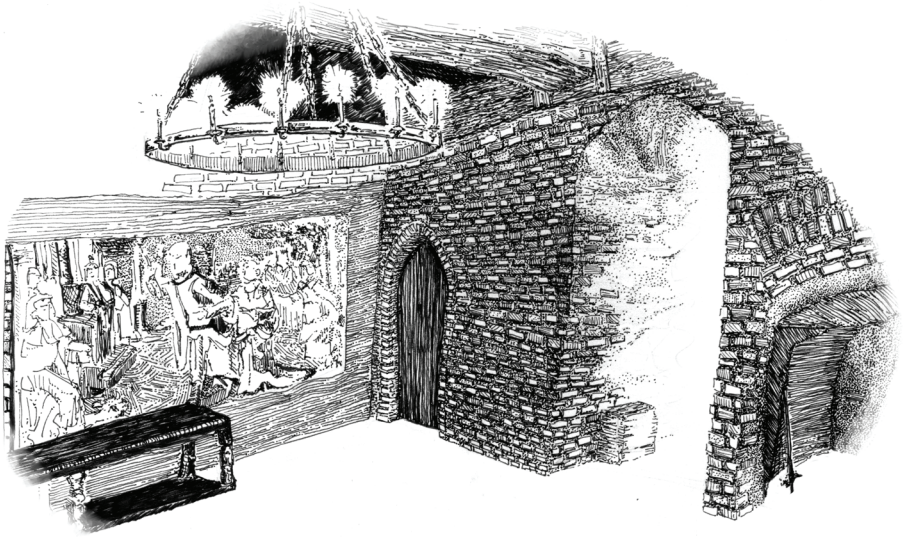
Great Hall: This is a principal hall in a mansion or castle. It is often used for dining and entertainment. (*downdraft, basket, chalice, goblet, jar, jug, pans, arras, armorial bearings, flag, benches, chairs, tables, throne, alcohol, food, braziers, chandelier, torches, smoky odor, bones, dung, vomit, rats, plants, balcony, glass window, tapestry, trash/refuse, silverware, plates, platters, tablecloth*)



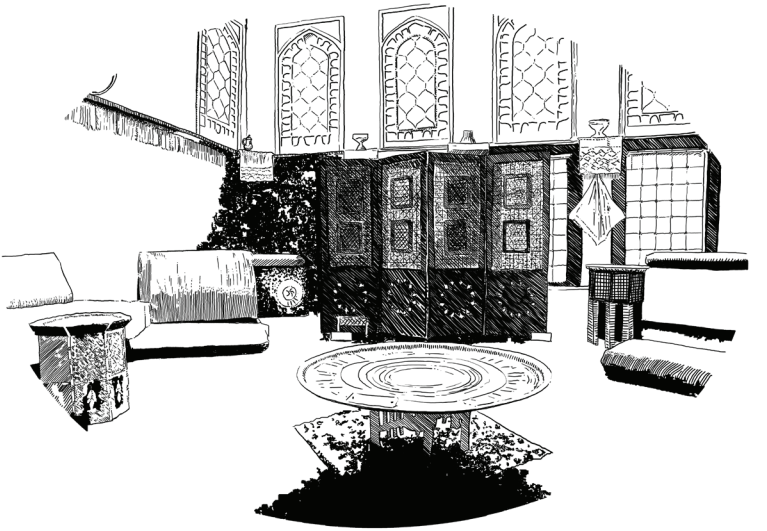
Guardroom: A room used either by military personnel when on duty or a place where military prisoners are kept. (*chair, table, spittoon, cards, dice, alcohol, weapons/armor (all)*)



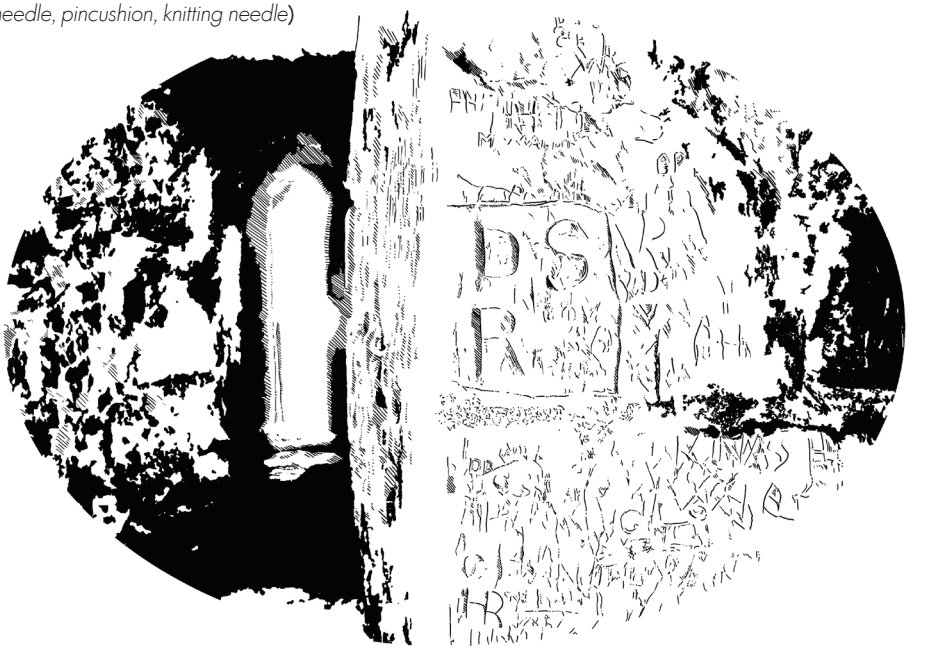
Gymnasium: A room used for exercise, indoor sports, or physical education, originally from the Greeks who derived it from their word for training in the nude. (*towel, balls, nets, bars, targets*)



Hall: This is a corridor or passage in a building. It can also colloquially refer to a large building or room for some purpose, most often residence or learning. (*clock (any), arras, flags, maps, relief (any), painting, fresco, mosaic, benches, chair, torches, breeze/downdraft, chill, banners, carpet, rug*)



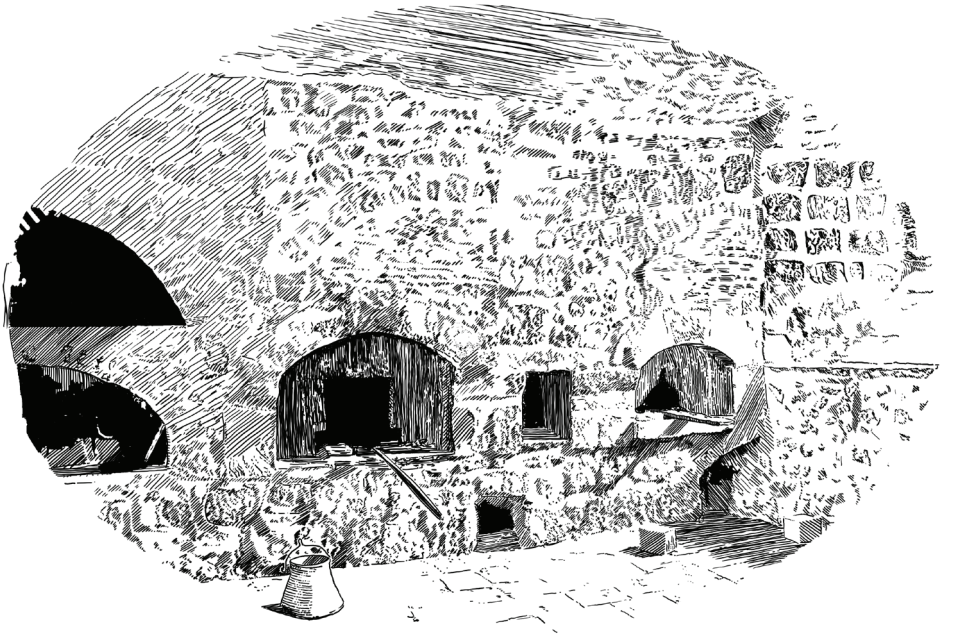
Harem: This is a room or chamber reserved for women only. It is where they reside, acting as quarters specifically for women. They are often wives and concubines. (*bed (all), basket, cabinet, chalice, chest of drawers, closet, hope chest, jewelry box, music box, vase, wineskin, apron, blouse, coif, corset, dress, frock, garter, girdle, gorget, gown, hose, petticoats, robe, scarf, shawl, shift, slippers, toga, tunic, veil, curtains, drapery, furs, hides, fresco, mosaic, painting, armchair, couch, divan, end table, pillow, mattress, quilt, braziers, candles, chandelier, lamps, books, musical instruments (all), pets, pedestals, plants, flowers, alcove, tapestries, banners, carpets and rugs, comforter, cover, cushion, dye, fake jewelry, headdress, ivory, jewelry, mask, oil, perfume, pipe, ribbon, shears, scissors, yarn, thread, cloth, thimble, needle, pincushion, knitting needle*)



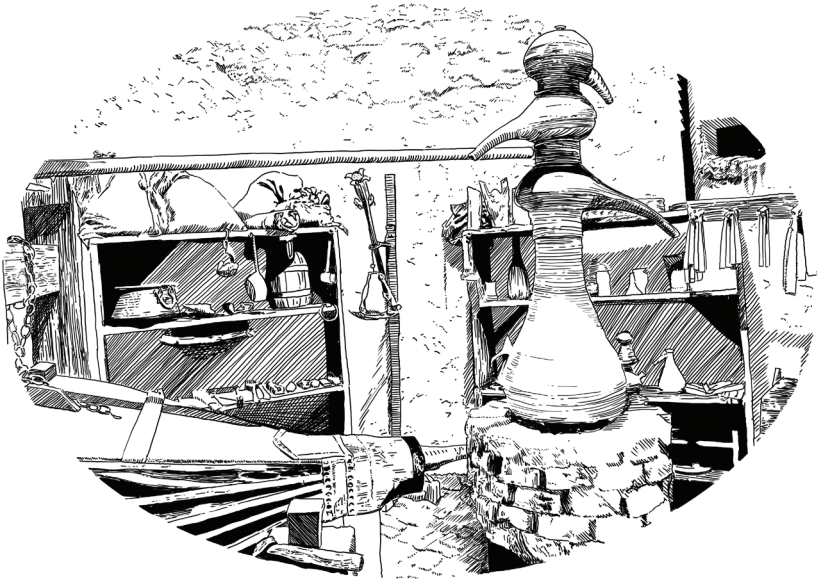
Inscription Chamber: A chamber where many people have written upon the walls. (*writing on walls*)

Interrogation Room: A room used for the purpose of questioning prisoners, suspects, witnesses, and victims. May contain the ability for others to see into the room that cannot be observed, and also, often a way for others to see out into an area that cannot be observed to identify people. (*chair, lamp, table, restraint/torture (any)*)

Kennel: This room or chamber is a place for sheltering animals kept as pets. These rooms focus on the breeding, raising, and training of the animals, (*cages (animal), butchery, fish, meat, sand, sundials, birdbath, bags, barrels, bins, basin, bowl, decanter, chest, apron, gloves, smock, dome, font, fountain, chair, cupboard, cabinet, mat, wall basin, workbench, grain, candles, lamp, acrid odors, feathers, animals*)

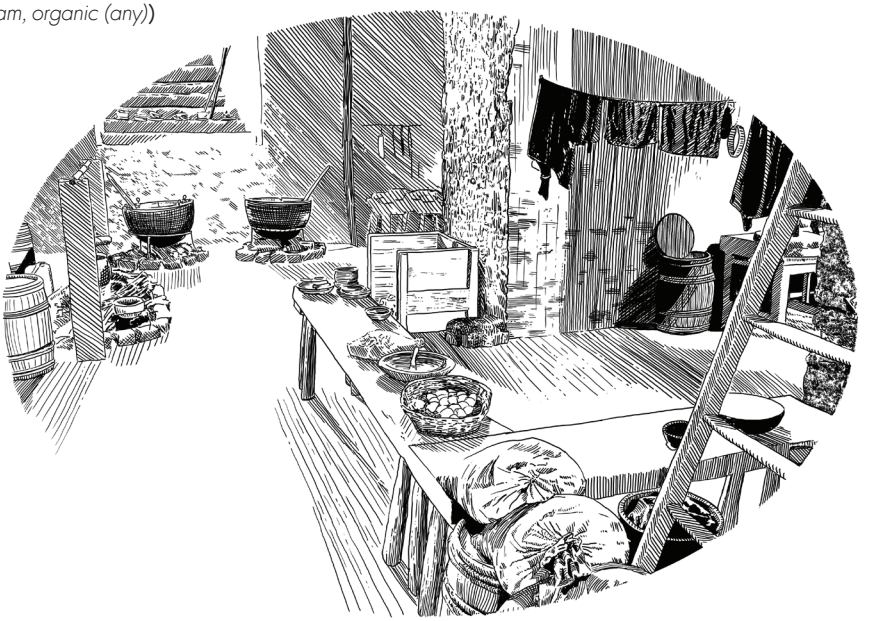


Kitchen: A place used to prepare food. (*pots, pans, silverware, cabinets, oven, stove*)



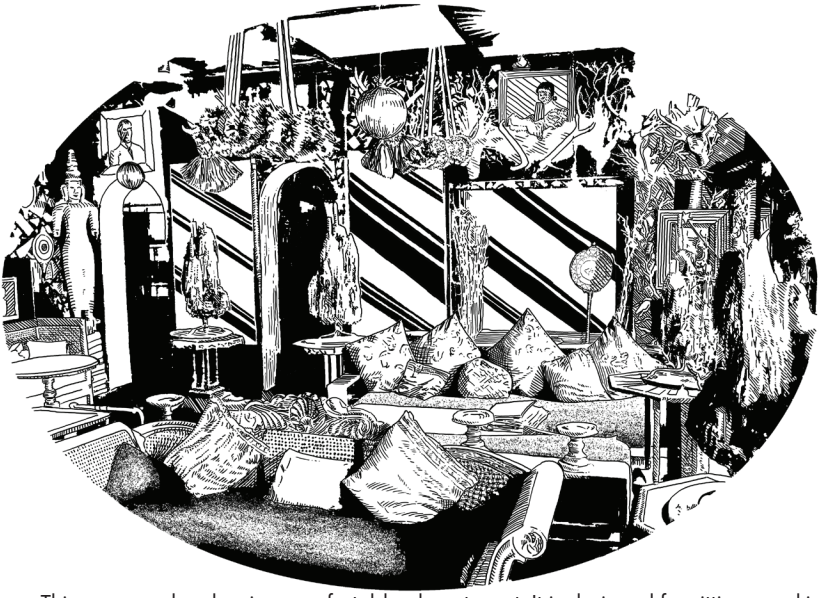
Laboratory: A place equipped to conduct any sort of rigorous investigation or observation. (*amblic, beaker, bottle, bowl, cauldron, furnace, decanter, ewer, flask, font, fountain, tables, desk, chair, torches, candles, lamps, astrolabe, alembic, balance & weights, callipers*)

Lair: This room or chamber is the resting place of a wild animal. It is often concealed or secret. (*nest (any), dirt/mud/filth, lake, waste, scratches, stale or urine odor, plants, fungus, trash/refuse, river, stream, organic (any)*)

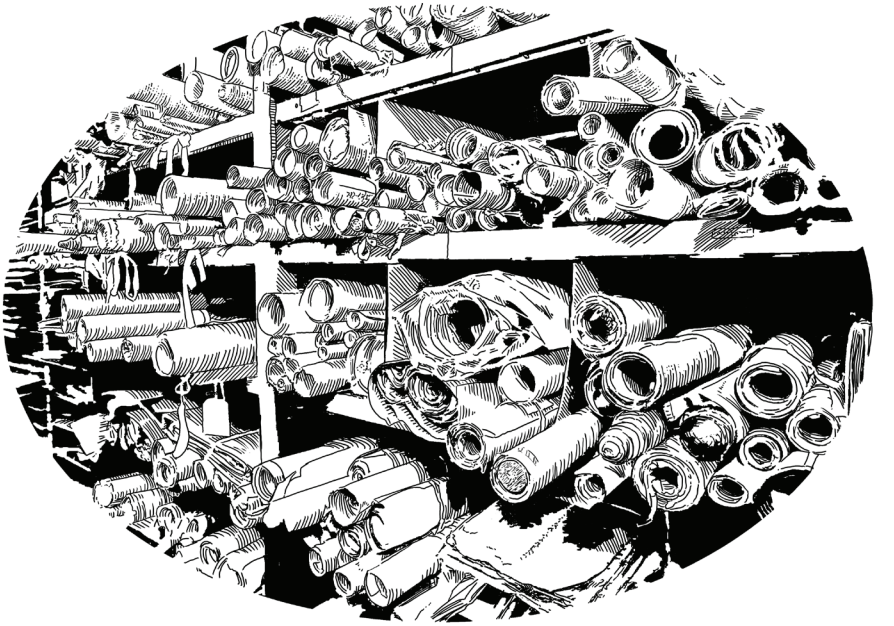


Larder / Pantry: The larder is a room where food is stored. It is traditionally "a place for meats". A pantry is a small room or cupboard which contains provisions as well as cooking utensils and dishes. It is traditionally a "bread room", or the office or room of a servant who has charge of food. (*shelves, food (any), broom, dust pan*)

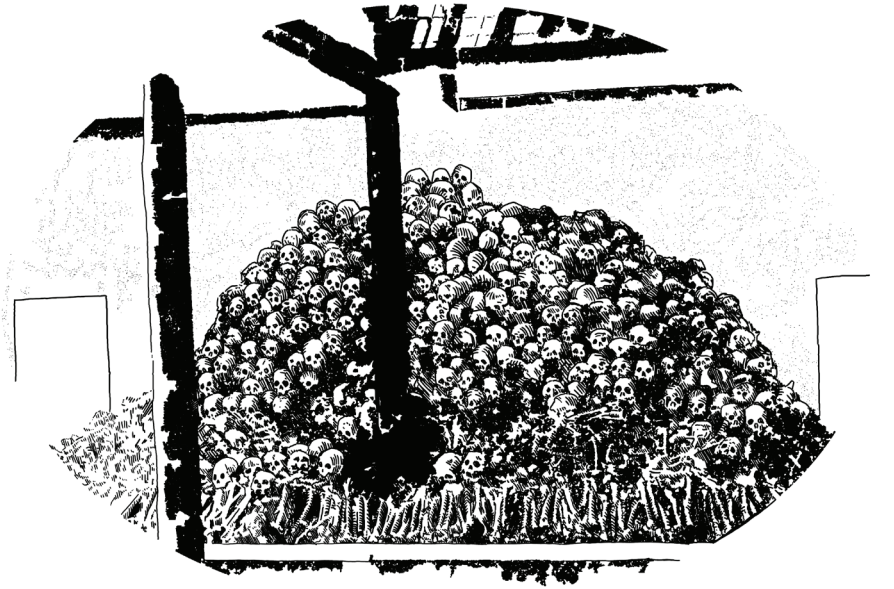
Library: A room, chamber, or building set apart to contain books, manuscripts, publications, periodicals, and other material for reading, viewing, listening, study, or references. (*bookshelves, chairs, couches, ladders, books, tomes, manuals, scrolls*)



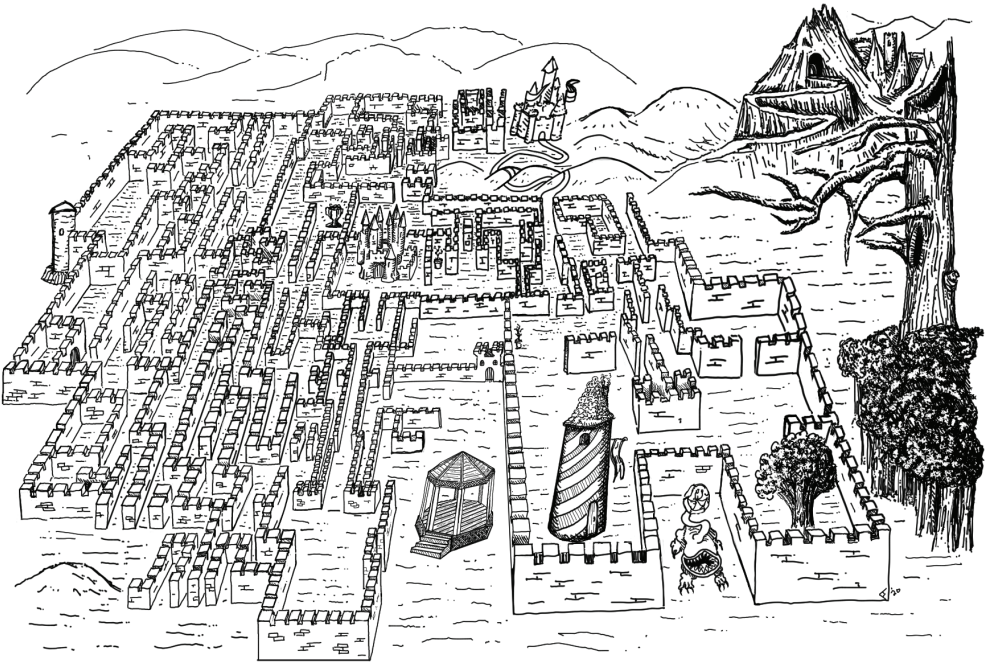
Lounge: This room or chamber is a comfortable place to rest. It is designed for sitting, smoking, or reading. It often has privies nearby. (*basket, arras, armorial bearings, drapery, fur, hides, fireplace, fresco, mosaic, painting, food (any), waste, torches, lamps, candles, brazier, couch, divan, armchair*)



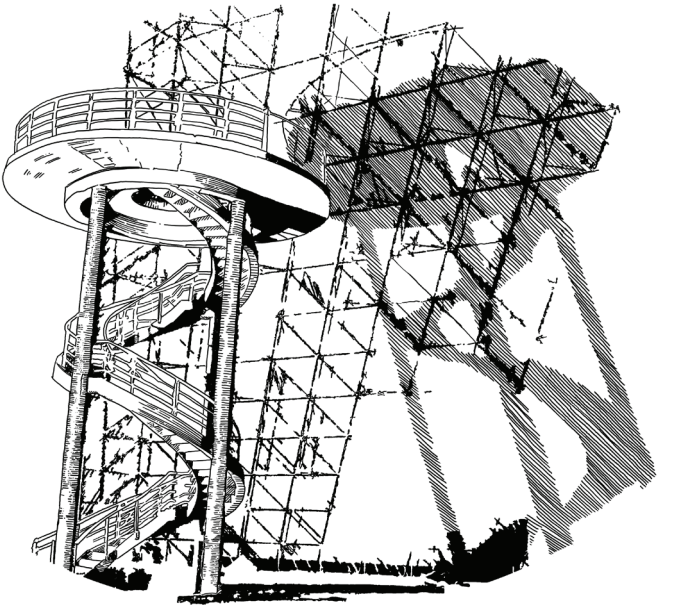
Map Room: A room or chamber for the storage, creation, or display of maps. (*table, chairs, knife, quill, ink pot, maps*)



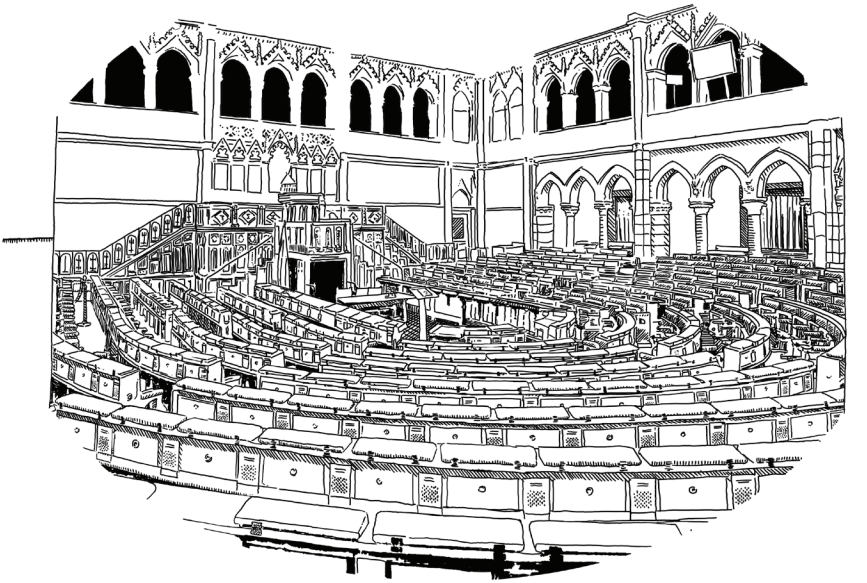
Mass Grave: This is a grave containing multiple corpses. (*dirt/filth, corpses, clothing (all), rotted things (any)*)



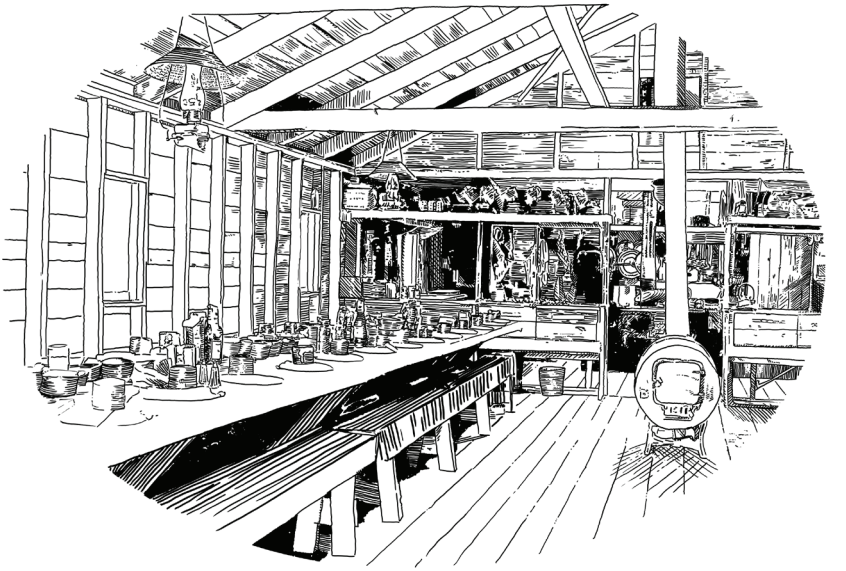
Maze: This is a system of passageways and chambers designed to be confusing due to their interconnections. This room is also referred to as a labyrinth which originally meant 'exhausting labor'. The purpose is to disorient, bewilder, and delude those who travel through it. (*this may literally contain any item, though bones, monsters, and refuse/trash are most common*)



Meditation Chamber: A space set aside for the purposes of meditation and solitary spiritual pursuits.

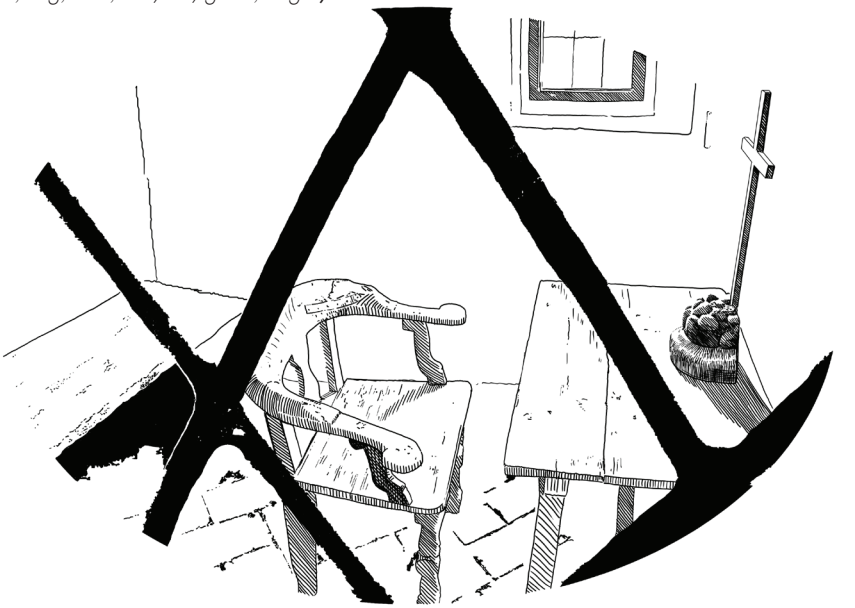


Meeting Chamber: A space devoted to meeting. (*arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under comprehensive list of things in rooms)*)

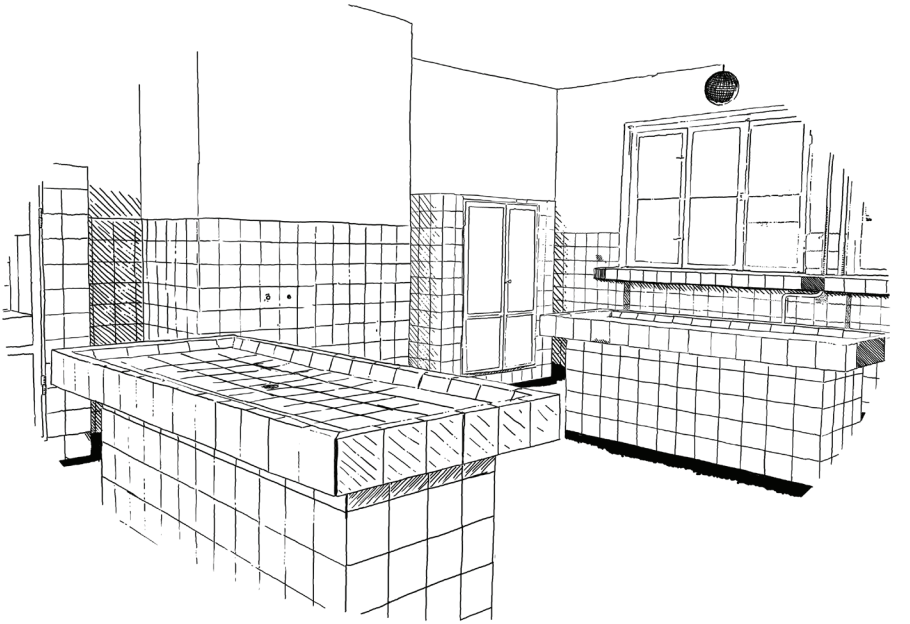


Mess Hall: A room where a group eats with regular frequency. (*cups, jars, jugs, pans, benches, tables, alcohol, food, lamp, torches, decanters*)

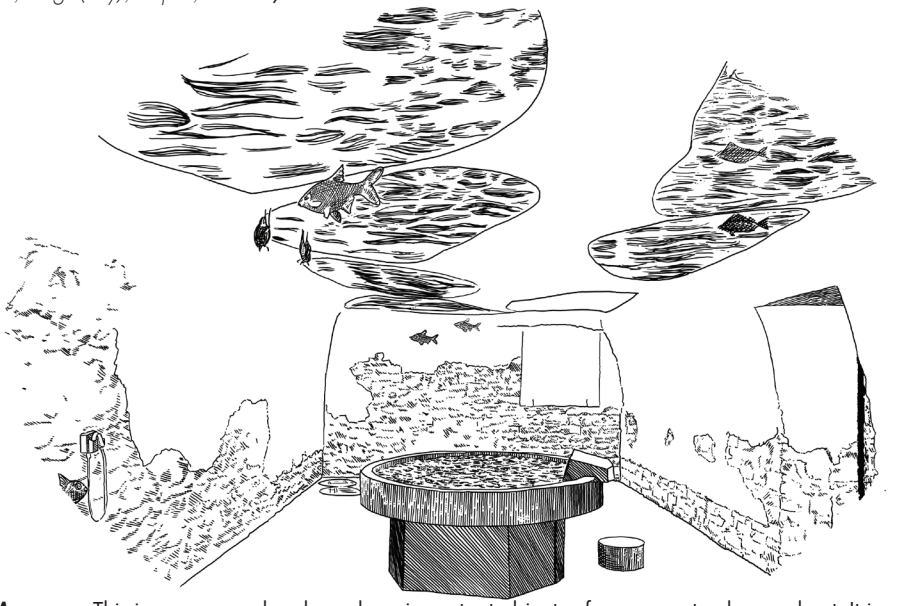
Mine: This is a subterranean passage where minerals are retrieved, or an extension under an enemy's works or position to either access or destroy their position. (*pick axe, support, ore vein, chest, bag, sack, dust/dirt/grime, fungus*)



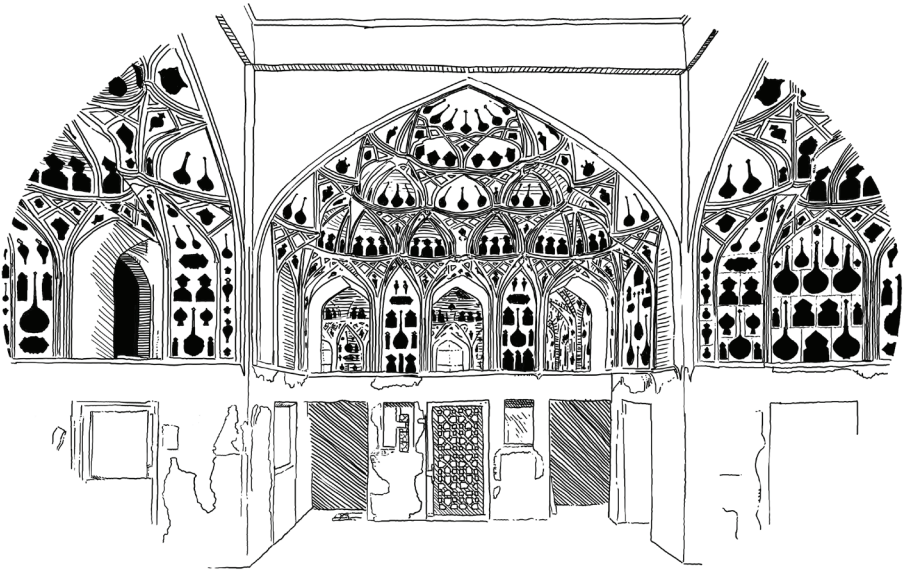
Monk Cell: A small sparse chamber used for rest and habitation for the spiritual disciple. (*pallet, bed, desk, quill, paper, scrolls, books, bench, privy, straw, cot, stool, jug, plate, fork, spoon*)



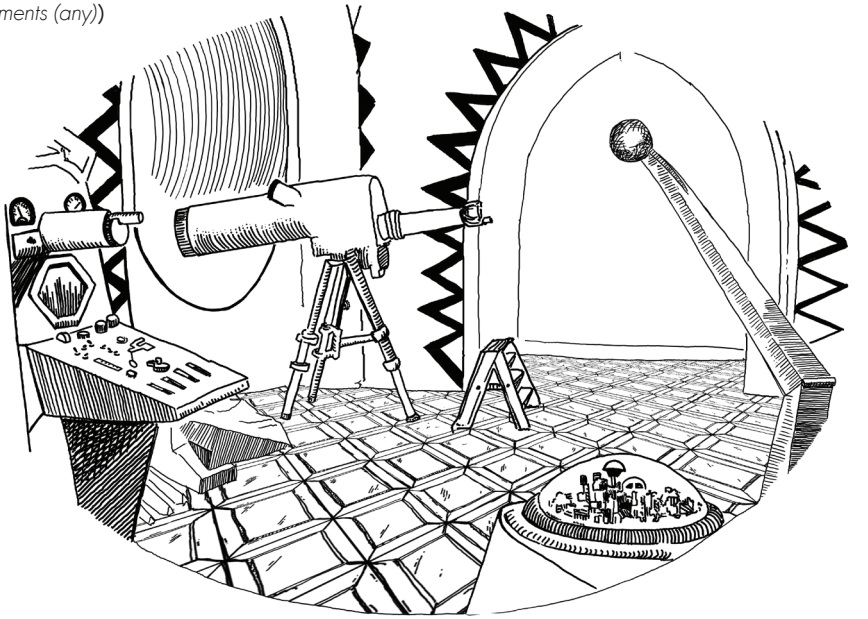
Morgue: A place devoted to the storage of bodies or, less frequently, the place where old records, information, and objects are kept for unexpected but possible future use. (*coffin, casket, urn, things (any), corpse, skeleton*)



Museum: This is a room or chamber where important objects of permanent value are kept. It is literally a place devoted to learning or the arts, a place sacred to the muses. (*arras, armorial bearings, dias, fresco, mosaic, painting, benches, idol, lamps, box, statue, pedestal, column, tapestry*)

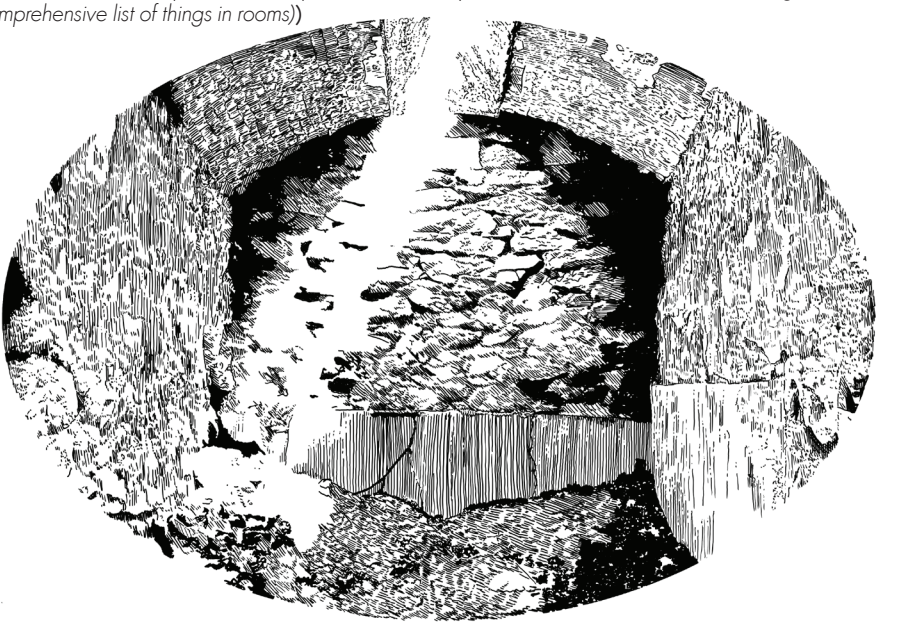


Music Room: This chamber (*literally*) is often pertaining to the performance of chamber music. The room is often vaulted for improved acoustics. (*arch, bowl, dias, dome, podium, chairs, benches, pews, stadium seating, lamps, braziers, torches, metronome, money (in bowl), alcove, balcony, musical instruments (any)*)

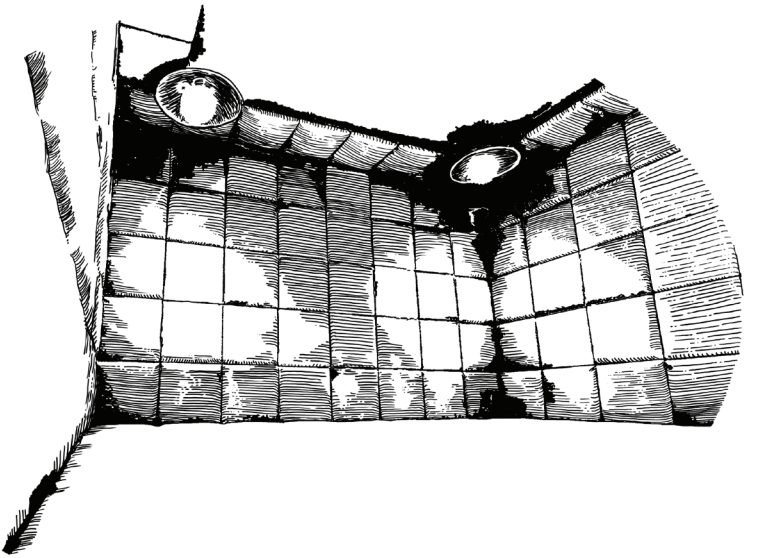


Observatory: A room devoted to making observations of natural phenomena. This can include astronomical or meteorological phenomena. (*amblic, beaker, bottle, bowl, cauldron, furnace, decanter, ewer, flask, font, fountain, tables, desk, chair, torches, candles, lamps, astrolabe, alembic, balance & weights, callipers*)

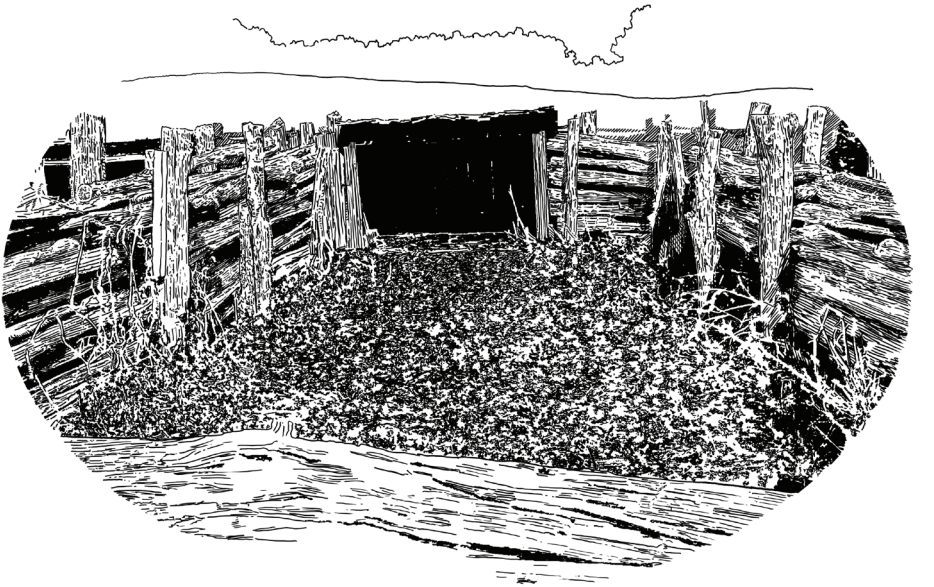
Office: A room where the business of a professional person is conducted.(*arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under comprehensive list of things in rooms)*)



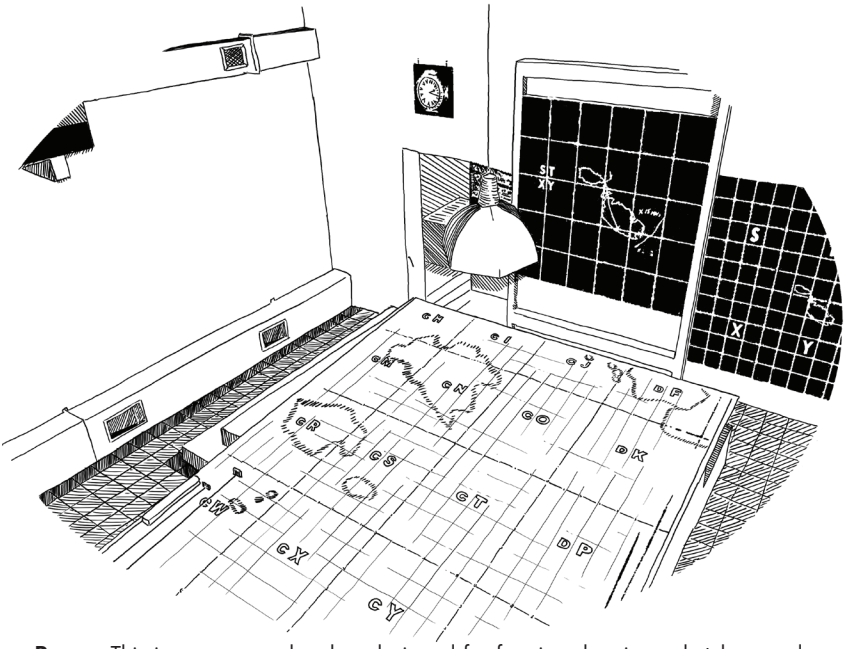
Oubliette: This is a room or chamber that is a secret dungeon with an opening or trap door only located in the ceiling. (*hazy, dust, cold/damp breeze, filth, waste, scratches, dank odor, blood, skeleton, chains, cressets, hooks, ropes, manacles*)



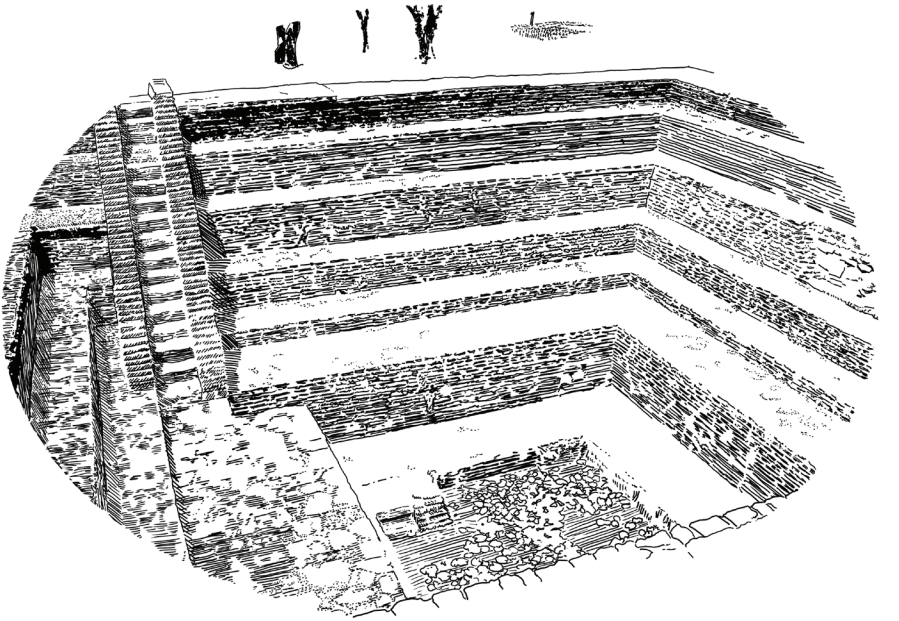
Padded Room: This is a room or chamber with cushions lining the walls. Also sometimes known as a rubber room. (*walls, padding*)



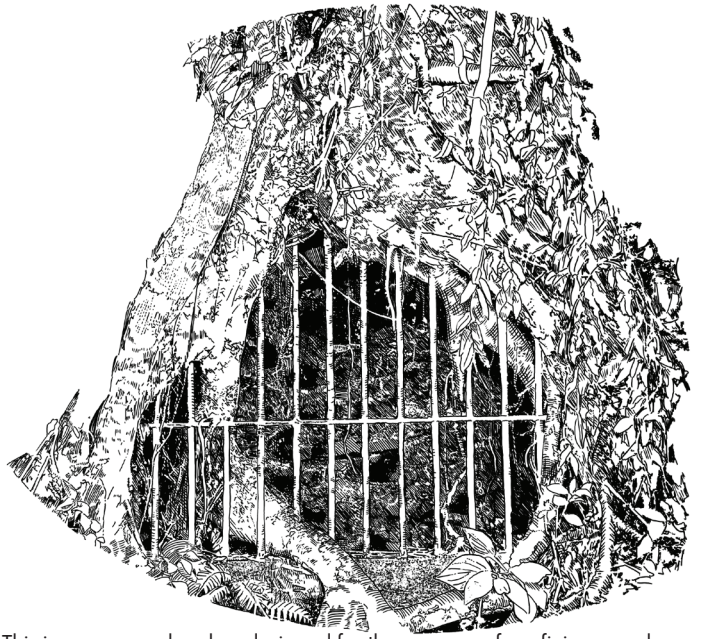
Pen: This room is often a small enclosure for animals, or occasionally an enclosure created for the purpose of confinement or safekeeping. (*filth, mud/dirt, trough, food/waste, animals*)



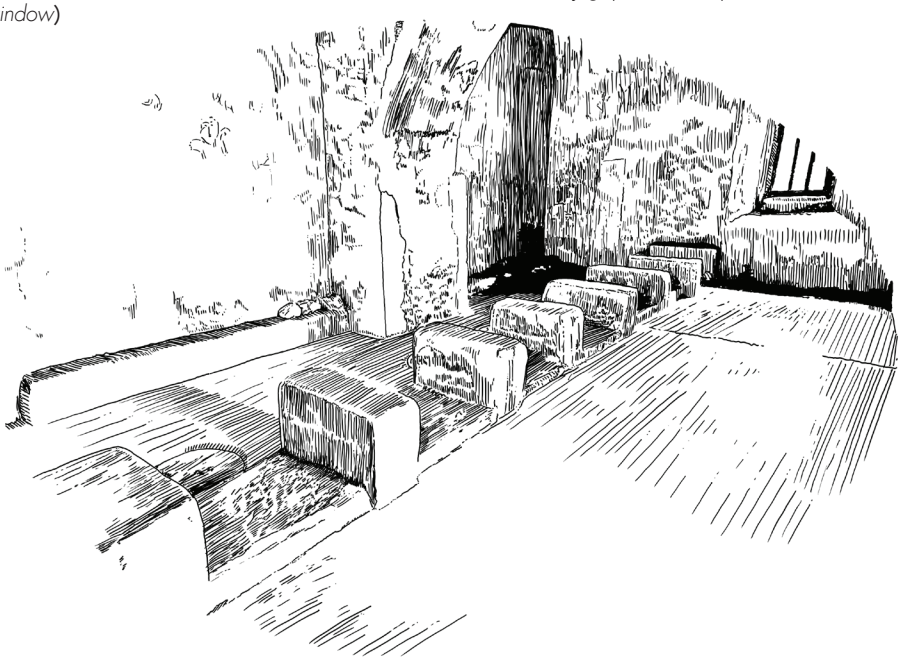
Planning Room: This is a room or chamber designed for forming drawings, sketches, and a scheme of action that will form a detailed program intended to be followed. (*trunk, clock (tall, wall), flags, gilt, inlay, map, dias, chairs, table, sand table, torches, lamps*)



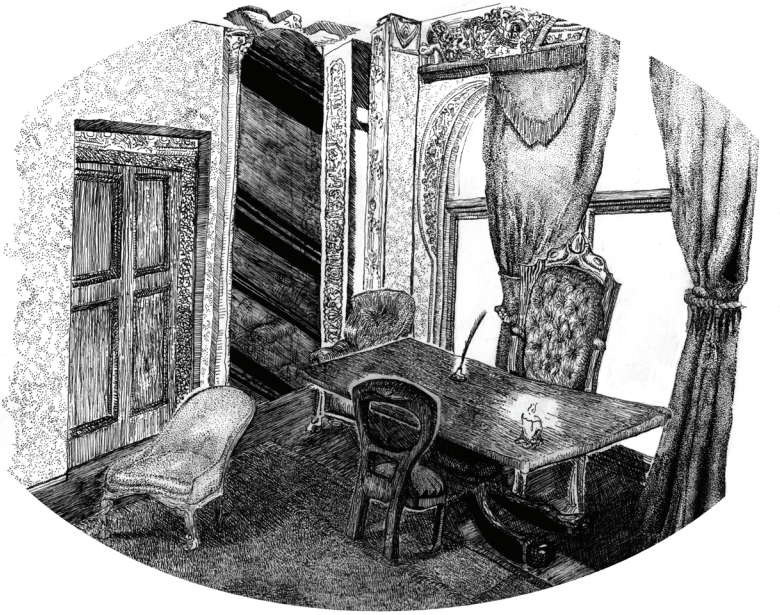
Pool / Water Room: A room used for the storage, transport, cleansing, reclamation, or enjoyment of water. (*fountain/lake/pool/font/well/bath/river/stream, tile, towel*)



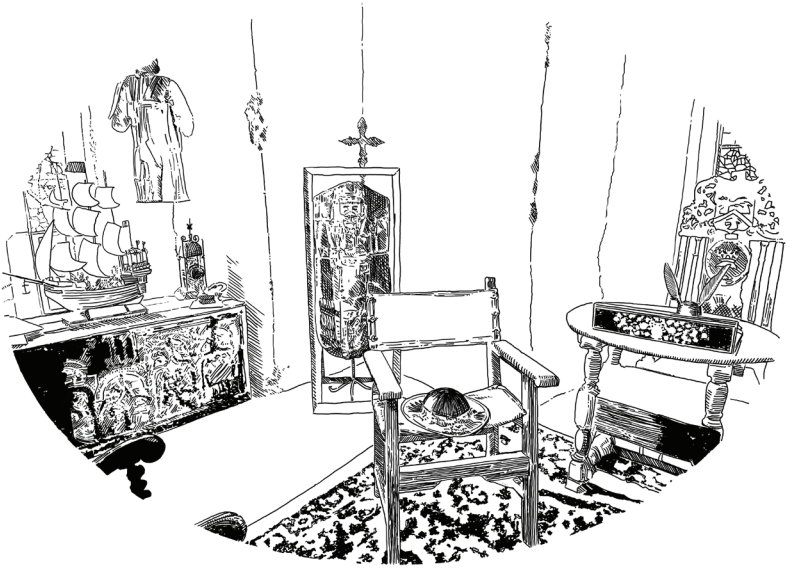
Prison: This is a room or chamber designed for the purpose of confining people awaiting trial or sentencing. (*pallet, bed, desk, quill, paper, scrolls, books, bench, privy, straw, cot, stool, waste, stale or urine odor, blood, skeletons, manacles, wall cressets, trash/refuse, jug, plate, fork, spoon, file, barred window*)



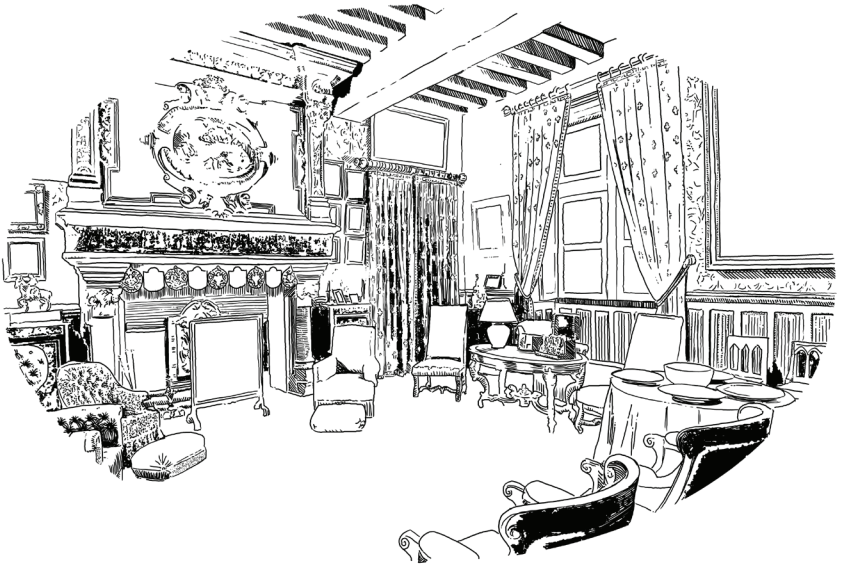
Privy: This is a room or chamber designed for the elimination of human waste. (*toliet, leaves/sponge on stick/wool/corncob/rope/cloth*)



Reception Chamber: This is a room for receiving clients, patients, or visitors for the purposes of official business. (*arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under comprehensive list of things in rooms*)

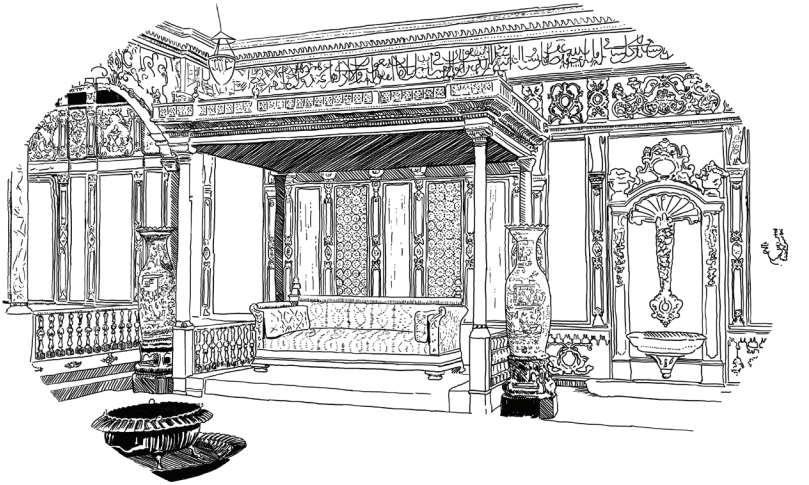


Robing Room: A room or chamber where official robes of office are donned. (*stool, clothes (all), desk, mirror, pin, clothespin, clothing rack, chest of drawers, closet, chair, lamp, candles, perfume, oils, make-up*)

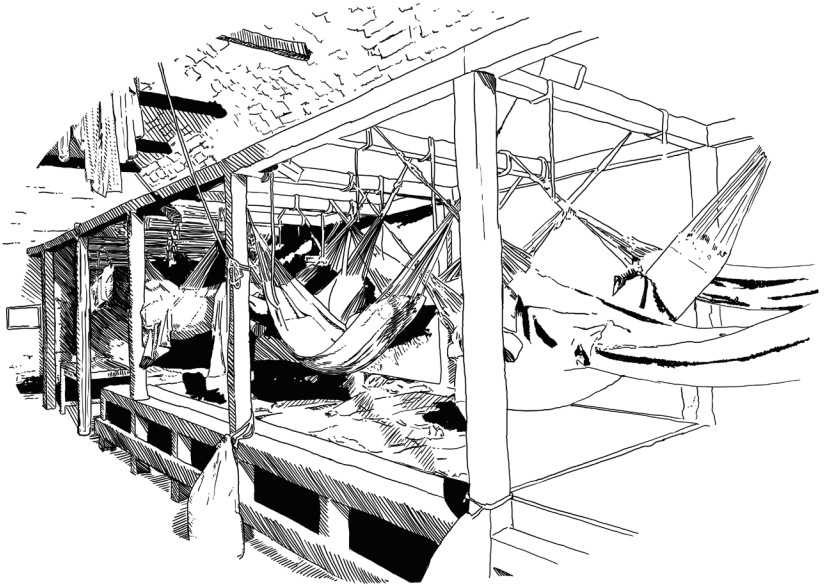


Salon: This room or chamber is a drawing or reception room. It can also be a place designed for the display of art. (*arras, armorial bearings, dias, fresco, mosaic, painting, benches, idol, lamps, box, statue, pedestal, column, tapestry arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under comprehensive list of things in rooms)*)

Scriptorium: Any room or chamber where manuscripts are stored, read, or copied. (*pallet, desk, shelves, bookshelves, ink, ink pot, blotter, quill, paper, scrolls, books, bench*)

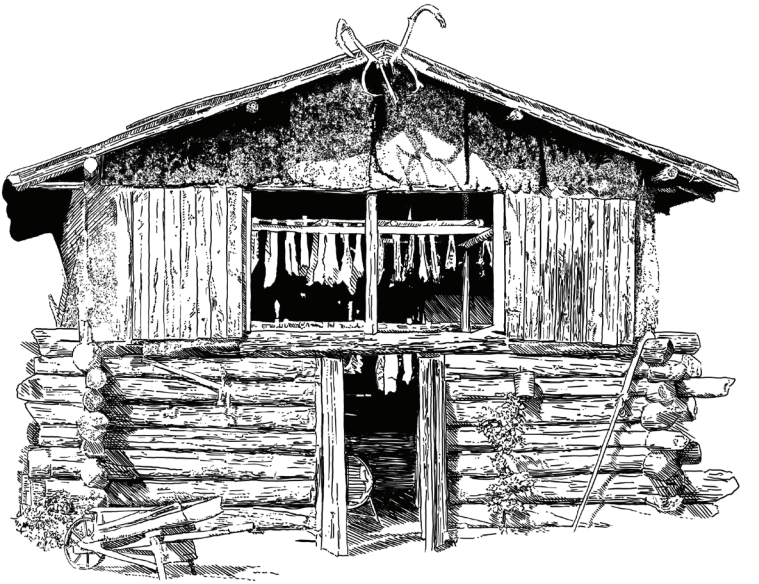


Seraglio: This is another word meaning harem, with a word root meaning 'animal cage' or, from the original Latin, bolt/door bar. The word also has Turkish associations with palace. Often with connotations of restricted freedom in relation to the women. (*padlocks, chains, manicles, stocks, pillory, rope, bed (all), basket, cabinet, chalice, chest of drawers, closet, hope chest, jewelry box, music box, vase, wineskin, apron, blouse, coif, corset, dress, frock, garter, girdle, gorget, gown, hose, petticoats, robe, scarf, shawl, shift, slippers, toga, tunic, veil, curtains, drapery, furs, hides, fresco, mosaic, painting, armchair, couch, divan, end table, pillow, mattress, quilt, braziers, candles, chandelier, lamps, books, musical instruments (all), pets, pedestals, plants, flowers, alcove, tapestries, banners, carpets and rugs, comforter, cover, cushion, dye, fake jewelry, headdress, ivory, jewelry, mask, oil, perfume, pipe, ribbon, shears, scissors, yarn, thread, cloth, thimble, needle, pincushion, knitting needle*)

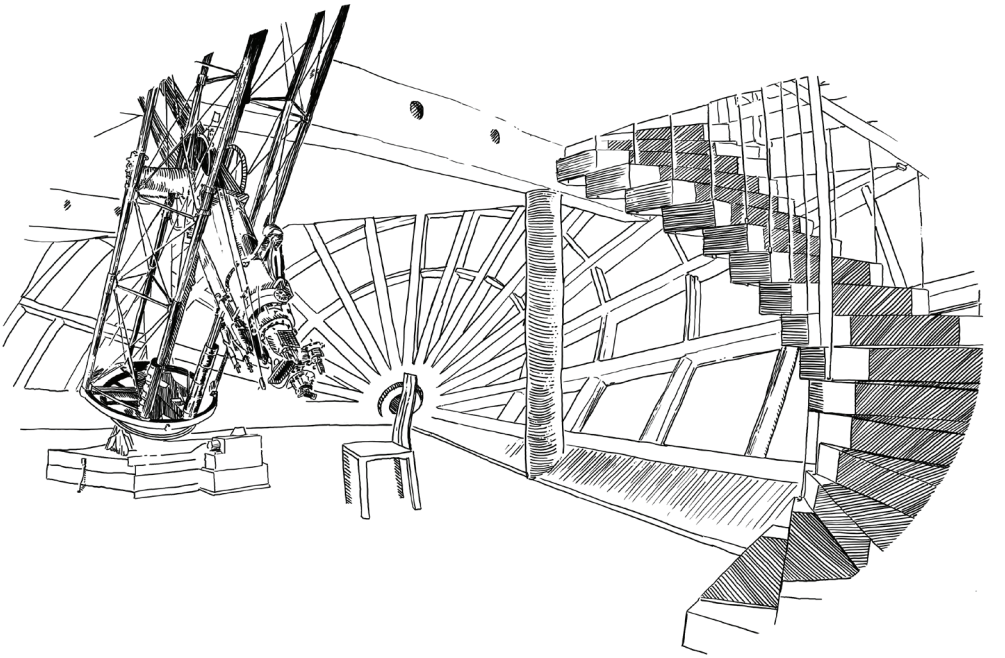


Servants Dorm: This is a living space for servants. They may vary wildly in quality. (*altar, bed (all), basket, cabinet, chest of drawers, foot locker, hamper, pill box, powder box, vase, clothing (all), closet, furs, blanket, comforter, quilt, tapestry, carpet, rugs, armoire, bookshelves, end table, pillow, stool, lamp, candles*)

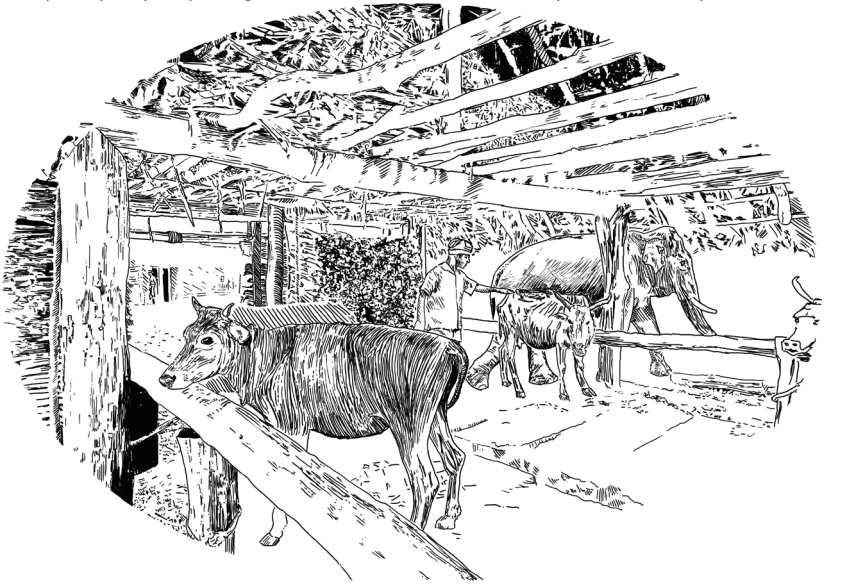
Shrine: A structure or building of some sort, often stately or sumptuous in design, character, or architecture, designed for the purpose of either being a consecrated place of a saint, holy person, or deity, or for literally enclosing the remains or relics of the same. Often the place of religious veneration and target of a pilgrimage. Sometimes referred to as a reliquary. (*altar, arch, drapery, gilt, inlay, relief (all), dias, dome, font, fresco, mosaic, painting, pews, podium, idol, magic, candelabra, lamp, torches, pedestal, pillar, column, tapestry, offertory container, reliquary, offertory dish, oil, perfume, alcove, glass window, incense burner, alcohol, holy symbols, remains*)



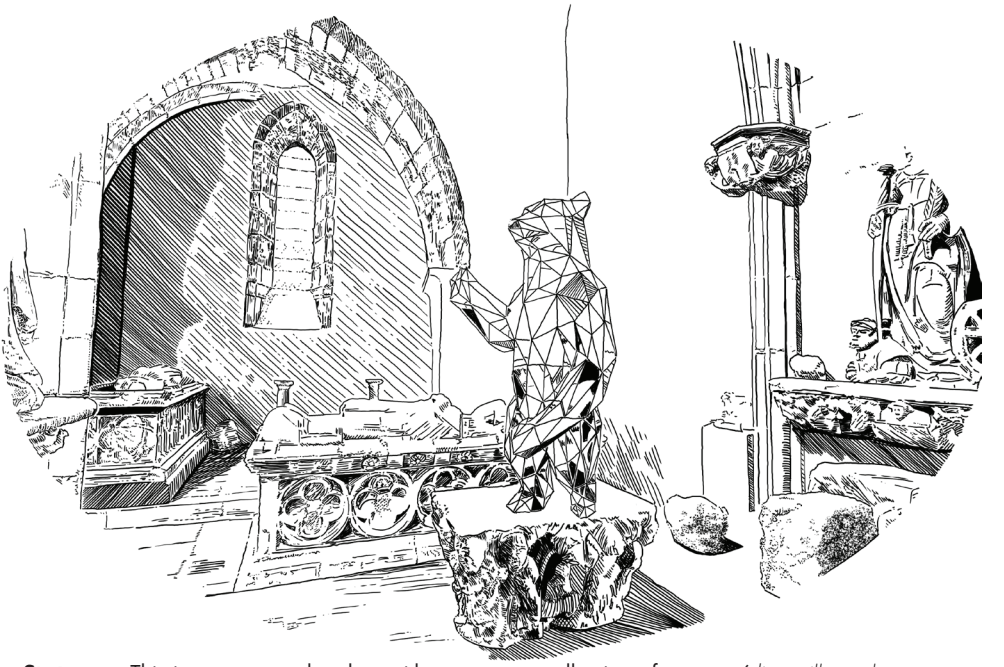
Smokehouse: A place where fish, meat, etc. are cured with smoke. (*shelves, food (any), broom, dust pan, hooks, stick, hangers, brazier, coal, fire, smoky*)



Solar: This is any private or upper chamber in a house or domicile. (*altar, bed (all), basket, cabinet, chest of drawers, foot locker, hamper, pill box, powder box, vase, clothing (all), closet, furs, blanket, comforter, quilt, tapestry, carpet, rugs, armoire, bookshelves, end table, pillow, stool, lamp, candles*)

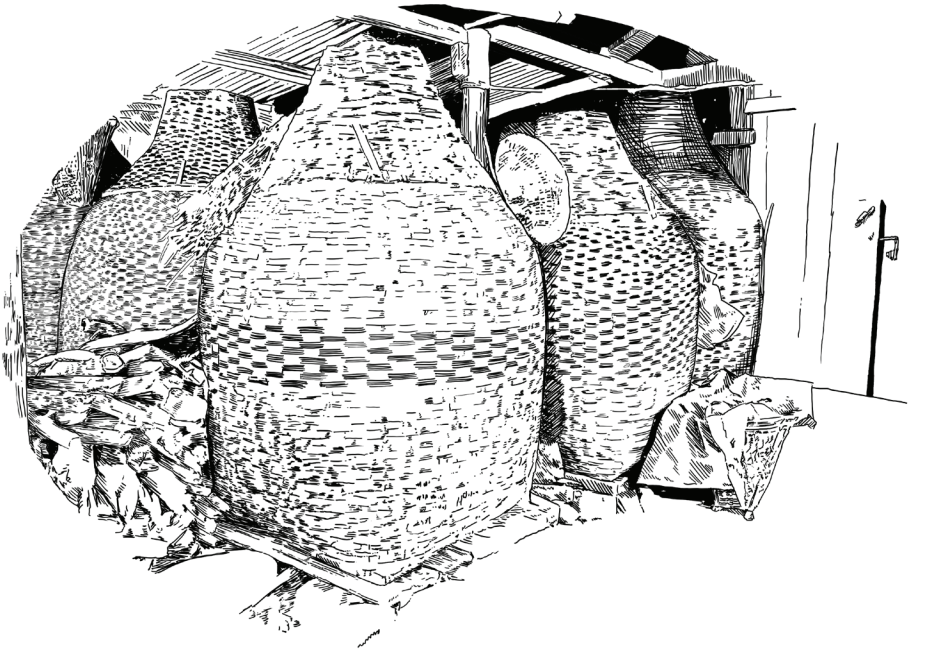


Stable: A space devoted to the lodging and feeding of horse, cattle, and other service animals. It usually contains stalls. (*cages (animal), butchery, fish, meat, sand, sundials, birdbath, bags, barrels, bins, basin, bowl, decanter, chest, apron, gloves, smock, dome, font, fountain, chair, cupboard, cabinet, mat, wall basin, workbench, grain, candles, lamp, acrid odors, feathers, animals*)

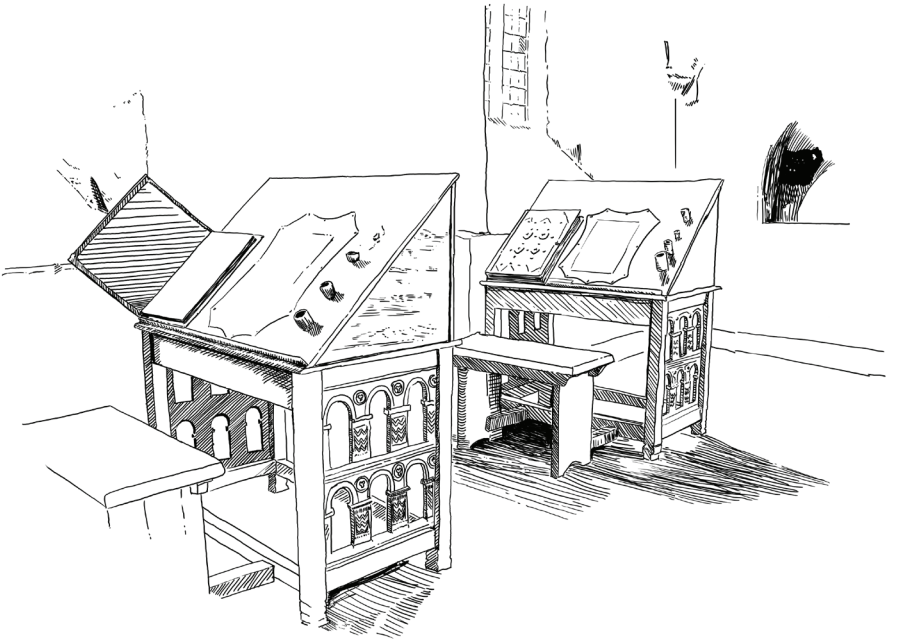


Statuary: This is a room or chamber with a group or collection of statues. (*dias, pillar, column, pedestal, statue, fresco, mosaic, painting, bas relief, torches, brazier*)

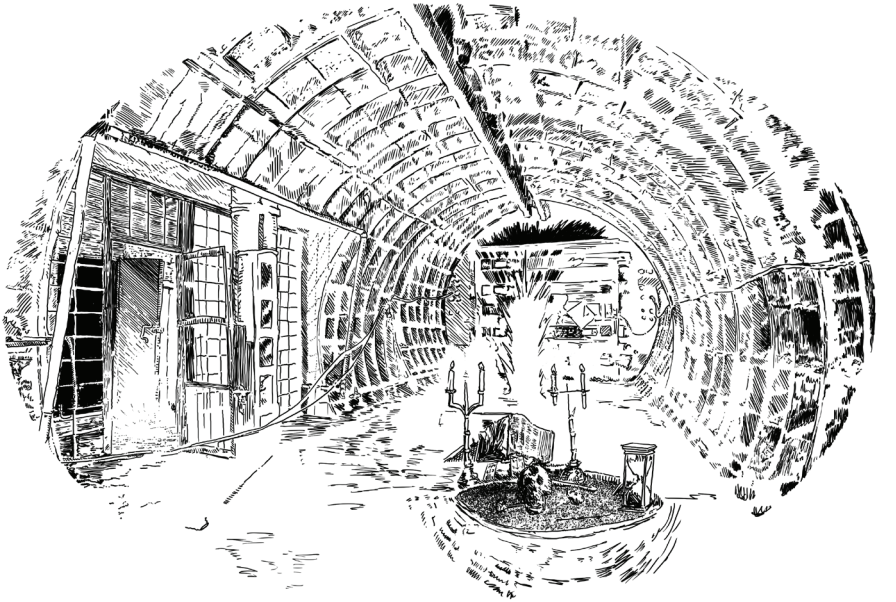
Stockade: This is a room or enclosure that is a prison for military personnel. This can refer to a small space surrounded by posts or stakes. (*bench, privy, cot, stool, jug, plate, spoon, fork, canteen*)



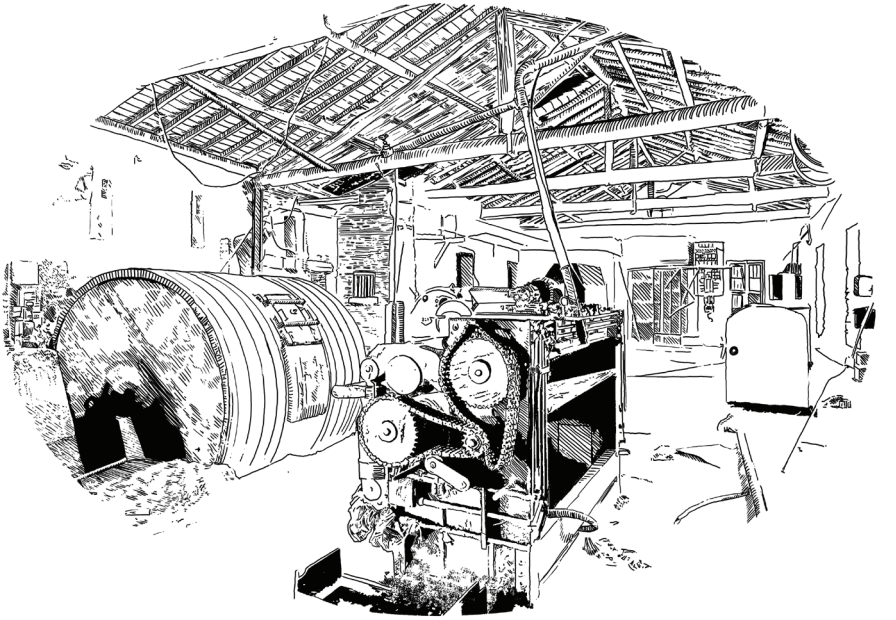
Storage: This is self-explanatory. It is a room used for storage. (*bookshelves, shelves, boxes, cans, jars, sea chest, trunk, chest of drawers, stool, candle, lamp*)



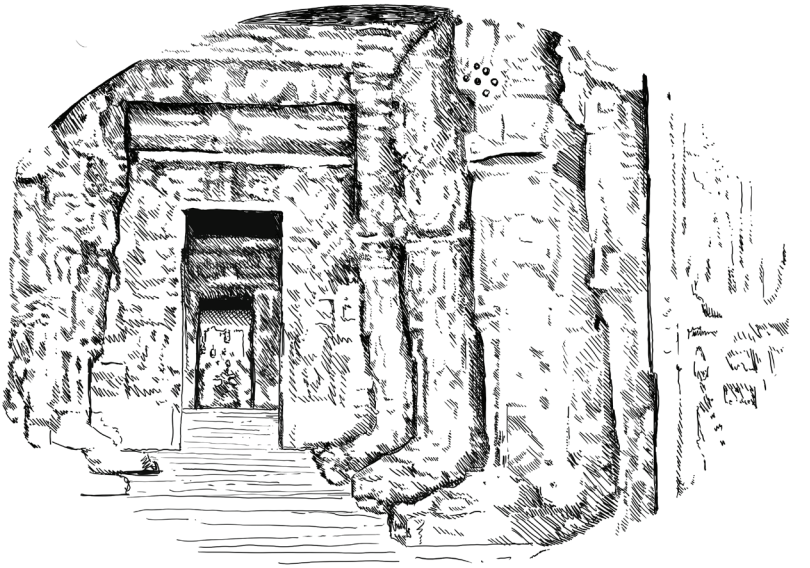
Study: A room set aside for any sort of private activity, reading, study, writing and similar. (*pallet, chair, cushion, bench, divan, desk, shelves, bookshelves, quill, paper, scrolls, books, bench*)



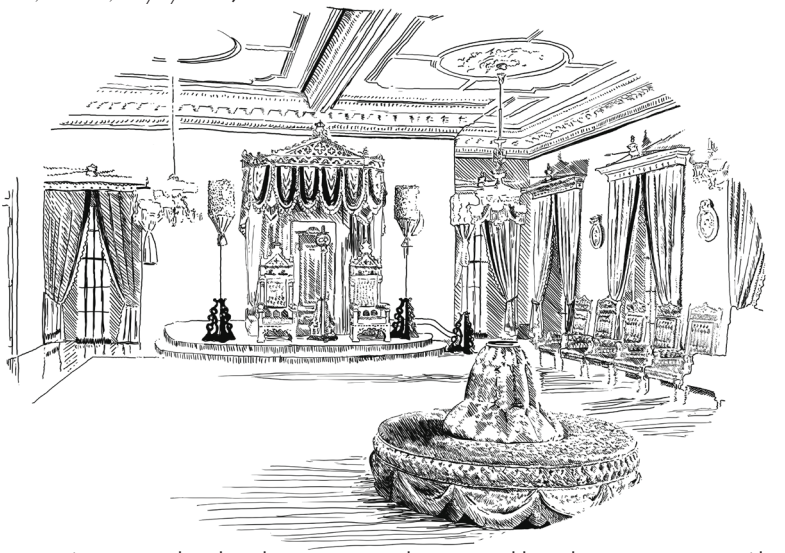
Summoning Room: A room or chamber devoted to the purpose of summoning and binding extra or intradimensional beings. (*chalk, runes, summoning runes, brazier, dome, magic, podium, tome*)



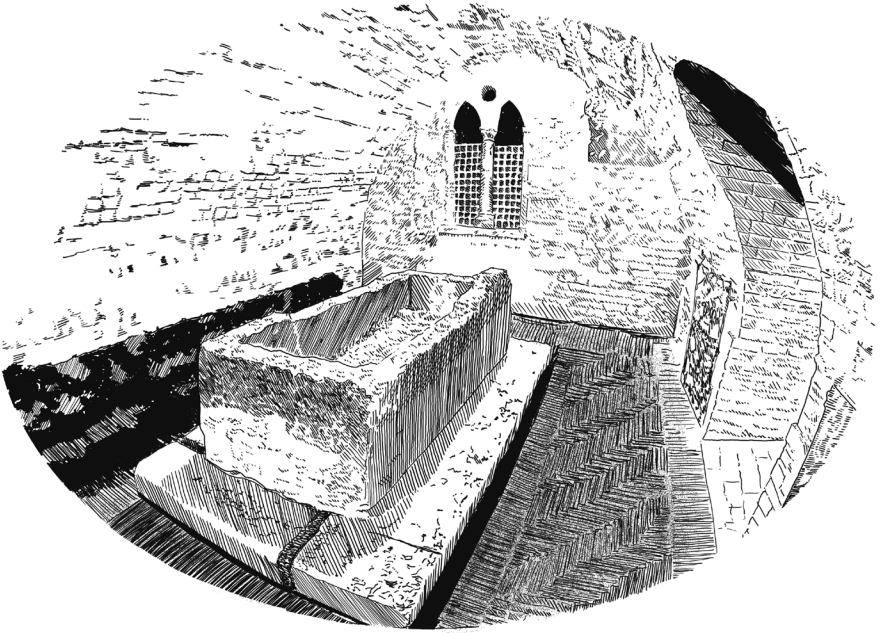
Tannery: A space where skins and hides are tanned. (*skins, furs, animals, corpses (animal), knives, racks, rags, bucket*)



Temple: Any room, chamber, place or structure used for the purpose of service or worship to a deity. It also refers to any large or pretentious building devoted to public use. Traditionally a space set aside (*demarcated*) by an augur for taking auspices. (*altar, arch, drapery, gilt, inlay, relief (all), dias, dome, font, fresco, mosaic, painting, pews, podium, idol, magic, candelabra, lamp, torches, pedestal, pillar, column, tapestry, offertory container, reliquary, offertory dish, oil, perfume, alcove, glass window, incense burner, alcohol, holy symbols*)

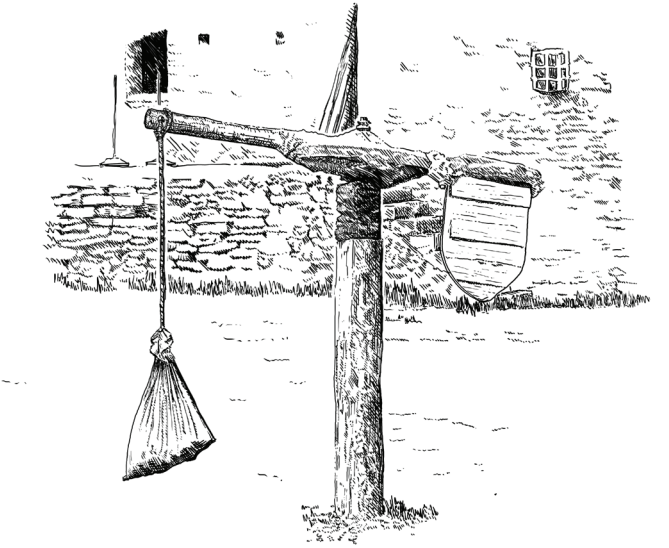


Throne Room: A room or chamber that contains a throne, used by a king or sovereign. Also a colloquialism for a room that is the location of the actual power or authority of a business or government. (*pedestal, pillar, column, dias, downdraft, basket, chalice, goblet, jar, jug, pans, arras, armorial bearings, flag, benches, chairs, tables, throne, alcohol, food, braziers, chandelier, torches, smoky odor, bones, dung, vomit, rats, plants, balcony, glass window, tapestry, trash/refuse, silverware, plates, platters, tablecloth*)

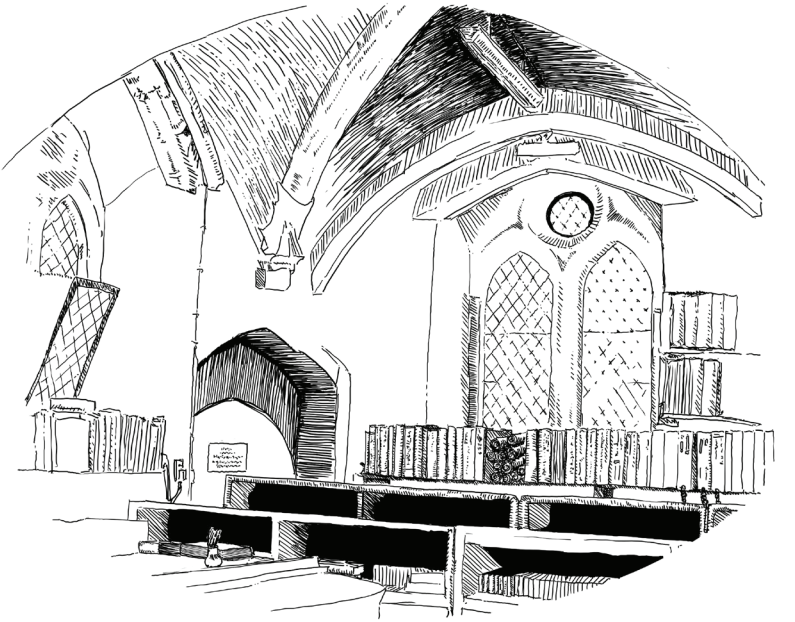


Tomb: Simply put, a grave. Any excavation in earth for the purpose of corpse burial. Can also refer to a mausoleum or chamber used for burial. Often this space commemorates the dead person. Broadly refers to any sepulchral structure (**any structure having to do with burial, tombs, storage of the dead, etc.)**. *(coffin, casket, urn, things (any), corpse, skeleton*)

Torture Chamber: This is a room or chamber in which torture is performed. (*"restraints/torture" (any), bucket, stool, brush, broom, weapons, torches, coals, brazier*)

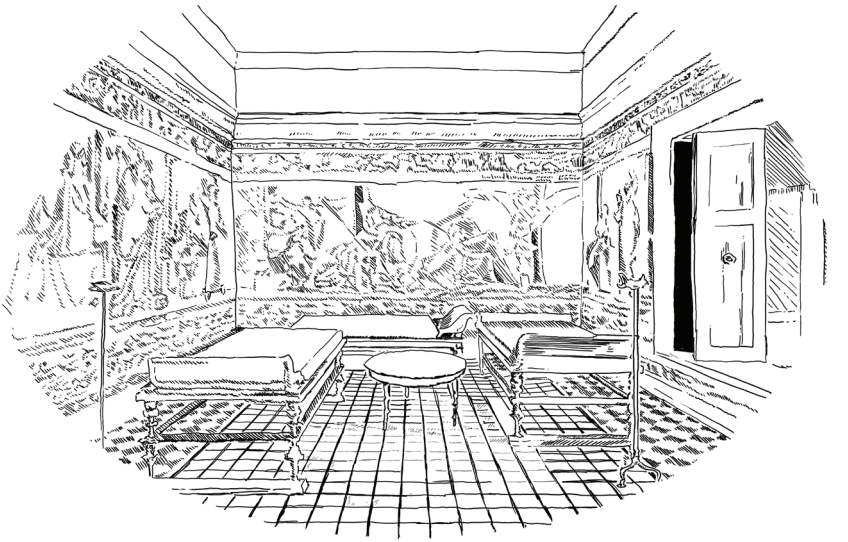


Training Room: Self-explanatory. A room used for training. (*weapons/armor (any), mat, training targets*)



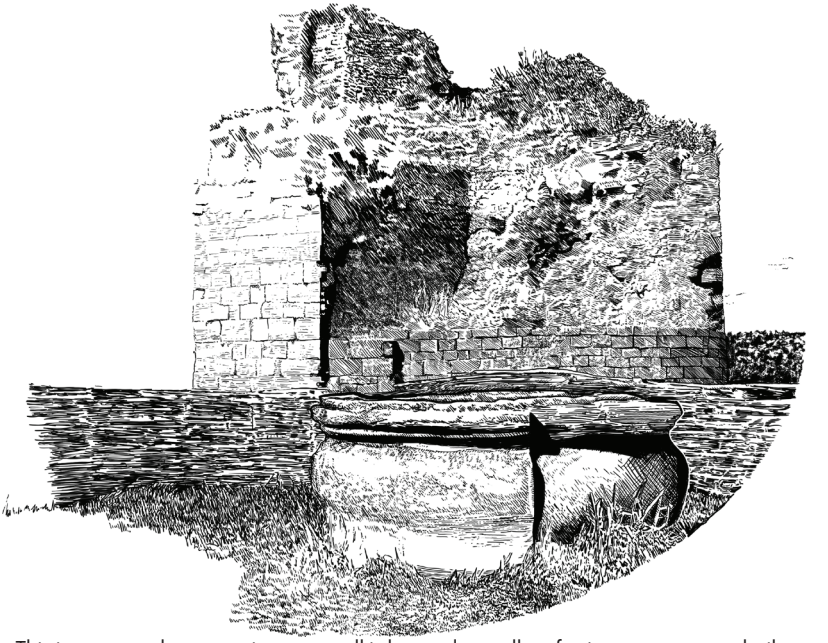
Treasury: A place where funds and money are kept. (*arch, shelves, locks, padlocks, treasure*)

Trophy Room: This is a room or chamber designated for the display of trophies. (*dias, pedestal, box (glass), shelf, lamp, trophies*)

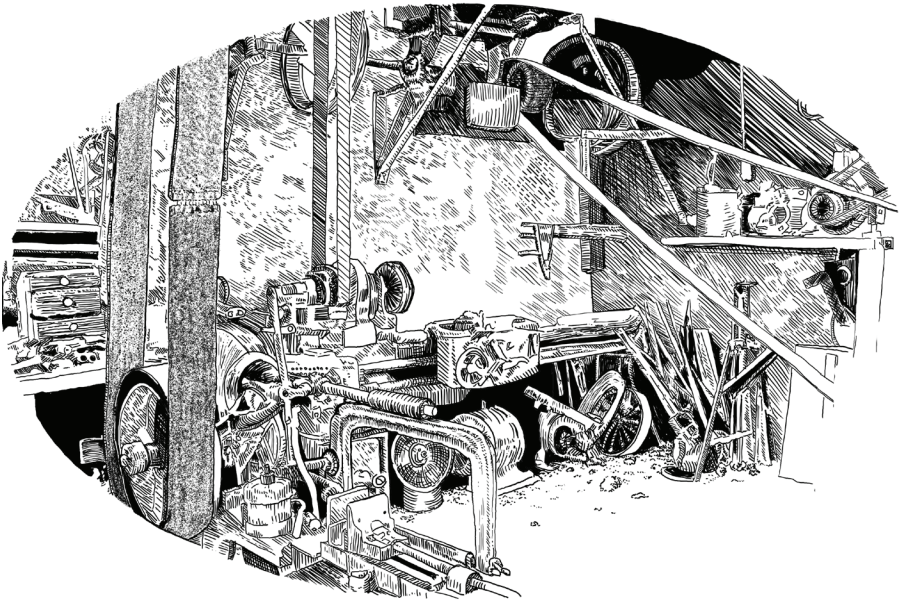


Waiting Room: A room used explicitly for the purpose of waiting. (*bench, chair, end table, books, cushion, lamps, torches, vase with flowers, wall decorations (see "Things" under Comprehensive List of Things in Rooms)*)

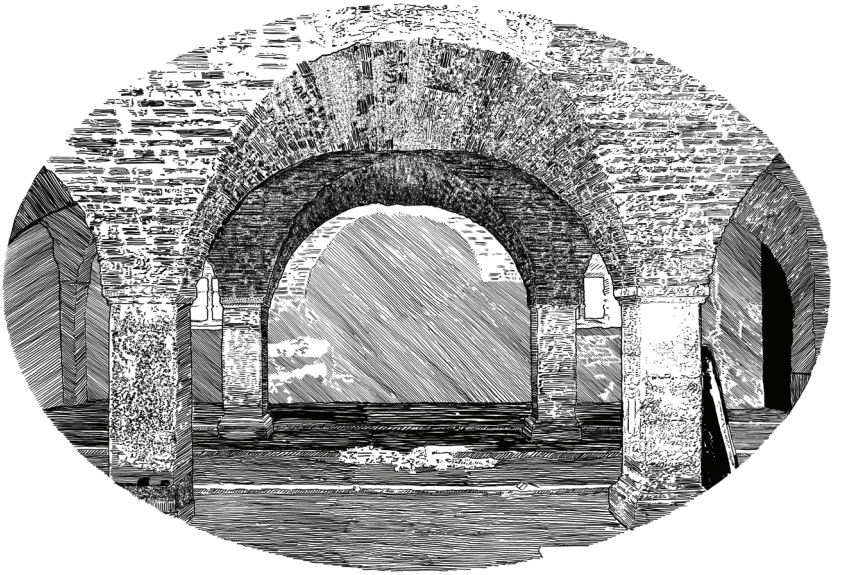
Wardrobe: This is a room or place in which to keep costumes or clothing. (*stool, clothes (all), desk, mirror, pin, clothespin, clothing rack, chest of drawers, closet, chair, lamp, candles, perfume, oils, make-up*)



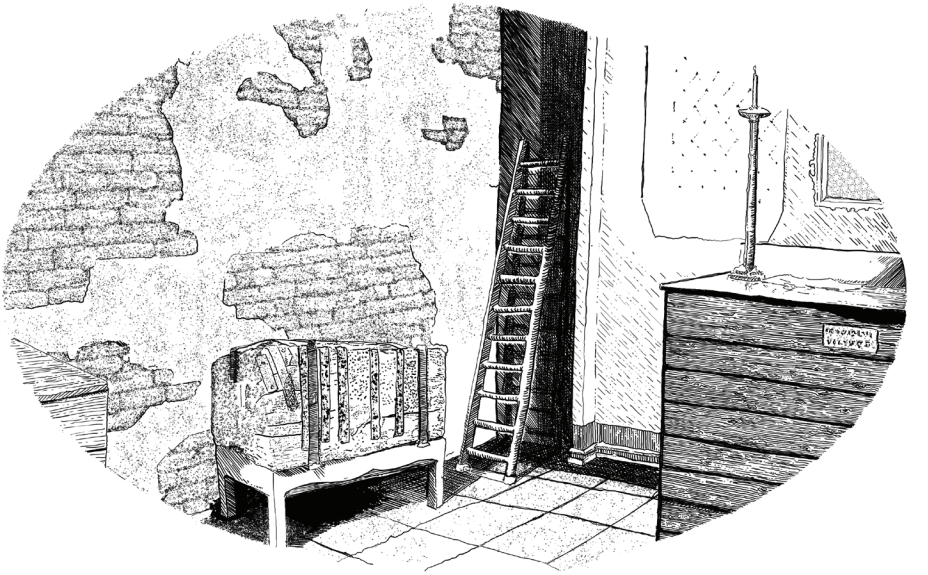
Well Room: This is a room where a spring or a well is located, usually referring to a structure built over a natural mineral spring or well. (*well, rope, crank, bucket, iron bar, clay/dirt/mud*)



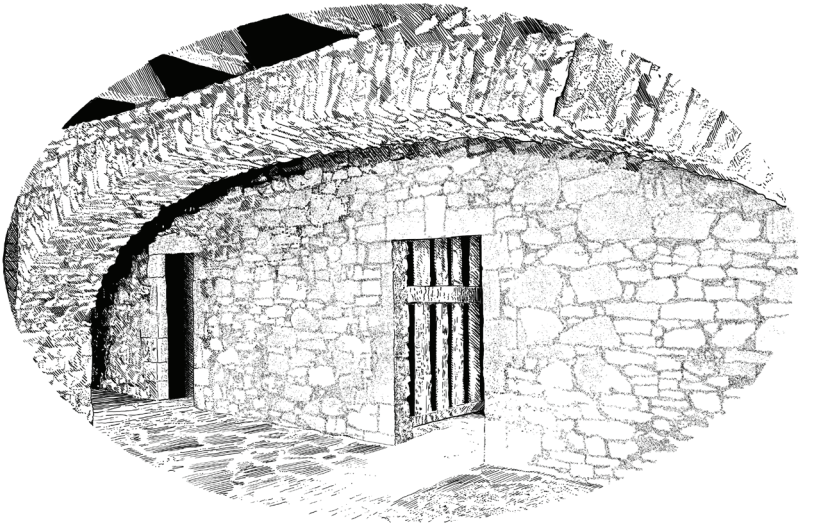
Work Pit / Workshop: A room or grouping of rooms in which work is conducted. Often refers to some sort of mechanical work. (*tables, chairs, lamps, torches, tools (any)*)



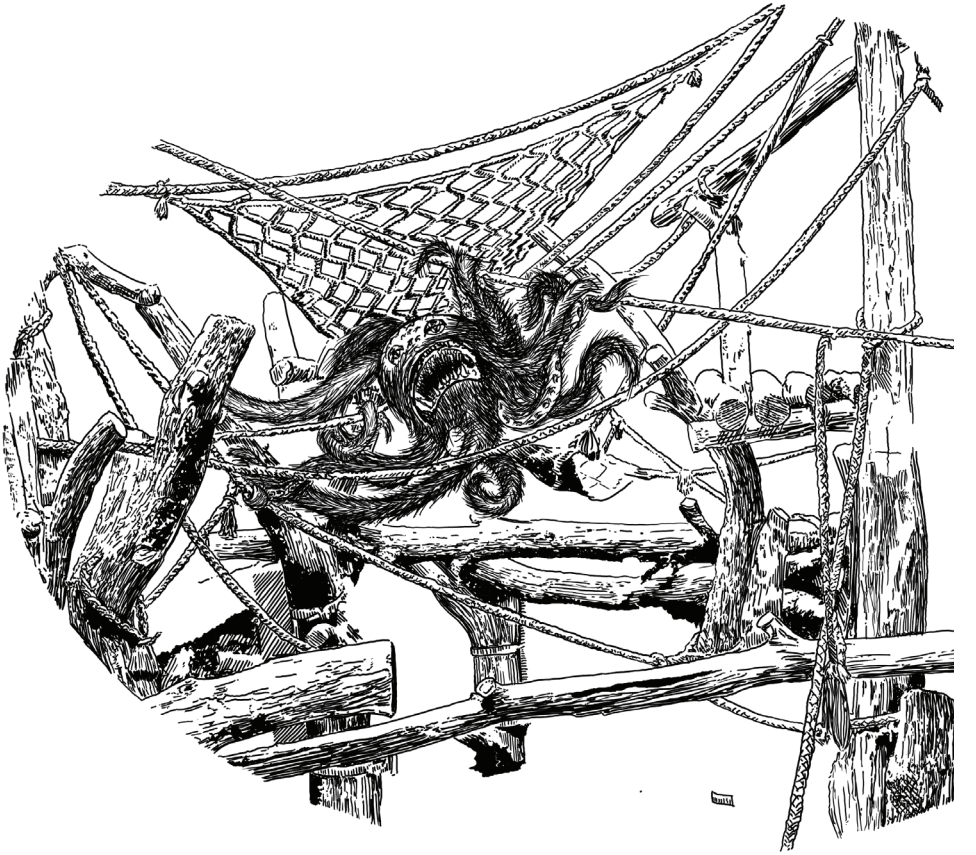
Vault: Traditionally this referred to a room with a vaulted or arched ceiling. Since these are very stable structures, this type of architecture was often used for below ground settings, which both tended to be secure and used for the storage of valuable goods. This is a room or compartment reserved for the safekeeping of valuables. It is often underground and lined with metal. (*arch, shelves, locks, padlocks, treasure*)



Vestiary: A room for storing clothes or dressing in. (*stool, clothes (all), desk, mirror, pin, clothespin, clothing rack, chest of drawers, closet, chair, lamp, candles, perfume, oils, make-up*)



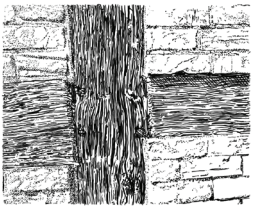
Vestibule: This is a space separating the interior and exterior of a building. It's often a chamber, hallway, or passage. It can also be used to mean any enclosed space forming an approach, bridge, or entrance to any other section or interior space. (*arch, basket, cabinet, chest, pottery, shadow box, clock (mantle, grandfather, wall), drapery, mirror, bench, chair, table, cushion, desk, screen, shelves, quilt, shrine, lamps, flowers, ashtray, wall or shelf decorations (see "Things" under comprehensive list of things in rooms)*)



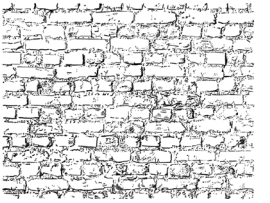
Zoo: This room is a park or garden-like area where animals are kept in cages or large enclosures. (*cages, bestiaries, dias, pedestal, walking paths, benches, statues*)

FOUNDATION AND EXTERIOR MATERIAL

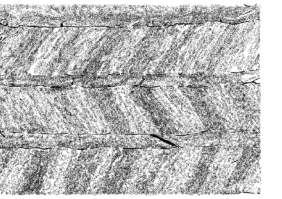
Brick & Timber



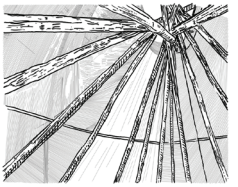
Brick



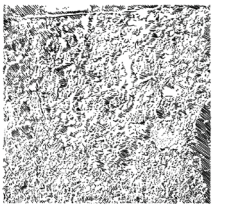
Sod



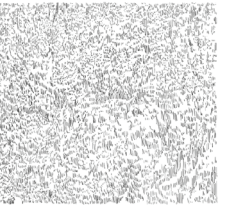
Cloth & Poles



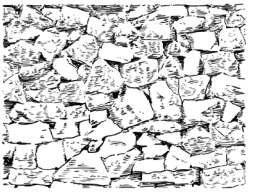
Adobe



Felt (Yurt)

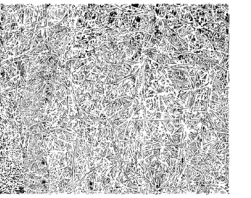


Stone

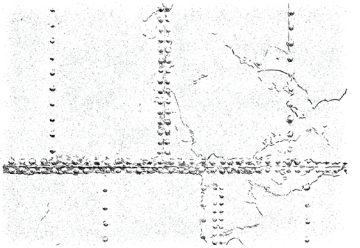


Rammed Earth

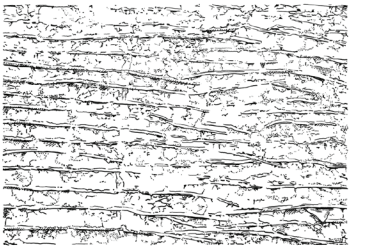
Grass



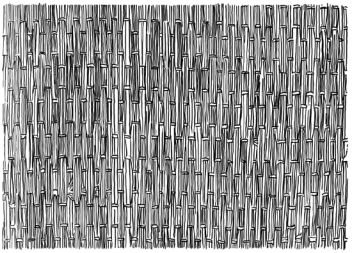
Metal Sheet



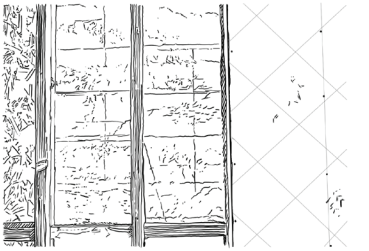
Wattle & Daub



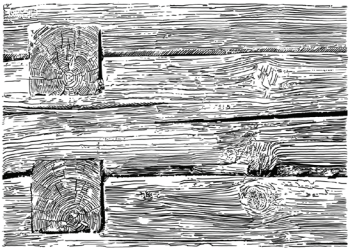
Matting



Plaster Board & Timber

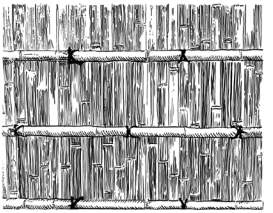


Timber



WALLS/INTERIOR

Bamboo



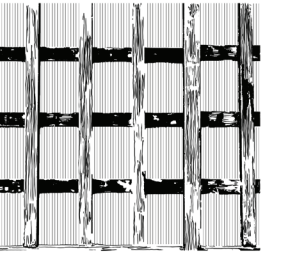
Board

Brick (Mud)

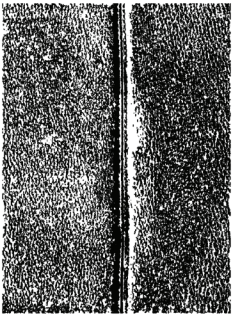
Cloth Drapery

Wickerwork

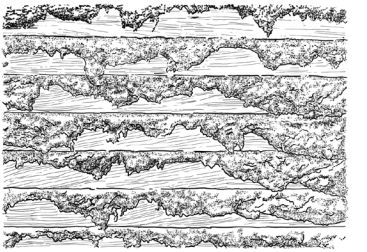
Frame & Paper



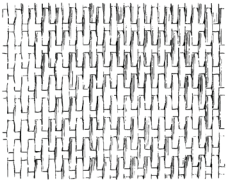
Leather Curtain



Lath & Plaster

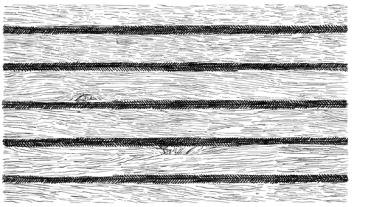


Rattan

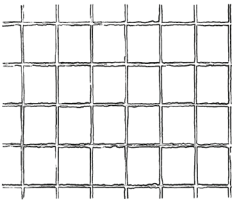


Tin

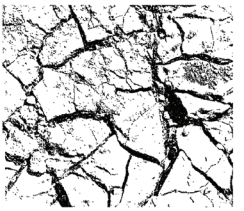
Timber (log)



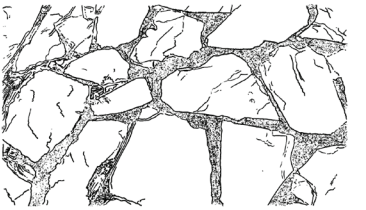
Tile



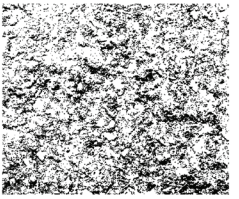
SURFACE/FLOOR



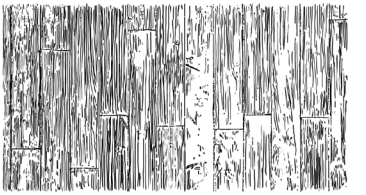
Clay



Stone (Flag, Field)



Dirt (Packed)



Wood (Plank, Split)

AGENCY

Games are collections of interesting choices. The player making choices sets this type of entertainment apart from more passive forms like books or film. What makes a choice interesting? An interesting choice is neither trivial nor an objective matter. There are several guidelines.

A choice must matter. The agent must be able to perceive difference between outcomes. The larger the space between, the more powerful exertion of the agency.

The player must understand the choice well enough that her decision represents her intent.

Everything is difficult at first. The description must include everything significant. It must include clues to its nature. The players must understand in the way the referee does. Do these clues need to be obvious? Do these mechanisms need to be simple? Does everything you put in the room have to be relevant? No.

They players do not know the outcome. They do not know what the trap is on the chest. They do not know what will happen when they pull the rope. This is the first thing to realize.

Interactions in the room take time. Time is a tool you use to control tension. There are many kinds of timers.

One person can search a 10′×10′ surface section per turn. Searching grants a chance to detect secret doors. Knowing that the door exists does not automatically mean they know how to open it. The results of a failed search should remain uncertain.

Plan your encounter spaces and how to describe them ahead of time. Note the following passage written by Gygax in the *1st edition Dungeon Masters Guide*.

> *"DM: '. . . They find the refuse consists of castings, some husks of small victims of the spider, hide, bones, a small humanoid skull, and 19 silver pieces. Do you now fire the webs overhead?'*
> *LC: 'Examine the skull first. What kind of humanoid was it? Can we tell?'*
> *DM: 'Possibly a goblin. When you are looking at it more closely, you see that there is a small gem inside – a garnet.'"*

And later:

> *DM: 'First, the others checking the containers find that they held nothing but water, or ore totally empty, and that the wood is rotten to boot. You see a few white, eyeless fish and* **various stone formations** *(emphasis added) in a pool of water about 4′ to 6′ deep and about 10′ long. That's all. Do you wish to leave the place now?"*
> *LC: 'Yes, let's get out of here and go someplace where we can find something interesting.'*
> *OC: 'Wait! If those fish are just blind cave types, ignore them, but what about the stone formations? Are any of them notable? If so, I think we should check them out.'*
> *DM:'Okay. The fish are fish, but there is one group of minerals in the deepest part of the pool which appears to resemble a skeleton, but it simply—'*

Your spirit must remain unattached. Do not draw attention to things of importance, nor draw attention away from them. There's a yellow cloak, some leather boots, and a sword. Is the cloak covered in yellow mold? Do the boots hold a key? Is the sword rusted or magical?

Reality is surprisingly subjective. Embarking into the realms of adventure, the actuality of things should be beyond reach. Walls aren't soot-covered or covered in blood. Walls are stained, dirty, dark, filthy. The floor isn't covered in pulverized rock; the ground is sandy, dirty, or dusty. Clarity and understanding without certainty drives action to uncover the truth.

If players possess clarity, then they can be challenged fairly. The way into the secret room isn't always in this room. Doors are not always two-way. Passageways that look straight, sometimes aren't.

The adventure is a conversation and traps represent an escalation. People in crisis escalate because they lack the skill to get their needs met other ways. This is what an intervention does—it allows someone to assist them with the skills they need to regain control. Traps escalate the threat to the player, and the Dungeon Master creates a milieu where the players have clarity needed to make informed choices.

Encounters don't exist in a vacuum. Repeat features near related areas. Let the players discover traps by discovering the pattern by which they've been laid. Consider expectations. As a conversation, there is antagonism between two parties that grows organically. The world players explore exists in escalation with their ability to affect it. Thieves listen at doors, Gygax places earwigs on doors, players begin to bring ear-horns to protect themselves. The success or failure against earlier traps will set expectations for future ones. Choose to both affirm and subvert those expectations, doing justice to the veritas of play.

MECHANICAL TRIGGERS

The reality of mechanical triggers is relevant only to inform our design of them for play in the game. Presenting environments requires both knowledge and vocabulary. Mechanical triggers should be described to the players when the object containing them is investigated. (i.e. Party Leader: "We look at the floor." Dungeon Master: "You discover a pressure plate.") The description should provide a clue to their function or purpose.

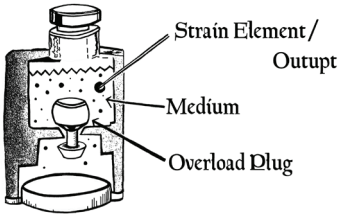
Do not let these descriptions become slippery in your planning. Devise how the mechanisms conceptually work and describe them straightforwardly. Do not take the role of an engineer. Encounters are designed for play, not architectural standards.

Trigger detection is tightly integrated with the basic procedure players use when exploring. Are they testing with water? Probing ahead with poles? Are they sending a lightweight scout 60′ to maintain their stealth? Is there a rear guard? Are they walking single or double file? These are the fictional realities that allow you to adjudicate the results of the triggers.

Pressure Plates

Pressure sensors detect and measure pressure and convert that into some kind of output.

We are not escalating our interactions with the players to engage esoteric knowledge, but rather to allow them to enjoy problem solving. This is the lens through which we examine the pressure plate.

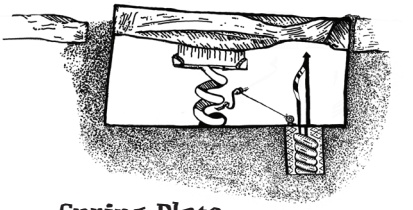


Pressure Sensor Platonic

There are a few types of pressure sensors: **Strain** based sensors require a physical material placed under strain such as a coil or strip of wire. **Resonant** pressure sensors which measure frequency to determine if a machine is experiencing unexpected pressure. Finally, there are **thermal** or **ionization** sensors measuring pressure via temperature change. There is a heating element balanced delicately, and any movement causes a change in temperature due to airflow.

Historically, pressure plates were given a chance to trigger as each character passes. Players poking and prodding ahead would have a chance to trigger the trap with their poles. Mechanically this meant the more likely the trap was to trigger, the easier it was to detect. Pressure plates that trigger 100% of the time are always detectable. This ratio is a good starting baseline.

Pressure plates are not necessarily a trap trigger. Cities use pressure plates (tubes) to map traffic to better design roads. Detecting a pressure plate doesn't give a character any insight into what it does.



Spring Plate
Here, the medium is air,
the strain element is the left spring
and the output is the latch.

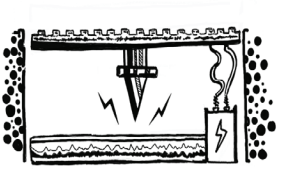
The illustrations indicate one case where the pressure plate itself is the trap, and another where the pressure plate is a trigger for the trap. This is not merely a matter of semantics, but describes what the problem the player actually faces.

There are many many ways that people become aware of pressure plates, consider your own awareness when using pressure plates to open handicapped doors. It is difficult to completely integrate pressure plates into surfaces undetectably, though there will always be a dwarf who will claim otherwise. Bipedal creatures are acutely concerned with the stability of the surface they are standing on.

The plate being triggered must be abstracted to a random chance based on player procedure, otherwise the game becomes a tedious exercise in players exhaustively trying to discover the specific sequence of words that will satisfy the referee. Because of this abstraction, a failure to trigger could mean "Didn't step on the plate at all," "Plate didn't trigger due to weight distribution," to "The player's patron used mystical force to protect them". Consider this when framing the fictional positioning to the players.

Variations on the pressure plate include many thousands of tiny pressure plates, each step triggering some percentage of them. Alternately a pressure plate that disarms a trap or produces a safe space.

The reuseablity of pressure plates makes it difficult to conceal them. Plaster and paint will crack, space that allows the plate to move will crack and grow, plates will lean, etc.



Electric Plate
Here, the medium is air,
the strain element is the electrical resistance in the air, and the output is an electric current.

Common classic player behaviors to discover these include pouring water, tapping ahead with poles, and being a dwarf.

Pressure plates and their environments are frequently decorated or part of decoration that uses tile mosaics to hide their presence. In addition, the effects of the pressure plate are usually visible—scorch marks, blood stains, gouging.

Traditional use

A1: *Slave Pits of the Undercity* by David Cook

20. TRICK STAIRS

A staircase goes down about 10' and ends in a small landing with a door facing the stairs. The steps are made of flagstones set in mortar. The flagstones are loose.

This staircase will become a slide if the door to room is not opened properly. A thief may not detect the trap, but a dwarf could detect shifting stone if checked for. If the door is opened without first locking a secret catch (detectable only by a thief), the stairs will suddenly slant, creating a steep incline. Unless previous precautions have been taken, characters will slide into room #21, automatically losing surprise and initiative for the first round. Characters roped together, but not fastened to anything, will have even greater difficulties (the characters will be surprised for two segments and may not take any action during that time). After the door is closed and pressure released from the slope, the stairs will return to normal. If the door is opened after locking the catch, nothing will happen and the party will find stairs going down.

C1: *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan* by Harold Johnson & Jeff R. Leason

2. The Hall of Thrashing Canes

The sides of this corridor are carved to resemble walls of bamboo-like logs. The passage slopes down from a single door on its western leg, the lintel of which has been crafted to represent a stylized cavern entrance, to double doors of beaten bronze, worked to resemble a forest of seaweed.

There is a pressure plate halfway down the hallway which triggers a trap. Several of the logs will swing out from either wall and buffet the paw towards the double doors. For tournament play, the trap will always work. For campaign adventure, the trap will be triggered on a 1 or 2 in 6. Characters will suffer no damage if the trap swings out behind them, stunning for 1-4 rounds. If a character is walking up the slope towards the trap, he or she will receive 1-6 points of damage from the trap, and will be stunned for 1-4 rounds. Once triggered, the stone logs will not swing back and will effectively block the passage, since they bar the way from ceiling to floor with only a 6" gap between the logs.

T1-4 *Temple of Elemental Evil* by Gary Gygax

103. PILLARED HALL

One hundred pounds of pressure on the floor at a point five feet in from the entry triggers a delayed-action mechanism. The pressure point limit is shown by X marks on the map. One round after this is triggered, a heavy barred grate drops and seals the doorway. Two harpies roost atop the two central eastern pillars, having special niches cut into the eastern faces 34 feet above the floor. When the grate crashes down, the harpies start singing. After one round, they cease their song and fly around, attacking any creature that makes a hostile gesture. If sounds of fighting occur here, the occupants of area 104 arrive 1 round later. If there is no such turmoil, these creatures arrive five full rounds after the grate's noisy descent.

Pressure Plate design

Early pressure plate design should trend toward obviousness and small hit point tax. Escalating this should be both pressure plates that trigger nothing or are broken, or plates that work to allow the players to advance (e.g. a plate that requires 800 pounds for a door to open). Consider the construction of the plate, specifically the medium in relation to what the players do to examine it. The pressure plate is not a critical feature. The simplest option when dealing with it is "I ignore it". This is a feature. Pressure plates (and pits) are most effective when they are placed in areas where characters will be fleeing: tombs, in front of fear runes, outside of a room filled with 12 beholders.

Latches, switches, and levers

Latches, switches and levers are thresholds of change.

Less a trick or trigger, more a way to represent a choice in how to proceed. There is no distance between events and actions within the game. They all occupy the journey, not organized chronologically, just thematically. (i.e. "We approach the ridge, oh, I had Tod the elf pick up rope back in town (writes down rope and scratches off 15 gp on their sheet) and I use that rope to climb the ridge.")

All possible events during a game are occupying the same shared space, without boundary. It is the latch, switch, and lever that allow players to navigate and organize this space. The entire game structure involves the referee waiting for players to interact with the "contents" (monsters, traps, treasure, tricks, or 'nothing') or navigate to a new location.

Do not obscure the nature of the switch. The player should make the choice to trigger the switch or not. If they don't understand that it is a switch, then to the player there is no structure to the events. If they trigger the switch by accident, their experience is one of chaotic instability. It appears as if the world changed without cause. The crux of the game is deciding on actions weighed against risk, not on trying to comprehend how to take action.

Have the effect of the switch happen within the range of the player's ability to notice. If the choice produces no visible/audible effect, they will not realize the connection if they ever discover it. Ways to notice the effect of the switch:

- A noise or light coming from the direction of the effect (grinding gears, monster voices, dogs howling, water running, etc.)
- A change in wind pressure, new breezes or smells
- Opening a door, portal, gate, or other passage
- Scenery changes due to teleporter

Switches can be hidden. The switch is usually a false object, detectable due to discoloration or structure. Sometimes real objects are used (such as a real book in a bookcase) but constant use eventually causes damage. The false object is often hid among several actual real items to increase the illusion. Because the objects don't usually move (except to trigger the switch), they may be covered in dust, or show differing signs of wear compared to other similar objects. If the object is freestanding, it must be attached to a surface with a hinge or nails. The latch is often triggered by cables or ropes hidden within the walls.

If the object moves against another surface, such as a torch sconce that rotates against the walls, it will leave marks from the use. Cheap latches will have visible hinges, making it very obvious. More complicated triggers should be considered tricks and designed with those guidelines in mind.

Traditional use

A1: *Slave Pits of the Undercity* by David Cook

B. TRAP DOOR CONTROL BOOTH

This is a small room, sparsely furnished. On each wall are a large number of levers and above them at eye level is a narrow horizontal slit. A large insect man stands in the room. He is carrying a 2-handed sword, 2 shields and wears two belts that cross his thorax.

This drone aspis . . . operates the controls to the trapdoors of area #18a and usually watches through the slit for signs of activity. . .

C1: *The hidden Shrine of Tamoachan* by Harold Johnson & Jeff R. Leason

53. THE VALVE:

Here is a foyer, 10′ wide and 20′ long. A narrow hall leads away from this foyer on the south and from the north a 5‘ wide staircase leads up. A wheel is set horizontally half into the wall at the western end. This wheel appears to be a crank. Above the wheel, in the wall, is set a bronze lever.

The stairs lead up to the blank wall behind a secret door. This door is opened by the wheel in the foyer. The wheel will not turn until the lever is raised and then will turn one way with difficulty. Rotating the wheel will slowly open the secret door, but it will also open the floor to either side of the wheel into a black pit, at the bottom of which may be seen a pale shimmer of bone. There is a 1 ’ ledge to stand on and work the wheel and a 6 inch wide footbridge of polished marble crosses the pit. When crossing this beam characters must check for slipping off . . . If the crank is released once the secret door is opened it will wind back quickly shutting the door. To prevent this the braking lever may be pulled down. However, pulling the braking lever down will cause a portcullis to fall shutting the foyer off from the stairs. The portcullis may be raised by a character rolling his or her lift gates percentage. . .

Latches, switches, and levers design

Introductory levers should perform their obvious function. Sequential levers should give clues to it not serving an expected purpose. During a conflict, a lever can change the terrain or situation, allowing a new advantage or escape path. Levers can also be used to change the layout or configuration of an area, creating dynamic puzzles: lowering water levels, changing the orientation of a room, causing objects to shift either temporarily or irrevocably, altering the height of platforms, providing access to new areas or modes of travel (e.g. chains or ropes dropping from the ceiling).

Lids

These "mechanical" triggers are very simple—any object that covers a pit that make it look like there is no pit is a lid. This also refers to false coverings that open into a trap. Prodding and tapping are very effective at detecting these kinds of traps. Pits, like pressure plates, usually have a percentage chance to not be triggered. Since lids are literal covers for holes, water usually tends to be very effective in detecting these traps.

There are different types of pits: open, breakaway, latch, teeter-totter, and illusion.

Breakaway pits are camouflaged, but any testing or prodding will indicate that the floor is not solid or that the covering has some give to it. Consider the terrain and the material used to cover the breakaway pit. Leaves and sticks outside, and a carpet indoors.

Latch pits have moving parts. There is some support for the latch and usually some way for the latch to reset. This means a wheel or gear hidden nearby. Also, it is more difficult to hide the seam of a latched pit.

Teeter-totter pits are easy enough to detect by prodding but, as a side effect from heavy use, may not center correctly. One side may be raised up an inch or more, while the other is low. Or if it is poorly made, the wrong side of the lid could be visible.

Illusionary pits create a very realistic looking floor, making detection by vision almost impossible. The illusion isn't solid and doesn't interact with the environment. *Detect magic* makes it obvious, but fog rolling along the ground will drop right through. It doesn't block sound or airflow, all of which can provide clues to the illusion.

Traditional use

B2: *Keep on the Borderlands* by Gary Gygax

A. KOBOLD LAIR: There is a 2 in 6 chance that as the group enters the cave-like tunnel, 8 kobolds will come out from hiding in the trees above and attack. . .Each carries d8 silver pieces.

Note: 30′ inside the entrance is a pit (B). There is a 3 in 6 chance that each person in the front rank will fall in unless they are probing ahead. There is a 1 in 6 chance that individuals in the second rank will also fall in, but only if they are close to the first rank and the character ahead has fallen in. The pit is 10′ deep, and those falling in will take 1-6 points of damage. The pit lid will close, and persons within cannot escape without aid from the outside. The noise will attract creatures from areas 1. and 2. Planks for crossing the pit are stored at #1., beyond.

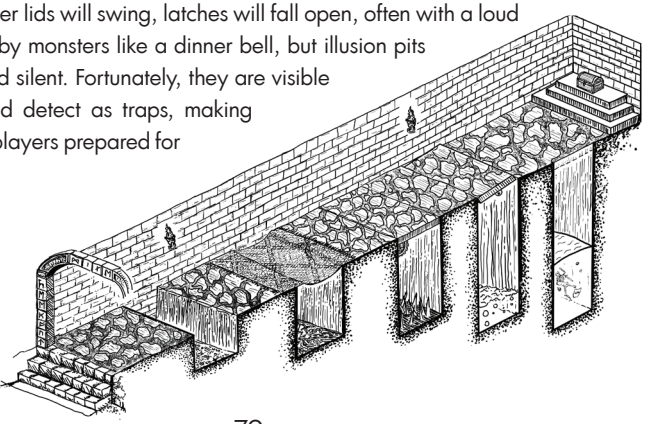
Pit lid design

Early pits should have open lids and are an exercise in crossing. Open pits should be placed in areas where other action will be taking place. These can be crossed by dropping down, walking across, and climbing out the other end, to heights up to 15′. For any non-injured medium-sized adventurer, climbing out of such a pit is a trivial matter. Once pit depths reach 20′ it is more challenging. They may climb out of the bottom if they can reach the ledge and pull themselves up. If they cannot reach the lip, they may be trapped. They may attempt to jump across, use planks or poles, or try to lasso something on the other side.

Breakaway lids should be considered in room or hallway descriptions and accounted for when first describing a room or area. In most cases, *anyone* who asks about the floor or what's on it should be told "It looks like it's covering a pit." If the pit is particularly well hidden, i.e. if the floor itself is buried in leaves, a fair response to someone investigating the floor would be "There are entirely too many scattered leaves to tell if there is a floor underneath them."

Latch and teeter-totter pits will frequently not be described or visible, and are the most classic X in 6 style pits. Anyone specifically examining the floor should be able to spot them. As these evolve, the players should have access to more powerful tools (e.g. *eyes of the eagle*, *detect traps*, *true seeing*) in addition to high level thieves, monks, and rogues. The presence of well-hidden latch pits should be telegraphed by the environment.

Illusion pits are rare, and for good reason. They are silent and deadly. "Early" illusionary pits could be old failing magic, with occasional static or flickering. Or they could have obviously wrong things, like water flowing onto the floor where it disappears into the ground, or a hallway covered in debris everywhere but the illusion. It's possible to have an illusion pit cover a deadly substance like acid or a paralytic gelatinous ooze up to 15 feet down, which a character would fall in under one second. That isn't enough time to shout out. To the other characters the victim just vanished. Even someone looking directly at the person falling would be hard pressed to tell what happened, seeing them quite literally vanish through the floor. The other triggers take more time and will alert bystanders to their presence. Breakaway lids will fall in, tetter-totter lids will swing, latches will fall open, often with a loud bang, alerting nearby monsters like a dinner bell, but illusion pits are insubstantial and silent. Fortunately, they are visible to *detect magic* and detect as traps, making them easy prey for players prepared for danger.



Proximity Trigger

This trigger is an extremely sensitive device that detects vibrations, most often transmitted through the air. They are generally used in out-of-the-way places. Because they detect vibrations in the air, they are extremely sensitive to sound. Non-thieves have a difficult time detecting these traps. There is little that can be done to notice the trigger, but the area around a proximity trap has no breeze, is very quiet, and often has either a thick layer of dust on the floor or no dust at all. Disarming it is a difficult and time-consuming process—increase the length of time required to disarm a proximity trigger by 10 times. On the positive side, these triggers usually only trigger alarms or summon guardians of some sort.

Mechanical proximity triggers are interesting triggers because they often are not directly detectable. The only clues to proximity detectors are undisturbed and sealed areas. Even sensitive ones can avoid being triggered by someone who is quiet and walking softly, so approaching and disabling them is possible. The difficulty comes in finding them.

Finding a proximity trigger without triggering it takes twice as long as just searching a square normally. Also, it can only be done by one person at a time, slowing down the process even more. Since these are triggered by vibration, talking loudly or some other action the party might take may set it off.

Another way to handle these triggers is to just set them off. Throw a thunderstone down the hallway and cover your ears.

The biggest clues you have in order to detect a trigger of this type are the signs that the area has not been disturbed or visited in a long time. Examples above, such as dust, are useful; other signs of proximity triggers in use include:

- Cobwebs
- Sagging shelves and furniture or curtains
- Hard stone or metal hallway floors or acoustical ceilings to increase the noise made
- The section of the dungeon is sealed or is clearly a vault.

For higher level characters, they may be facing powerful Wizards, Engineers, and Alchemists who may be able to make proximity sensors that only are triggered when player characters enter a certain (short) range. This includes *symbols* and magical triggers. These are trivally detected with magic (*detect magic*, *detect traps*). This method is used in the mid to high level modules following. This escalation can occur once they receive new tools for addressing problem solving (henchmen, constructs, *wizard eye*, *legend lore*, etc.)

Traditional use

C2: *Ghost Tower of Inverness* by Allen Hammack

6. BUGBEAR ROOM. . .

This 90′×90′ room has a 20′ high ceiling; there is a 10′ wide passage in the center of the west wall. In the room are 16 bugbears without weapons, standing perfectly still; however, they do not appear to be statues. In the center of the north wall is a 10′ long, 5′ wide, 5′ tall stone sarcophagus engraved with lettering.

The bugbears are in a type of temporal stasis; 4 will animate. . . and attack any intruders within the room each time one of the doorways is passed through. (For example, if a party member steps into the room and then out again, 8 bugbears will be animated.) The doorway, and not the floor, is the trigger: flying and levitation spells will still animate the monsters, characters using *Dimension Door* and *Teleport* spells will not activate the bugbears, regardless of whether the room is entered or passed thereby.

T1-4: *Temple of Elemental Evil* by Gary Gygax

210. OCTAGONAL CHAMBER

Illumination in this large octagonal room seems to come from everywhere—ceiling, walls, floor—a milky radiance which gives a dim and eerie glow to the whole scene. The floor of this place is 15′ below the level of the normal dungeon floor, with short broad stairways leading to it. The ceiling vaults to a height of 40′. The walls and floor of the room are of polished gray stone with whorls of glittering mica; the floor is partially obscured by swirling, eddying, softly glowing mist. In the center of the area is a great pierced square of bronze, ten feet on a side. A dome is pierced in the northern ceiling, a circular shaft some 20′ wide opening directly over a pit of the same diameter and five feet depth. Immediately to the south of the pit is a block of alabaster two feet wide, four feet high, and eight feet long. Atop it are two knives and a bowl of finest crystal. Ranking the pit are two crystal braziers, suspended from tripods by chains of silver. Each emits a faint sickly-sweet perfumed smoke. The doors to the north are bronze, sealed with iron, chained, barred, and bear a warning inscription in runes of some sort.

The altar stone and crystal service pieces are protected by a special *Glyph of Warding* suitable to the place. They cannot be safely touched unless the symbol of the Air Temple is worn and the glyph name, *whah-duh*, is spoken. Failure in either requirement causes a whirlwind to suddenly form and spin from the pit to the altar, inflicting 12 points of damage to each creature within ten feet of its path (save vs. spells to take half damage). This also triggers an alarm; the whole area gives off an evil-sounding chiming and tinkling, and the guardian is summoned.

Proximity trigger design

Early proximity triggers can be identified as visible devices with a range to create a situation where players can identify 'no-go' zones. These can be identifiable pillars or other themed/connected objects (e.g. plinths, crystals, beams of light, metallic sculptures, statues, etc.). Once aware of these, players can use them against opponents. This can also complicate other adventure spaces. Another option for early proximity triggers is a 'spin up' period where the trigger begins to activate over a round or a few rounds. Escalations can involve placing these in hidden places, behind curtains, screens, or concealed walls. More advanced proximity triggers are usually magical in nature, such as *symbols* and the like.

Light detection

This trigger only functions in always lit or never lit areas. It works by using materials that react to the interruption or exposure to light. The source of light can be natural (sunlight/moonlight), magical (*light*, *continual light*), or man-made (incandescent, torchlight, lasers). The trigger can be set to go off after the first interruption or detection of light, or it can be set to be triggered after a certain number of counted interruptions or time exposed to light.

This simplistic description of light detection neglects the various ways it can be used. This is an effective trick or puzzle when the sensor responds only to a certain color of light. The default stance of the trick is of course that once torch, lantern, or sun-rod light is shone on the trigger, the trap is set, but it is also a useful stance for constructing a puzzle. Often the sensor will be visible as a colored opaque crystal sphere. This should be breakable, but doing so should ruin the mechanism.

The trigger does not have to be binary. It can require a certain degree or configuration of light, or perhaps be part of a multi-part puzzle where the light that triggers the detector also gives a clue to the next step in the process.

Traditional use

S3 *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* by Gary Gygax

2. STRANGLE VINES: . . .These creepers are attracted to the strongest light source, i.e. *Continual Light*, bright ship's light, light, lantern, magic sword glow, torch light.

. . . If the ship's lights are on the viewers will see various forms of large and small fish, and have a one in six chance of getting a glimpse of the "frog-thing". . . Glints of gems will be seen from the lake bed! If they use lights in the observatory they absolutely will not only see that creature, but it will begin smashing at the plastiglass observation windows to get at the tender morsels within. The chance to break through is 5% per round. Attempts will cease as soon as the light is extinguished or the party is out of the monster's sight.

S4 *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth* by Gary Gygax

1. SMALL CAVE WITH MANY TUNNELS

This low-domed chamber has its ceiling literally dripping with stalactites. . . A tribe of 18 troglodytes lairs in the five small tunnels which radiate from this cave. . . Unless the party is exceptionally quiet and shows no light, the trodlodytes will be lurking in ambush for them, and they will surprise the party on a 1-4 (d6) or a 1-2 if a ranger is leading the party.

T1-4 *The Temple of Elemental Evil* by Gary Gygax

339. HALL OF ELEMENTAL MAGIC

This huge echoing hall is constructed of polished black stones, which give back odd reflections of your light. The most striking features here are the symbols set into the chamber floor. To the north is a triangle of dull ecru stone, outlined with some sort of gray metal; a throbbing radiance seems to spread in dun-colored pulses that wash over the area. To the east is a great 10' square of translucent stone, blue at the edges and shading to a deep green at the center, bordered by a strip of pale green; the whole gives out undulating sheets of blue-green light. To the south is a circle of translucent crystal ringed by a silvery band; the whole sends forth slowly rising clouds of pale light, that spread and disappear. To the west is a long diamond shape with four points radiating from the sides of the lozenge. The whole is fashioned of translucent stone mottled red and amber, outlined in red gold. It sends up sudden tongues of brightness, planes of pale fiery light that vanish as quickly as they appear.
All of these radiations gleam from the walls and floor of the hall. Any object in the center of the four symbols shows the four different illuminations, and the ghastly purple of their mix.. . . Any creature who steps into the area of an elemental symbol and stands there for 3 segments is transported to the corresponding Elemental Node: the Air Cavern (circle), the Earth Burrows (triangle), the Fire Pits (lozenge), or Water Maze (square). The only way to escape therefrom is to win through to another "gate" area or to possess the complete Orb of Golden Death, inset with all four proper gems.

Light detection design

Early use can be situations in which characters must maneuver without light to avoid an enemy. Simple puzzles can differ based on the time of day or season. Mirrors to reflect light into certain spots (with multiple solutions so that players might discover one and not another). Later, more difficult puzzles can be avoiding light being used as a tripwire, or environments that change based on available light (such as a room that is different at night than during the day).

Timed

This trigger just regularly springs the trap. Note that the trap may be set to use a timed trigger after the initial trigger is sprung.

Timed triggers are great obvious traps. This can be gouts of flame or swinging blades. They are buzzsaws, vines, and swinging logs. It is spinning pillars, anti-gravity platforms travelling up and down, and sections of floor that disappear or collapse after you step on them. They are rarely a danger themselves, but can make other situations more interesting.

They are best used in situations where other objectives need to be met, rescuing hostages, defeating a bad guy, stealing an item, made all the more complicated by the regular changes in environment.

Traditional use

S2 *White Plume Mountain* by Gary Gygax

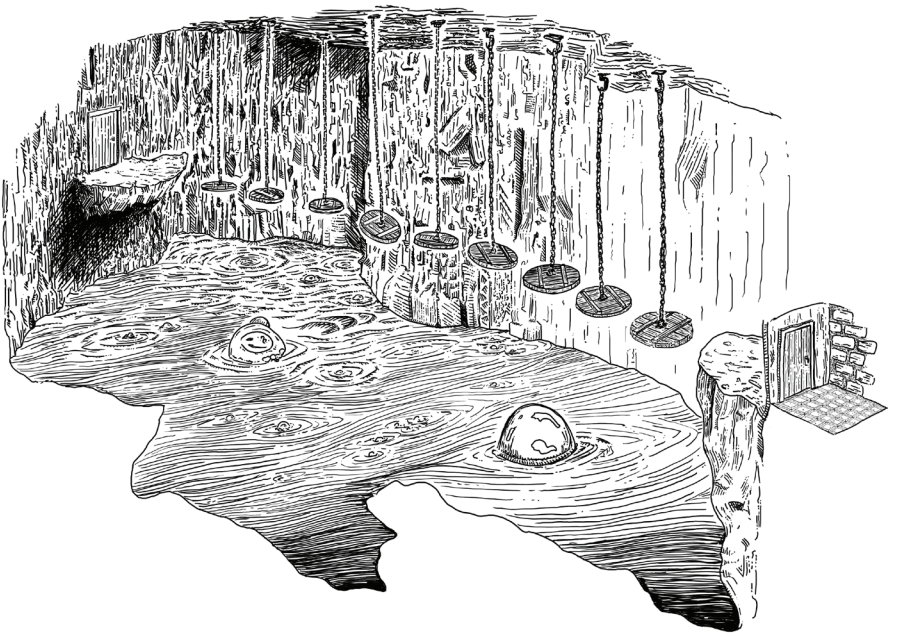
7. The door opens onto a stone platform in a large natural cave. The ceiling averages 50′ above the level of the platform while the floor of the cave 50′ below is a deep pool of boiling mud. Points A and B mark the locations of geysers. Geyser A spouts once every five minutes. Geyser B spouts once every three minutes. Opposite the entrance platform is another stone platform, approximately 90′ away. Between them a series of wooden disks is suspended from the ceiling by massive steel changes. The disks are about four feet in diameter, and three feet apart. Each disk is attached to it's chain by a giant staple fixed in its center. The disks swing freely and will tilt when weight is placed upon them. The disks and chains, as well as the walls of the cavern , are covered with a wet, slippery algal scum that lives on the water and nutrients spewed up from the geysers. This coating gives off a feeble phosphorescent glow.

When the geysers erupt, they reach nearly to the roof of the cavern, and creatures holding onto the disks or chains may be washed off to fall into the mud below (an almost instant death). Characters with 18 Strength, or better, have a 65% chance of holding onto a disk that is adjacent to an erupting geyser. For each point of strength less than 18, there is a 10% lesser chance of hanging onto the disks (i.e. 16 strength equals 45% chance.) However, for each disk the characters is located farther from the geyser, there is a cumulative chance 5% greater of holding on i.e. one farther away (from the adjacent disk) equals +5%, two away equals +10%, et. Damage varies as the distance from the geyser. Adjacent disk: 5-50 points; one away: 4-40, and so on: 3-30, 2-20, 1-10, 1-6 and 1-4 for anyone in the cavern. Characters who make their saving throw versus breath weapon will take only one-half damage.

Timed trigger design

Early timed triggers can be as simple as a swinging blade, something obviously and trivially avoided, at least until you get hit with a *fear* effect or henchmen fail their morale rolls and run into it while fleeing.

Moderate timed triggers are an effective way to challenge mid-level parties with beginning challenges. Take an encounter for characters of 1st–3rd level and add gouts of fire that criss-cross the battlefield and it becomes an appropriate challenge for higher level characters. Another type of timed trigger is one where a normal activity is given a hard time limit: you must defeat the monster/pick the lock/disarm the trap before the room crushes you, the ceiling falls, the guards arrive, or you get cut apart by laser beams.



TRAPS

The purpose of a trap is to complicate a choice now or later. It should not be a tax.

Why do players not just submit (or follow) an exhaustive list of activities before entering any space? Because the game is in deciding what to do about the trap. The challenge is in solving the verbal puzzle. The player is the person playing the game, not her character. Describing things in an obtuse manner to represent the verisimilitude of the character's understanding robs the player of the opportunity to play the game. The puzzle is solved by the player making choices within the encounter; it is not a contest to understand the encounter.

When this situation engages your spirit, you will find it uncertain. You must dismiss your spirit and examine the experience for the players. They can not see behind the screen. Your boldness in presentation will bring the adventure and danger to the fore. They should know what the encounter is and instead question what may be.

Your stance should be open and attentive. Comments or ideas may elucidate confusion on the part of the players. The role of the referee is one of service; he has no authority over them, but instead a responsibility to the veritas of the journey.

This exchange is known as intention, initiation, execution, and effect. First, the intention (not the action) of the player is discussed. It is during this process that questions are passed back and forth, until no more information can be obtained without action. The intention and specific action is confirmed, then executed with all resultant effects.

During negotiation your spirit may become rigid. Hostility, authority, or power struggles may seem attractive to pacify the whims of your spirit. But your role as facilitator of the journey is to be accepting of hostility and disagreement; listen and guide the group along *their* path.

Consider the spirit of the player. It is at threat, at risk. They only control their character, and any action exposes them to the judgement and possible embarrassment in front of the group. Facilitation is a stance of assistance; ask questions as opposed to lecturing, convey interest and enthusiasm for the group.

Traps by definition put this to the test. They represent an authentically dangerous threat. In order to allow them to be threatening, the players must be certain enough of the encounter and their own actions that when the consequences of the threat occur, they understand their responsibility for the result. This is not possible if they are uncertain or confused.

Once these traps as structures and mechanisms are grasped, they can be portrayed clearly for the players to navigate or influence. The player, understanding the mechanism as you do, only has her character suffer as a consequence of her poor decision making.

Note the danger in reticence. It is not a specific incantation the players must recite. If they take the action, they get the result. If they search the barrels, they find anything associated with the barrel. There's a hinge that attaches it to the ground, or a false bottom, or that it's full of dwarves instead of fish—they find it.

When engaged in encounters with traps, they must be structured, in the same way combat is structured. Just as a players can't say "I win the fight," they can't say "I take care of the traps." They have to state the specific action they wish to take. "I attack the monster with my weapon" allows them to attack. "I search the area for traps" allows them to discover the visible parts of traps. Do not require specific words or phrases to be said to progress. Respond to their choices.

It is here that the knowledge comes into play. Just like with a combat encounter, the players understand the reason the monster can do area damage is because they have a breath weapon, so should a coiled needle beneath a latch explain the saving throw. So you must understand the traps within the game as you understand how monster abilities work. Then the player takes their turn and tells you what they do to discover how the trap works or bypass it. Very often this is quicker done than said.

The fun for the players in a trap is noticing the clues in the environment that allow them to subvert it. These clues—evidence of the trap effects, themed trap placement, and environmental design—provide the clues and guidance for players to know where to search.

When a trap is triggered outside of a combat situation, allow the players a reaction. This choice of fictional positioning can both provide agency to the player and allow them to avoid or worsen the consequences of the triggering of a trap.

The trap is placed, the clues are considered and then presented in the description. The players take action to determine information. On a success, they understand the situation better and can address the trap. On a failure, the trap triggers and they have a chance to react.

If the stance of your spirit is one of an impartial arbiter, the resolution of traps is no different than any other activity in the game: the players take action and gain new information and consequences from their actions. They don't have to guess what you want them to say, because you don't *want* them to say anything. They tell you what they do, and you discover the results together.

ARROW TRAPS

Most commonly found with the venerable pressure plate trigger, this causes a projectile (dart, arrow, javelin etc.) to shoot out of a hidden panel, with a chance to strike the target that triggered the pressure plate. Variations include other types of triggers, triggers that cause ranged attacks to be made at other party members, and great variation in location and placement of the projectiles (ceiling, floor, etc.).

This trap is the most common 'gotcha' trap, lacking agency. It is often just used as a punisher—first through the door? Take an arrow to the chest.

These locations that the projectiles come from should be painfully obvious to anyone who simply notes they are looking at the surface of the wall. This should require no check on the part of the players—even if there was a cover for the hole at some point in time, it likely will have fallen off.

Broken arrows (or whatever projectile the trap uses) should litter the floor at the terminal projection of the trap. Just noting "a few broken shafts of wood litter the south wall" or "small pieces of metal and fragments of wood are piled in the corner" or even "a single arrow lies in the floor of the corridor ahead" with no other comments should be enough to pique the interest and caution of the players.

Dead bodies are another way to make this trap into an encounter. The player's first thought when seeing dead bodies is to check to make sure that they are not undead by shooting an arrow or two in them. Showing the dead target should make the players aware of the danger.

Note that just because the players are aware that there is a trap present—even if they are aware of where it is located—does not mean that they know how it is triggered.

Arrow traps in complicated environments, during a combat or in multi-level environments and tight hallways will turn an arrow trap from a hit point tax into a strategic problem.

The arrow is theoretical; a laser beam, death ray, or spear are all 'arrow traps'. Arrows can be poison, or hardened snakes that turn into writhing poisonous problems.

BEAR TRAP

This is a bear trap, for bears. Spring-powered, sometimes called an ankle biter, these can use food as a lure or be concealed in some manner—possibly even magically.

If not discovered by searching, checking the characters' reflexes can help them avoid the trap. This check covers both catching sight of the trap at the last minute and ducking out of the way.

Failure means taking damage. Bear traps are brutal. Consider if the character is not wearing leg armor (i.e. leather) or maximum damage is rolled, then the leg is broken. They are also trapped, unable to free their leg or limb.

If the bear trap is loose, the player character can still move with the trap attached to her leg. Her move is reduced, she gains no benefit from her dexterity to armor class, and the character continues to bleed. You may assign damage from this as desired, but the real danger is the delicious trail of blood left through the monster-infested dungeon.

For a trap that is somehow static or chained in place, the character is trapped and must work their way free before they starve or something worse happens.

Few characters starve.

The player can also attempt to escape the trap. Victims are at a disadvantage. They must find something to pry the trap open. Someone assisting can open the trap, as they would set it. Smashing the trap apart is an option, but they are usually made of sturdy material. There is fervent debate on the efficacy of loudly banging a large metal weapon against a metal trap in a monster-filled ruined pile and associated survival rates.

Disarming these is simple. Trigger them with something that is not a limb. These are often camouflaged in several ways, covered by leaves, or underneath cloth. When used to bait animals, there is often food in or near the trap. For adventurers gold or other treasure works well. They are particularly effective in areas where the floor is poorly lit.

Bear traps are usually placed near a desirable object, and it is generally considered an error to bait the center of the trap. The trap is generally situated near where a person would stand to acquire the desirable object.

CEILING SNARES

This trap is designed to snare one person, leaving them suspended in the air. There is a snare on the ground, made of thin wire. When triggered, it snaps tight around the victims ankle and pulls him into the air. There is a whizzing sound, and a distinct crash as the counterweight falls against the earth. A separate chamber nearby is often constructed to contain this counterweight. A variant of this trap has the counterweight able to drop farther than it raises the character up, smashing them against the ceiling for damage and possibly breaking a limb.

This trap is particularly difficult to notice due to the poor visibility of the wire in a dungeon setting. It uses a peg and nail trigger, so astute dungeoneers will note the small stone with the notch in it to the side of the dungeon against one of the walls assuming they can distinguish between that stone and the many other ones that litter the dungeon. There is only a small chance of discovering a trap like this by prodding the ground ahead of the characters; however, it is very likely someone walking along will trigger the snare, knocking the notched stone aside and getting yanked to the ceiling. Escaping from the trap is as simple as cutting the character down, but for a solitary adventurer it is much more difficult to escape. Attempts can be made to cut the wire if the character possesses a knife, but depending on the strength of the cord or wire it could take several tries. Each successive attempt should be penalized from the fatigue of being upside down, curling your body up, and cutting through a rope.

Soon enough, someone will arrive to check the contents of the trap. Variations include nets instead of simple snares, allowing it to capture multiple characters.

CHESTS

Traps on doors and chests are the ruin of choice.

As designed encounters or ways to increase complexity, traps are enjoyable parts of the game. As a tax or an exercise in tedium of searching they are not. If examined, traps are visible on doors and chests. Visible traps are in general easily disarmed.

Contact poison will be visible as a grease, oily sheen, iridescent reflection, or sticky powder. It can be disarmed with vinegar or oil, wiped off, or by using gloves.

Poison needles will have exposed tips, and spring mechanisms will be visible within the lock mechanisms. They may be passive, or active and thrust forward when the lid is lifted.

Poison darts are going to be triggered by tension mechanisms, released by raising the lid. The tension mechanisms and darts will be visible inside the chest if the lid is lifted without triggering the trap. Darts can also be noticed and discovered by noting the worked crevices they are stored within or fired from.

Scything blades also require a tension release. The blade or the recess it is contained within is visible.

Vermin such as beetles, mites, ants, or other deadly, infectious, parasitic, and murderous organisms will be easily spotted.

Chests that trigger nearby mechanisms will be attached to the floor or have nearby grooves that contain cables or wires. Tension and gear triggers can also trigger nearby mechanisms.

Sprays and mists are contained in glass or ceramic vials. They require some tension or trigger mechanism to shatter them. Primitive ones will be placed to shatter from the force of opening the chest.

Only requiring characters to state “I search the chest for traps” to find traps automatically without any sort of roll or check will still find characters many times opening chests, sacks, drawers, and other storage areas without checking for traps.

COLLAPSING FLOOR

This is an unstable floor. It requires only that there be open space below it. This open space could be the next dungeon level (or further), but this will indicate the distance the party member will fall. This is not a constructed trap, but a hazard of a decaying structure.

A dwarf should automatically get a check to detect this if it is in a dungeon or any sort of stone environment. Don't forget, however, that this occurs on roofs, ships, and upper floors of houses also. For those groups that fail their roll, or do not have a dwarf in the party, the following are some signs and descriptions of collapsing floors. These ensure the players have agency, without giving the trap away.

Bulges or warps in the floor.

The slightly rounded floor holds. . .
The concave surface of the room is. . .
The dresser across the room leans oddly against the wall.

Cracks in the floor.

Trails of smoke (or dust) waft up through the floor.
The tile is patterned with ancient cracks.

Extremes of temperature may cause a floor to collapse.

A bitter chill, cold enough to freeze water, emanates from the floor of this room.

Sagging in the floors indicates collapse.

Several pools of water (sand, dust) have collected on the floor of this room.
. . . have collected in depressions on the floor of this room

DETOURS

This is a corridor or hallway trap. The basic premise is that when it is triggered, no damage is done to the characters, but their passage through the dungeon is altered.

When the characters walk down a corridor, the way forward and back are sealed off. Then the wall slides back to reveal a chamber. A four-way corridor intersection seals various passages as the characters pass.

They create danger by exposure to unselected paths and preventing easy escape; forcing players to locate another way out of the dungeon. It can make for a very exciting game, but downsides include frustration and the need to have time to resolve the situation before the end of the session.

Detection is crucial to providing agency of these puzzles. The relief at discovering one before it is triggered is equal to the fear at attempting to survive after falling prey to one.

If there are sliding walls, then there are methods for the characters to detect where the walls slide from. Dwarves gain a bonus for detecting just this type of thing. There will also be marks on the walls and floors where the walls slide across. The triggers are detectable in the normal ways.

Another clue may be treasure maps, or maps purchased from other characters which do not match the environment visible to the chracters.

Noises may be audible through the walls that may lead to discovery of the threat of hidden chambers and sliding walls.

DOORS

There are several kinds of doors relevant to play.

The first are normal doors, used in establishments such as an inn. Normally, these do not require any type of check to open.

The other type of door is the mildewed, warped, swollen, and bent door within dungeons. These doors (noted as 'stuck') do not open. Every player character has a chance to force open such doors based off their strength, by knocking the door down or kicking it off its hinges. Rams may be used to combine strengths to open narrow doors. This method has several consequences —the door is ruined, every attempt attracts wandering monsters, monsters in the room beyond cannot be surprised, and each attempt becomes more difficult. Depending on the material of the door and the degree of 'stuckness' some doors may be easier to open than others.

Finally, if you are unable to kick down a door, you may, if the door is wooden (or rarely stone), hack the door apart. A wooden door takes 1 turn to hack apart, or two turns if reinforced by bars. A stone door can be destroyed in 4 turns. If players are hacking down or through a door, roll 3 wandering monsters checks each turn and assume all monsters within 50′-200′ are aware of the attempt. Make sure, if an inappropriate non-magical weapon is used, to check for the tools destruction every round. Certain materials may make it more or less difficult to force a door (notably metal ones). Some doors may not be forced or destroyed.

Types of Doors

Roll	Door Material	Bonus Open Door
1-2	Wood, Simple	+2
3-10	Wood, Good	0
11-14	Wood, Strong	-2
15-18	Stone	-4
19-20	Metal	-10

Roll	Door Condition
1-6	Free
7-12	Locked
13-18	Stuck
19-20	Unusual, specially locked or trapped

Depending on the original architects of the structure, a single basic door type should be selected for each builder or modifier of the original architecture. Having every door be completely random within a structure can truly strain the suspension of disbelief. Check for special door types in more unusual places, when the architecture shifts, when chambers have doors, in special rooms or rooms that link sections of the structure, or when intelligent creatures may have replaced the door. Let there be a small chance (1 or 2 in 20) for individual random doors to be made from a peculiar substance.

Once the basic door type is determined (e.g. Chestnut good doors or Copper grating doors), each door can be checked for condition.

Unusual Features

1	Door slides left/right
2	Door slides up/down
3	Door hinged on top
4	Knocker
5	Peephole
6	Window (% false image)
7	Door spiked closed
8	Doorbell
9	Doorknob falls off
10	Locking bar
11	Binding metal
12	Door bolt
13	Wood bracing
14	Door chain
15	Sign hangs from door
16	Door is warped and will not shut
17	Things nailed to the door
18	Door has a portal covering
19	Door is abnormal size
20	Door is strange shape

Special Features

1-2	*Wizard Locked*
3-4	Padlocked
5-9	Trapped
10-11	Magically trapped
12-19	Door has Unusual Features
20	Door is Special

Lock Quality and Stuck difficulty

Lock Quality		Modifier
1	Wretched	+6/+30%
2-3	Poor	+3/+15%
4-10	Fair	0/0%
11-13	Average	-1/-5%
14-15	Good	-2/-10%
16-17	Excellent	-3/-15%
18	Strong	-4/-20%
19	Very Strong	-5/-25%
20 (1-10)	Fullproof	-6/-30%
20 (11-15)	Superior	-8/-40%
20 (16-19)	Masterful	-12/-60%
20 (20)	Impossible	-16/-80%

Normal doors open right to left or left to right either by pushing or pulling (depending on where the hinges are located.)

There are a variety of door forms.

- Single or double doors
- Large double doors with small inset door
- Double door with horizontal separation
- Double door with vertical separation
- Hatch
- Large single with small door inset
- Trapdoor

Special Door types

Without password, casts spell on those who pass through the door
Door gates people elsewhere
Door is trapped with *symbol*
Every third time used, it casts a spell on any who pass
Negation (as the wand) on magic items that pass through the door
Door temporarily animates the dead
Door *blinds/feebleminds* those that pass
Door gives visions
Door creates duplicates that attack or merge, causing damage and confusion
Door is electrified
Door summons monsters
Door is intelligent and aligned
Door is polymorphed monster
Door is an illusion
Contact with door turns it into mud, sand, dung
Contact with door causes it to cast a spell
Doorknob falls off
Door is thief proof
Door is rotten
Door has knocker
Door is invisible
Door is magnetized
Door is hot
Door hinged at the bottom
Door teleport switches PC with Monster
Door is coated in acid
Door vanishes when closed
Door glass steeled
Door is a revolving door
Door fakes noises for listeners
Door locked, destroys weapons used to break it down
Door is magically locked, unopenable unless the people who wish to pass knock politely
Door slams in characters face
Door is unopenable, but has distinctive lock; When distinctive key is found, door eats the key and remains unopenable
Carved in door is guardian; If door is forced/picked, guardian screams
Door is a mirror
Door teleports people past
Door revolves on horizontal bar in middle
Door is demi-human sized
Door is on fire when touched
Door is 5'-10' off floor
Door opens 5'-10' above floor on other side
Door has contact poison on surface
Door only opens in, cannot be opened from inside
Skeleton hangs on one side of the the door
Door has *continual light*
Door has *silence* cast on it
Door requires password
Door is covered in blood
Door smells repulsive when touched
Door is in invisible wall
Door is sticky
Door is curtain of darkness
Door requires blade instead of key
Door missing feature, will open after feature replaced
Door is fake ☙ magic/trapped
Door plays music when open
Door is fire/acid/water etc. proof
Door repels metal
Door protected by demon
Door prevents multiple passings
Door doesn't open in torchlight
Door only opens with group effort
Door is of a strange material (glass, bone, force, solid fire)
Unopenable
Door is covered in levers and lights; Pulling any lever electrocutes everyone and all lights change color
Door magically *teleports* to different area
Using key on door sets off trap
Talking door with a known password that the door must be tricked into saying
Door is repaired after being knocked down
Door is transparent from one side
Door falls on anyone who opens it
Door causes *fear* when touched with bare skin
Door with a hand-shaped doorknob

ELEVATORS

Elevators and shafts make for interesting choices and spaces. They give access to multiple different areas from a single access point and create interesting strategic options.

Players will rarely trust elevators. Consider providing an alternate route that is also risky to make the elevator seem like a practical choice.

Mechanical elevators work via a counterweight system. More rarely, platforms are raised and lowered by a hydraulic piston. Less standard are conveyor belts, large Archimedes type screw elevators, scissor lifts, double decker elevators, paddles, or forks. Most early elevators were constructed to move heavy goods out of mines or loading docks, frequently steam powered. Traction elevators work by using gears to turn hoist ropes over a drive sheave, attached to a powerful motor.

Other more fantastic options exist; magnetic tubes, pneumatic human delivery systems, anti-gravity spells, and flying chambers.

Primitive elevators were controlled by large mechanical switches or were operated by turning a crank or pulling on adjacent ropes. Early electrical controls included a rheostat used as a throttle. This may require some skill on the part of the operator to have the elevator stop at the correct destination.

Elevators can contain buttons to lead to floors or operate the elevator; space to stand or sit with rugs, cushions, or blankets; sensors to detect passengers or weight; electric fans or heaters; an alarm or call button; a communication box, either wired, radio, or magic; controls to hold the elevator, deselect destinations, or gain access to restricted areas; a security camera or *wizard eye*, mirrored or decorated walls, and possibly an impressive view. Possible hidden features include switches to enable or disable the elevator, manual controls, and service modes.

FALLING CAGE

This trap has spelled the doom of more than one adventurer in its day. Perfect for dungeon environs populated by intelligent beasts. Monsters simply have to walk down the hall and check in the cage to find out what's for breakfast.

The trigger for this trap is most often a pressure plate, but once triggered there is little chance of an escape. The cages tend to be large, covering a 10′ × 10′ area at a minimum, and fall from the ceiling quickly. If anyone triggering the trap insists on trying to duck out of the way, let them try. There is a significant chance they will be trapped by the falling cage, which could weigh up to several tonnes. This may be a risk they are willing to take.

People adjacent or nearby the person who triggers the trap have it easier; they can make a save to determine if they are inside the cage or not.

This trap is easily detected by those who know what to look for, because in order to trap anyone, it must fall from the ceiling. If it has no top, then the cage itself must run nearly to the ceiling, and it can be detected by the long narrow slots in the ceiling where the cage resides.

If it does have a top, then there must be ample room on the ceiling to hold the entire cage.

Though this trap can be camouflaged either by low light, similar coloring, rags, weeds and leaves, dark paint, or even magical efforts such as invisibility and illusion, it still requires a large area and is often easily detected simply by looking up. Since the cage usually has manual reset, there is often little sign of the trap near the ground. Some of the stone may be cracked and broken from the force of the cage slamming into the ground, and there may be metal shavings or bent pieces of metal where someone tried to escape.

Most of the denizens nearby should be familiar with the noise of the cage triggering, so there is usually little opportunity to escape before the arrival of some hideous netherworld creature.

INFESTED PITS

The pit is a perfect environment for many monsters. Hidden and out of the way, avoided by the resident denizens, and your food comes to you! There are a variety of monsters that can survive in a pit for long periods of time, where the confined quarters and long waits are not bothersome. There are often small tunnels and such giving access to such pits.

Some monsters that might inhabit pits include: giant microscopic creatures, beetles, fungi, insects, jellies, animated objects, mimics, mold, oozes, rats, parasites, shadows, slimes, stirges, and undead. Gelatinous cubes are a perennial favorite.

It is suggested that the player roll to see if the creature in the pit is struck. If so, then the creature will take the same damage as the character falling into the pit. Note that striking many pit creatures with your body will have many negative effects of their own.

Detection is as any standard pit. Most of these monsters should be easily detectable once the pit is located and that is fine. Allow the players to avoid your monster if the monster is discovered. Of course, if you were to place a magic sword, stairway, secret doors, or even a lair, that could convince them to have the encounter anyway. If you are truly wicked, have the magic sword be worthless, the stairway a dead end, or the lair filled with nothing but monsters.

KISSING MAIDENS

Often triggered by a pressure plate that releases tension, this is a tension trap swinging some object, be it a spike, log, metal ball, or worse, rapidly at head or chest level. This can be a single sharp post, an entire wall, or even a statue of a beautiful woman. The trap often comes equipped with a counterweight for automatic rearming.

In the vast majority of cases this trap must be visible. It can be camouflaged or concealed, but the impaling mechanism should be seen. Common means of camouflaging the trap include vegetation growing on the mechanism, dim light, and angled walls and corners.

There are often blood spots on the floor and end point of the trap's arc of execution. Even if successful, there will rarely be a body, due to its tendency to become impaled on the trap itself. If struck by a trap with a body already in it, damage might be mitigated. Bodies or skeletons hanging without supports on the wall might be another way to detect this trap.

More subtle means of detection include the hollow space where the counterweight resides. This will often be in either a wall or floor. The trap can be disarmed, but this almost universally results in the trap being triggered because it is under tension. Having a firm grip on the trap and releasing the tension slowly is one option; another is to not be where the trap is triggered.

MAGIC SNARE

These are literally magic spells that act and detect as traps. Some (non-comprehensive) examples include:

- *Alarm*
- *Fire Trap*
- *Symbol*
- *Explosive Runes*
- *Spike Stones*
- *Glyph of Warding*
- *Sepia Snake Sigil*
- and others

Thieves can detect magic traps. This is a factor into what makes thieves special. If thieves can detect magic traps and no one else can, then they have another important function which is useful for a class whose class features basically consist of things most everyone can do. I always allow thieves their base find traps percentage to notice magical traps.

Magical traps are deliberate. Not random. A mage must prepare them and then they must be set. This means the type of item protected is somewhat limited.

Magical traps should produce an odd smell or sensation. The room should smell of ozone, or remind the thief of blackberries eaten on the warf, or should give her a chill of mountain snow.

When checking for magical traps, describe what the thief sees if the trap is found. In the Myth series by Robert Asprin, mages lose focus and see magic as lines of energy. In the Wheel of Time they are threads that can be pulled. Describe the physical manifestation of the magic! It could be motes in the air that float up or down, a glowing sphere, beams, rings, or holograms.

When interacting with magical energy, describe memories, sensations, some improbable. E.g. "Your blood feels solid as if turned to gas and then tastes of sugar in your veins" or "When you touch the strand, you remember lying in your coffin a millennium in the future as your skeleton is finally destroyed." or "You scream in pain as wood feels when it is chopped knowing it is destined for the fire of fleshy creatures."

As far as disarming traps go, if you aren't going to use an abstract mini-game to disarm magic traps (pull 5 jenga blocks, win 2 hands of war, solve this puzzle in 15 seconds, etc.), then this would seem a wholly appropriate time to use their mechanical skill at removing traps.

MIRRORS

Mirrors are a powerful tool, frequently overlooked and forgotten by dungeon designers. Consider mirrored walls, at a distance, strange figures that are difficult to make out. In a room with mirrors, distances can be confusing and surprising. It can be difficult to locate a target.

A mirror trap can be simulated by simply having each appropriate mirror face present another location for monsters the players can see.

Mirrors at the end of hallways confuse mappers and frequently draw aggressive reactions. Hide something deadly behind a mirror and wait for a panicky player with a crossbow to unleash it on a party.

Magical mirrors are always useful. A covered mirror could be a mirror of life trapping. Mirrors that travel to other mirrors, or hide reverse of rooms or dungeons, or act as scrying devices all have a precedent in fantasy.

Mirror opponents, duplicates but in reverse created by the mirror, are a classic opponent. How does the character beat himself? There's even an old transcription of a game in the 1970's where a journalist comments on encountering a mirror that made a fighter fight his reflection.

"Mirrors" can represent portals to a similar dimension, requiring you to take some action in this world to cause an event to occur in the other—pull a lever, push a pressure plate, smash an obstacle.

The important thing with maintaining agency about mirrors is making sure that you describe to the players exactly what they see and how it responds to them. You should work this out ahead of time (as above). Intelligent players will ask questions and draw the correct conclusions.

MIMICS

A thing that looks like a thing it is not. Many of the traditional options of 'object that is a monster' have actually been codified into monsters themselves. Caryatid columns. Mimics. Trappers. Cloakers.

These are all characterized by similar traits: digestive ability, immobilization/trapping ability, and disguise. Use these traits and your default system and you can create a 'trap' out of any object.

- Fountains
- Floors
- Walls
- Clothing
- Beds
- Chairs
- Doors
- Sculptures
- Statues
- Bags or sacks
- Pots
- Books
- Bottles
- Mirrors
- Endtables, cabinets, armoire
- Carpets
- Curtains (with the added bonus of being able to say "It's curtains for you!")
- Shelves

Use one descriptive term that is out of place for the object and describe the results of the events in the room. The odd descriptive term lets them know that something is amiss with the object, and the events should let them puzzle it out. Examples:

"A stagnant fountain lairs in the corner. The room has some discoloration on the floor and broken weapons and armor lie about." (In this case the fountain has backed into the corner, which is an odd position for a fountain. It cannot digest metal so that remains, and the discoloration is dried blood)

"A wooden chest with brass banding rests in the corner, facing the wall. There is a pile of bones and refuse piled in the opposite corner." (The chest is facing the wall, which is odd. The mimic piles its bones in the opposite corner to make itself appear not suspicious.)

NATURAL HAZARDS

One of the things that make a useful trick is using the properties of natural substances.

Sodium: This is silvery metal (looks like platinum!) that has wonderful properties when exposed to water. It begins to leak a damaging alkali and a highly flammable gas. The explosion should do both large flame damage, but also spray the characters' wounds with solvent, causing lots of damage over time. Have your resident dwarf or appraiser identify strange metals before carting them off.

Methane: Silent, natural, odorless, and highly flammable. And it's not really the explosion damage, but the likely cave-in afterwords that's the real danger.

Methane is also a great example of an asphyxiant. Even if the characters don't carry torches or other open flames, methane and other substances displace air, and there is little notice. The first thing that will happen is the characters will begin to feel drowsy as they start to suffocate. Other simple asphyxiates include propane, which is also flammable, and carbon dioxide, which is not for a nice change of pace.

To alert themselves to danger, miners traditionally used a canary, but any small creature dependent on oxygen will die long before humans. Your wizard wasn't really that attached to his familiar, was he?

White phosphorus is extremely reactive upon contact with air. In can be immersed in noble gas, underwater, or in a vacuum. It will very quickly, after being removed from a neutral substance, begin to react to air. Shortly after that it will produce thick clouds of smoke only seconds before self-igniting in the air, flinging large chunks of burning phosphorus everywhere. Conveniently once contacting flesh, it continues to burn!

Another natural danger is radiation. Normally radioactive materials make you ill a few hours after exposure and soon cause death, but because this is a fantasy game you can have it cause mutation, which is much more enjoyable.

Players should pay attention to the local flora and fauna. A well-described radiation danger would include lots of subtle but tertiary descriptions of strangely altered local inconsequential flora and fauna.

PEEPHOLE

Players will be tempted to take advantage of the information that can be acquired through the peepholes. Peepholes are a voyeuristic thrill, observing without being observed. Occasionally use traps to cause disastrous misfortune! Players will be reluctant to trust them at first, so be wary of trapping peepholes at the beginning.

The guilt associated with engaging in voyeurism will conjure many punishments to the imagination, cuts to the eyes, or the body.

Do not forget the mythic quality of these. Peepholes can show other things besides the area next door (though that is very useful). If they look through and see a burlesque show, the future, the past, or home, or perhaps even dungeon levels further down, mirrors reflecting their eyes or rooms far away, or even find that they are gazing upon themselves looking into a peephole, peepholes can be a trick in themselves.

Describe untrapped peepholes with the same type of flavor and atmosphere as the trapped ones. Perhaps there are red or black stains near the peephole. At some point a person was likely caught unawares while gazing at a show.

PROPS: CODES AND HIDDEN MESSAGES

Props are physical puzzles, tricks, and brain-teasers you can hand to your players at the table for them to actually physically handle.

Scytale: A strip of paper is wrapped around a cylinder, and a message is written across the paper. Unwrap the paper and the message is meaningless; rewrap the paper around a cylinder of similar size and the message becomes clear. Old like the Greeks.

Deciphering: If you write the message around something that is lying on the table (a pencil/marker, etc.), then simply handing them the strip of paper should be enough. If you want to give them several options, then the strip of paper should be handed out either before or after the cylinder is found and the cylinder should be disguised (hairbrush handle) and with a variety of other objects.

Mirror Message: No, not just writing a message backwards. You can bisect the letters vertically and write a message using the letters: AHINOTUVWX. Or, you can bisect the letters horizontally and write a message using the letters: BCDEHIKOX.

Once they figure out they need a mirror, they may use one nearby. Alternately, you may hand out a mirror (or other reflective object) with several other items to obfuscate the text.

You can do this similarly with maps or secret codes using catoptric anamorphosis, but it requires some measure of artistic talent and a polished cylinder. On the other hand, if you have a reflective teapot, it can make a fascinating puzzle. Place the teapot/reflective mylar/tin foil wrapped around a paper tube, etc. on the paper, and sketch an outline in pencil of the map or message.

Alternately it can be a letter substitution, or letters can be missing from the cypher.

Substitution Cypher: The message is in code. Substitution cyphers are simple to solve if you know the substitution. All the players have to do is have the message, either before or after they are shown a disguised copy of the cypher. It can be hidden in art, murals, colored, or otherwise disguised. The cypher could be written on pillars and stone tiles or hidden somewhere else in the environment.

Deciphering: The key factor here is that the substitution key must be presented. You cannot fail to mention it, nor should you provide more emphasis on its discovery. If the message is handed out earlier or later than the discovery of the message, then the connection must be made by the players. The key can be obfuscated (as in an element of a larger picture, message, or image), but should be available.

REVERSE GRAVITY

The hallway ahead appears safe and secure. The floor seems solid, but when was the last time anyone looked up?

While walking along, the lead person activates a patch of reverse gravity and falls, crashing through the false ceiling, smashing into the extended ceiling far above. At which point, the reverse gravity ends, and the character comes crashing back into the ground, taking the damage again.

There could be a series of these, each heading in a different direction, causing a character to fall far from his origin. The reverse gravity could be constant instead of activated by a person tripping a magical trigger, forcing them to "climb" out from within the pit. The ceiling of the pit could be filled with loose debris, or possibly spikes, or some sort of fragile container filled with a dangerous substance.

Finally, once triggered, the trap could automatically reverse gravity every round for an entire turn, making a difficult situation even harder.

The magical trigger on this trap makes it harder to detect (often relying on the thief's abilities), but there are a couple of useful thoughts. This trap is unlikely to show up anywhere except places where the builder has access to a lot of magical energy. A trap of this power level is far beyond your local hobgoblin tribe.

And although the cost and expense of having this trap is high, it is amazing how often few steps are taken to disguise the ceiling well. Most people don't look up, and it's often difficult to construct an automatic reset on the ceiling, so astute adventurers looking up (or brilliantly actually testing the ceiling) will do well.

ROTATING CHAMBERS

This trope of a dungeon that has rotating corridors is extremely common. It is found in a wide variety of modules to the point where its inclusion has become cliche (B4 The Lost City, FA2 Nightmare Keep, The Crypt of Luan Phien, et. al.).

The basic conceit is that the exit doors do not always lead to the same corridor. Variations include the tesseract, where each door opens into a space that maps in a non-Euclidean fashion, and other non-Euclidean maps.

The key to running this is to provide some indication that the corridors are shifting. The fact that where they are is not where they appear to be is a good clue to help the players understand the indicator that they have provided.

It is also important that you be helpful when the players are working on their maps. This does not mean you tell them the solution or that they are correct or incorrect in their assumptions. It just means that when dealing with a complex maze like this, the challenge isn't in drawing accurate room sizes. It's in understanding the nature of the mechanism. Letting them discover the turn seams where the dungeon rotates (once they are aware of the puzzle) and giving them accurate descriptions of the 'tiers' of rotation will not detract from their sense of discovery.

As an aside, minimizing the amount of tedious combats in a situation like this might be a good idea. This doesn't mean the exploration of the mechanism can't be challenging, just that the focus should be on solving the problem.

ROTATING INTERSECTIONS

This isn't a room that moves from place to place, but instead one that moves in place, changing the options of where you can go.

Simply when the characters enter/leave a room/intersection, there is a latch or switch triggered. It can be from a pressure plate or a door, or even triggered by an item, puzzle, or key in the room (after all—how are the original owners supposed to get around inside this place).

Once triggered, the central area rotates aligning with new corridors and halls.

This can work subtly, like the elevator room, but it instead works much better as a central feature. If the players are unaware the dungeon is moving around them, then they may become quite confused when their map starts to make less and less sense. But if the players are presented with some sort of puzzle or key that changes how the dungeon rotates, they are engaged in solving a very physical puzzle.

The same advice for agency in discovering the latch or noticing the shifting rooms goes as for before. e.g. feeling a shaking or vibration, hearing a mechanical noise, or feeling other internal sensations.

The real challenge is figuring out the trigger and the correct layout.

A truly nefarious GM blocks their only way out with such a corridor.

SAND

This is less “sand” or “quicksand” as a trap. Sand is often ill-considered during play, and yet. . .

Sand is more deadly than wild animals. Holes, unstable footings, and instability cause more deaths than wild animal attacks. From 1990 to 2016, there have been 16 deaths just from sand pits used for making sandcastles. Sharks only killed 12 people during that span.

Culturally, if there is no lumber or tree industry nearby, non-industrial societies have ‘sandmen’ who collect and ‘clean’ sand to bring into cities. It is used as a cleaning, degreasing, and abrasive agent. Once a lumber industry is running, sawdust is cheaper and more effective, causing this job to die off. But for non-industrial societies, collecting, moving, and cleaning sand is a necessary industry.

Sand describes a wide range of particles, from the large (64mm) to silt (.0004 mm). This consistency affects its behavior. You aren’t going to sink into large grained sand. For example, Sand between .1 and .5 mm in diameter at the right humidity level will emit noises like whistling and barking. This can be up to over 100 decibels in volume. If you have a sand trap, where it pours in from somewhere, it could cause a terrible cacophony. If it happened elsewhere, it could project the semblance of a terrible beast.

Sand near volcanic beaches can be straight up green. Olivine from the volcanic residue will produce a green color in the sand. Furthermore, sand can be beige or yellow, but also black, white, pink, red, gold, or purple, naturally.

Wizards who predict the future with sand would be called arenomancers. Arenolugry or thaumoarenoists are sand wizards.

Areas with a lot of sand where it can be disturbed (due to fights or fireballs) can put enough particularite matter in the air to cause illness, and if severe enough, cancer or death. Unprotected exposure to sand particles in the air can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and skin or flu-like symptoms like runny nose, lack of breath, a terrible cough.

Sand, of the correct type, will often be sought by glassmakers, wizards, and other people who need specific grades of sand for glassmaking.

QUICKSAND

Quicksand is not limited to any specific climate or region. It can be found anywhere you find sand, although a necessary component of quicksand is nearness to some body of water, whether underground or otherwise.

Quicksand is super saturated with water. It's basically a deep pool, filled with a great deal of sand. The water volume is so high, that there's no friction, the pool is in a "colloidal" state and can't support any weight, any more than a swimming pool could, but the sand prevents swimming effectively.

You don't actually sink in very far. But the mistake most people make is that they try to push themselves out. Any attempt to "lift" out of the quicksand will cause another body part to push. This pushing disturbs the support and people sink further in.

Since the sand is more than twice as dense than the human body, you will not sink if you don't struggle. Falling head first into the sand can be deadly, being that you cannot remove your head, nor hold your breath long enough for your buoyancy to bring you to the surface.

Whenever using sand as an environmental variable, it's suggested that you explain to the players what's occurring and allow them to respond. Don't just immediately penalize them for sand exposure; mention that it's clouding the air and burning their lungs and eyes. If they don't take action to fix or correct the problem (cloth over mouth, holding breath/closing eyes), then the penalties can apply.

The players need to be told about the hazard, before they get the chance to interact with it. Having quicksand or difficult terrain or pits on the battlefield, all should be described (if examined) before a player interacts with it.

Players should be told that sand is difficult terrain, but for sand that is actually hazardous (say, full of pits), let people know that they will need to make a check to keep their footing. Quicksand is difficult to spot, but allow players to take an action to try to identify which areas are unstable.

SLIDING ROOMS

This is a trap designed to fool mappers and delvers into misrepresenting the dungeon space on their map. It often occurs soon after entering a room, at which point traditionally the doors slam shut and the room moves, only letting the characters out once they have reached their destination. Although this is easy to do by fiat, it often informs the players that this has occurred. We'll look at some options of describing these effects in ways that just inform the players what information their characters have received without outright stating that they've entered an elevator or sliding room.

The sliding room moves them either to another floor (elevator room) or another area within the same floor (sliding room), denying them access to where they have come from. There is either a timer or another trigger further on that returns the room to its original location.

A dwarf should automatically get his check to detect this if it is in a dungeon or any sort of stone environment. For those groups that fail their roll, or do not have a dwarf in the party, the following are some signs and descriptions of shifting or elevator rooms. You can use these to ensure the players have agency, without giving the trap away.

A shaking or vibration is felt.

"The floor vibrates for a few moments."
"For a second the surface of the dungeon seems to lurch and then all is normal."
"As you touch the wall a slight tremor is felt."
"When you look at the puddle of water, you see small ripples flow across its surface."

A mechanical noise is heard.

"You hear a distant grinding."
"There's a loud rumbling that seems to come from every wall and shakes the floor."
"You hear a mechanical groan, and then a steady beat that goes on for a few moments."

Other senses of the characters may be triggered

"You feel a sicking drop in your stomach."
"A wave of nausea overcomes you for a moment."

TELEPORTERS

Teleporters transport people, either for the purposes of movement or deception. These are used to move people from an area which is more open to one that is more restrictive and dangerous.

There are a number of ways that these teleporters can appear—primarily invisible, but also as a mist, a distortion, or a glow. A trigger can set the teleporter to teleport once a weight or physical threshold is reached, or when a certain number of people have passed, or even only for those that lack a certain item or device.

Teleporters may simply confuse mappers by being connectors between areas, allowing tunnels to seemingly go in a direction where the dungeon already is, because a hallway-sized portal actually transported the characters to a different area. There may be no sign of this, or there may be some sort of visual anomaly.

Teleporters instantly transport their targets to another location within space-time.

An elf or mage could be given the opportunity to notice or detect this sort of trap—as should any pure thief who is actively searching for traps, without specifying any sort of information about looking for teleporter sign specifically. For those groups that fail their roll, or do not have an elf or mage in the party, the following are some signs and descriptions of teleporters. You can use these to ensure the players have agency, without giving the trap away.

An untouched further area covered in dust or long disused.

> *"Ahead on the floor of the corridor lies a thick coating of dust as if no one has walked there in a long time."*
> *"It looks like a thick layer of grime and dust is covering the dead end, but you are still too far away to make sure."*
> *"The footprints end in the middle of the hallway - they just seem to vanish about 10' ahead."*

A glow or shimmer may appear.

> *"The path before you seems to shimmer in your torchlight like a desert on a hot day."*
> *"The hallway ahead glows and small motes of light drift back and forth."*

There may be no visual indicator - just the sensations of teleporting.

> *"You all immediately feel sick and nauseous."*
> *"As you walk down this hall you feel your stomach drop as if someone just walked over your grave."*
> *"There is a strange breeze and your skin is covered in gooseflesh."*

SIGNS

Sometimes you want to challenge the player. Are they suspicious? Are they greedy? Are they brave?

Some examples.

A sign with text on it nearby a trigger. The sign says "Push to X" where X is opening a door or some other desired effect. The trigger itself has a negative effect, setting off a trap or the like. The sign itself is what must be depressed in order to trigger the correct effect.

A sign that says a disturbing or confusing phrase.

"Only bare feet from this point forward"
"You are cordially invited for dinner"
"Beware of dragon"
"Overthinking"
"Heavily trapped area ahead"
"Incorporeal creatures only"
"No admittance to mortal creatures"
"Opportunities to explore the afterlife, inquire within"
"Traversing this room is completely safe"
"Do not operate this switch"
"Intruders will be fed to pet wyvern"
"Ignore this sign"
"Do not fall down nearby shaft"
"Trade Entrance, assaults head to front"

A warning or truth sign. This sign presages a trap, but does so in a way that misleads the characters into triggering the trap. A sign that indicates a trap nearby, but the obvious safe path is trapped and the trapped path is safe. A "Danger" sign with small text that you have to be close to read. This will trigger the proximity trap.

One direction has a sign with an arrow that says "Safe path" and the other direction has a sign that says "Dangerous path".

A shelf of bottles has a sign above it, "ACID, DO NOT THROW."

SLIDING WALL DUNGEON

One more dungeon conundrum, that of the sliding walls. These work best with what are truly four way intersections, but each exit of the intersection has a hidden sliding wall.

The first time the players visit, the wall may be a 90 degree right turn. They take the turn and travel away. Once out of sight, the walls reconfigure. When they return, instead of finding the passageway turning to the left as they would expect, they find another right hand turn!

There is no end to the fun of sliding walls. Doors become dead ends. Corridors have new options. It can take the standard dungeon and both confuse and terrify your players, whose first thought is—how is what I'm looking at different from what I expect?

Thankfully for the astute party, there are multiple means of detecting these things above and beyond the natural ability of the dwarf.

First, each of these must have a detecting trigger such as a pressure plate or latch to start the timer. These can be detected in the standard ways.

Secondly, there must be a timer and this will also be detectable in some manner.

There is also the matter of the sliding wall. If it drops in from the ceiling or rises up from the floor, there will be some sign on the wall of its passage. The same is true if it slides out from the side of the corridor. Also it will not be as thick as a normal wall, allowing a determined party with a mining pick to break through it. The wall takes up physical space when hidden and this can be detected also.

Another excellent foil is using the timer—which is designed to wait until the party is out of hearing and sight range—to confirm the existence of sliding walls by triggering the walls and not advancing and waiting for the walls to activate.

Finally, this too can be part of a puzzle, just like rotating intersections.

SPRINGBOARD

This trap is simple. A pressure plate covers a tightly coiled spring. One step and there is a chance that the character will be blasted up, up and away!

Options for the ceiling include:

Ceiling: Does 3d6 damage (2d6 from spring momentum and 1d6 “falling” damage).

Spikes: As above, 1-6 spikes make attacks and do extra damage from the momentum.

Poison Spikes: As above, and save or die.

Fake ceiling: The climb up doesn’t do you in; it’s the fall back down.

Blades: Shoots up about 30’ in the air. Up into that tunnel. The one that’s lined with knives.

All of these are highly entertaining. You may provide agency in several ways. The pressure plate is under pressure and tension and so may be ever so slightly higher than the surrounding tiles. The primary way this trap may be noticed is the ceiling itself. It will be bloodstained, have spikes, or effects from the various options listed above.

TRAPDOOR LOFT

Somewhere in the ceiling ahead lies a deadly toxic substance. Upon triggering a hidden pressure plate, a stone or wood door in the ceiling drops open and dumps entertaining substances on the party!

Detect this as any trap door—it could be hidden or even secret. Also the trigger must be locatable, and the ceiling may show some signs of the existence of a trap door.

Signs may be present on the floor of the various kinds of things that can be dropped from the trap door.

Flaming oil will leave scorch marks

Green slime, black pudding, or various other oozes, slimes and jellies will leave scarring and other signs of their presence.

Falling rocks will leave dust, cracked stone, and scrapes and scratches on the floor work

Garbage and offal will leave stains, and there may be a terrible stench depending on the ventilation.

Sand and water can be released filling the space below. Both will leave telltale signs of their presence.

UNDERGROUND HAZARDS

The sub-world is not like the world above.

Uneven Ground

Environments underground are not always smooth and level. This is naturally taken into account by the movement rate. It is bad form to punish your players beyond that for the underground and cramped space.

Uneven ground can present a hazard; it would be obvious to any adventurer. Inform them if terrain takes additional movement to cross or has other conditions like slick terrain, ice, unstable stones. Emergent events in the hazardous environment create tension, tactical puzzles, and spurs creativity. Universal effects that reduce hit chances or cause people to fall prone will increase the duration and frustration of the encounter.

Verticality is paramount! The encounter that is limited to a single flat surface should be a rare and surprising jewel for players.

Light

Without a light source, movement becomes more hazardous. Stating that any movement out of bright light requires a balance or dexterity check can create an environment that feels hostile, held back by the characters' light. This is extremely compelling, because it psychologically mirrors the activities during the game. They are exploring the literal unknown dark, and straying from their light is dangerous.

Rockfall

=Miners and dwarves will know about the stability of underground areas. Some might be very stable. Some might cause rockfall due to the use of some sonic or thunder damage. Some might be so unstable simply passing through the room is dangerous. This rewards players for playing dwarves or taking the appropriate skills. When presenting rooms with rockfall, make sure you note what's on the floor. Dust, small stones, loose rocks, a boulder, spiderweb divots and cracks in the ground.

Dehydration and Exhaustion

When Dungeons and Dragons® was a more focused game about exploring dungeons, there were explicit rules to handle these.

RESTING: After moving for 5 turns, the party must rest for 1 turn. One turn in 6 (once each hour of the adventure) must be spent resting. If the characters do not rest, they have a penalty of -1 on all "to hit" and damage rolls until they do rest.

Flooding

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single cave, in possession of adventures and near a large body of water, must be in want of a flood. Water dripping from the ceiling, deep roaring noises, slick walls covered in algae can all provide clues of water storage or sources nearby. Flooding an environment changes an already explored area. Triggering a flood of water will change that environment, depending on the situation, to the monsters' advantage or the players.

It is difficult for everyone involved to have a similar understanding of how flooding works. Flooding can feel overwhelming and agency denying. There must be clarity of the threat for meaningful decisions to be made.

VENTS & SPRAYS

These traps are characterized by a variety of factors that separate them from spells or ranged attack traps. First, they often involve gasses or liquids and, because they are often sprayed out over a large area, they almost never miss.

In some cases there is also an onset delay. This means these traps can be triggered and the effect happen in a certain amount of time (sprinklers in a room) or a delay before the substance affects the characters (such as a room filling with water.)

Examples of the things that might be vented or sprayed include slime, shrapnel, cold, acid, boiling water, flaming oil/tar, sewage, mummy dust, poison, fire, magma, smoke, methane, sand, steam, sulphur, and water.

If a to hit roll is required, it will always ignore armor, but not necessarily shield bonuses. Saving throws may apply given the circumstance, allowing half damage or to avoid instant death.

These traps can be both the best kinds of traps and the worst kinds of traps. Because they often have extremely negative properties, they can be run in such a way where they are just Gotcha! traps, causing death or massive damage very quickly. This is an extremely poor way to run such traps, for several reasons. None of the vents and sprays above will be able to remove signs of their presence. Some examples:

Slime will leave a slick slimy coating on the walls and floor.

Shrapnel will leave gouges and scars in the walls and floor and ceiling.

Cold vents and sprays may show some signs of their presence due to temperature differences, areas where the cold strikes repeatedly may show cracking, the growth of natural molds and fungi may be retarded. If the trap is triggered often or recently, there may be frost, ice, or water on surfaces. If it has been triggered somewhat recently, the water will affect the appearance of the walls (they will be cleaner).

Acid will leave pits and scarring on whatever surface it is sprayed on. There may be a scent, or the characters' eyes may start to become irritated.

Boiling water may show up due to temperature differences, and will generally ensure a sparkling clean area where the walls and floor are blasted with it.

Flaming oil and tar will generally cover the upper walls and ceiling with black soot, and the floor may appear greasy or covered in scorch marks. Tar will stick to a surface and blacken and harden under high heat. The hallway may carry a scent of burning tar.

Sewage will smell overpoweringly terrible, unless it is stored behind water (like in a toilet) or behind an air tight valve or door. There will still be an odor because it will be triggered occasionally, filling an area with filth. There may be an unusually high amount of mold or spores or other type things in the area due to the rich food source the filth provides.

Mummy dust may leave a coating of dust on surfaces, cause a musty smell, and there may be corpses in the hallway.

If a poison is being used in a spray, it most likely is fairly virulent, and therefore there should be corpses, either dessicated in a forgotten dungeon like a tomb, or bones or signs of being dragged off in a more active area.

If fire is being vented out, then on the surface that the fire is across from there will certainly be burn or scorch marks. Their may also be burnt corpses.

Magma, if sprayed or vented out, will melt and re-solidify, causing whatever surface the magma contacts to deform. Areas where magma is sprayed will bubble, twist, buckle, and bulge from the constant melting and re-hardening. Bones and various other mineral items (armor and such) may be embedded in seeming solid surfaces. Smoke will often linger for far longer than it takes to dissipate, leaving a smell for 60′ to 100′ from the location of the trap for days.

Methane is a very dangerous trap, relying on the character' flaming light to trigger an explosion. There are several things to keep in mind with methane. First, it is odorless, the natural gas smell you are familiar with is a modern additive to help detect leaks. Second, it displaces oxygen, so even if the entire party has some means of seeing in the dark, it can rapidly cause asphyxiation. Use the rules for how long characters can hold their breaths unprepared for the length of time they can stay conscious.

Sand will both collect on the floor (and in clothes, armor, food, despite the best intentions). The first notice the adventurers will have will likely be the sound of sand crunching under their feet. Any surfaces subject to a spray of sand will likely be scrubbed clean. Repeated sand blastings will scour a surface clean, but will also remove the top layer, exposing rougher rock or metal beneath. Sometimes this will be used to fill a sealed chamber, in which case sand-coated corpses will often be discovered.

Steam is going to ensure that whatever surfaces the steam hits are clean, except for the bits of boiled flesh that it removes from its targets. Do not forget to continue to apply damage as *heat metal* for people caught in steam wearing metal armor.

Sulfur is an interesting compound, either acidic causing burns, or a fine dust causing explosions, or a gas causing choking and irritation. It is also known as brimstone. The primary method of detection is its overpowering rotten eggs smell, which is natural.

Water is often not sprayed on people for damage but more often is used to fill a sealed chamber trapping and drowning whoever is within. Water traps often leave water marks, as the fluid removes dirt and grime from surfaces and deposits it on a line along the wall. It also can have a briny or salty smell.

Do not forget that the vents and sprays also must come from somewhere. Nozzles, slots, slats. or shutters will be visible places where the substances are expelled.

WEAPON TRAP

These are most often triggered by tripwires. This causes a melee weapon such as a log, axe, blade, spikes, or scythe to shoot or swing out, cutting, smashing, or impaling characters. Variations include triggers that cause timed attacks, poison on the blades, or magically enhanced blades.

This is the second most frequent 'trap tax' type of trap, where player agency is put second to the random roll of 'is the trap found.' Let's take a step through the ways we can restore agency to this venerable trap.

The prototypical dead body.

Cracked walls or cut walls, stained with blood. This can be the result from the trap being triggered.

Often there is either an open or plaster-covered space in which the weapon rests. This option can be particularly stealthy when there is a small passage (big enough for an arm) that contains the weapon within this passage. This is very hard to detect.

Bits and chunks of metal from destroyed armor. Unless the hallway is swept, damage from previous victims should be discoverable.

If the weapon is on any sort of metal swing, such as a buzz saw or an axe blade, then there should be a scent of oil in the air. Likewise for a log attached to a rope, the smell of wood should be out of place in a dank dungeon.

ARTIFICES, DECEPTIONS, AND DILEMMAS

Tactical infinity is the appeal of the game. Like in life, when you solve a problem, you can solve it any way you want. In a fantasy adventure game, you can go even further.

We model our experience as humans in stories and tales we tell each other. Role-playing is engaging in that ancient practice of vision questing. We model our journey into the chaos of life by tales and stories.

This is explicit within the structure of the game; it is literally imposing human law, civilization, and order among chaos. Unlike the complexities of such behavior in life, it allows us to deal with the chaotic and dangerous unknown in a way that empowers us to address it.

In a very literal sense, we enter a dream realm together, a shared imagined reality. Fantasy and tales of horror have always been representative of our emotional fears and challenges. Vampires as a metaphor for rape, werewolves for alcoholism, zombies for consumerism, ancient lich wizards for the oppression of our undying elders, giants for our experiences as children, dragons for greed—it is literally the structure of fantasy.

We get to take risks over these dangers and conquer them in front of our friends which makes them matter. This is the greatest of things in role-playing games.

Tricks are how we find the spirit of such adventure and danger. They are the void that binds the other elements of encounters and raises them beyond their means. Encounters are made of varying parts of emptiness, antagonists, threats, and rewards. Tricks are ways in which situations are turned on their head, creating unforeseen emergent consequences.

Characters rapidly gain power that turns any confrontation, even those against powerful foes, greatly in their favor. But the interaction between a normal and one with multiple threats or objectives is where the real challenge lies. It's the presence of a dilemma that defines heroic play—can they save both the innocent and their friend? Can they stop the big bad evils retreat and save the city? Sometimes the answer is no. Sometimes the risk is rewarded.

Finally, some of these can change the world. If they find a way to shrink things, or turn copper into gold, or can sing their way across the sky, that is fine. Those are the magics that define their journey. It is of no concern if they surmount your threats, because greater ones always arise from the fallout of their choices. People are the architects of their own misery.

The arms race

Astute readers will notice a tendency of responses to player actions. Players are listening at doors, so ear-seekers are developed, etc. This is intentional. The realm of adventure across the threshold of the mystic underworld is a place of chaos and threat. It is a realm that adapts to the threats. It resists their invasions, by hook or by crook. Doors open for monsters and slam shut for player characters. Everything talks and represents a horror that you are too busy to address. This is why you can't just create a spreadsheet of activities to take every time you enter a room, because the experience is exploring your group's particular journey through this hostile land.

Player characters aren't a navy seal or a tactical strike force solving a problem. They are in a world where anything can happen, and that responds negatively to their presence.

The red herring

All of these traps and tricks are predicated on the idea of *Agency*. What does that mean functionally in play?

When players have their characters walk into the room, they get a description of all relevant manipulable widgets. This way if they miss something, it is due to player choice/skill and not due to a die roll.

This is a very engaging way of playing, but runs the risk of everything being related to play. What is the solution? Complex mechanisms and *Red Herrings*.

When an encounter is designed, you need to leave some clues for traps and such. Do these clues need to be obvious? No. Do these mechanisms need to be simple? No. Does everything you put in the room have to be relevant? No.

Interactions take time. During this time encounters are risked. This is the cost of being thorough. Some actual rules clarifications are useful. Allow people, when unsure of the environment, to perform a thorough search. One person can search a 10′ x 10′ surface section per turn. When they search, they get standard chances to detect secret doors. Knowing that the door exists does not automatically mean they know how to open it. I do not inform them of the results of the rolls.

Three watchwords to avoid obviousness and ensure impartiality: subtlety, complexity, and craftiness.

TRICK TYPES

BAIT

An object or item of high value is presented and has a risky means of obtaining it with many consequences for failure. This is similar to Defended (pg. 183), but differs in certain key ways. The object must be non-essential and it must be presented in such a way to tempt the victims into bad decisions.

Examples of Bait:

A crown sits inside a force field on a pedestal with six-flower shaped knobs surrounding it. Activation of each knob produces the following result: 1) Lower attribute. 2) Shock. 3) Turns the user gaseous. 4) Produce a scroll with a clue on how to deactivate the force field. 5) Turn the crown invisible. 6) Trigger a trap.

Treasures which are part of dangerous monsters: A scorpion with an admantium shell or a minotaur with diamond horns.

A window that looks down on a nearby treasure, only accessible from a nearby indirect route.

You gain a voyeuristic opportunity to strike at an opponent or steal a valuable object, making it unsurprising when punishment is applied to your greed.

Players often find themselves in possession of evil and nefarious magic items, in a quest to destroy them. During times of difficulty or stress, let the player know they have a tool that can solve all their problems that they are not using. Just remind them of the benefits and downplay the drawbacks.

Many animals fish for their prey using some kind of natural bait. Supernatural monsters may do the same, mimicking the sound of a person in trouble or under attack from a monster.

BOON/BANE

The most straightforward of the tricks. It is simply a triggered positive or negative effect or event. Different than the trap in that the trigger is not necessarily hidden, the effect can be positive, and is not limited in any way.

Examples of Boon/Bane:

An altar to a nature god radiates neutrality, providing a *bless* spell to all true neutral characters that pass within 10′. It lasts 2–12 turns.

Strange torches glow with blue light. Anyone who passes within the light radius of the torches gains infravision until the next full moon.

A room contains gas which causes all party members to save or attack each other.

A series of runes on altars fill the area with a magical effect, such as antigravity or wind shoots or pneumatic tubes that allow players to gain equal footing in a battle against flying opponents such as beholders.

An ancient throne that once you sit upon it fills your head with knowledge, along with the thoughts of an ancient spirit.

A spirit or creature follows the characters through the adventure; they can siphon its energy a limited number of times to re-roll saving throws.

CONFUSION/MISDIRECTION

This trick is relatively straightforward, but the results are not! It is defined by creating a situation in which the players think they are dealing with one threat, only to discover it's not what they originally thought.

Examples of Confusion/Misdirection:

A golden platter sits in the floor. The platter is not actually gold, but covered in yellow mold.

A monster is not what it appears. A woman in robes is actually a medusa. An ox was crossbred with a gorgon. A golem is covered in gold so it appears to be a statue.

Signs that point a different way each time the area is entered.

A roomful of mirrors hides the location of your opponents. Simply hide the walls during a fight, and place another image of a monster at regular intervals of distance from the wall.

Have multiple antagonists draw the party in different directions at the same time.

If exploring a maze, have multiple rooms that appear identical to confuse players.

Have traps labeled with signs that have been switched, e.g. put a pit trap sign near the swinging blade trap, and put a swinging blade trap near the pit trap.

Have an important non-player character have an amulet of noseeum (non-detection) and not have them be evil or a secret monster.

DEFENDED

This trick is some sort of guardian, either a creature, a situation, a physical structure, or a magical effect. It may or may not be guarding a passage, object, monster or other item, thing, or person.

Examples of Defended:

A room is filled with furniture which animates to attack or trip up anyone trying to take anything from the room.

A passageway forward fills with water when the characters attempt to cross.

The opponents have access to switches, levers, or runes that raise and lower barriers, changing the battlefield to their advantage.

A secret entrance or passageway is in the bottom of a pit.

Archers attack from heavy cover.

An enemy has a shield that can only be pierced by a certain element or energy.

A room is filled with invisible walls and barriers, allowing the monsters to attack and move, while the characters risk colliding with unseen obstacles.

PUZZLE

This trick presents a conundrum. Fairly straightforward, this is a broad category encompassing many different options. Puzzle tricks are usually structured so that failing the puzzle or making mistakes carry consequences of some sort. Puzzle tricks have flexibility within the game format, in that they may be magical puzzles, abstract puzzles (like sudoku or a cryptoquote,) or a physical situation with multiple correct answers. (How do we cross the chasm?) Chess tricks are puzzle tricks.

Examples of Puzzles:

A statue of a cyclops has the pupil of its eye missing. A nearby monster has the eye, which is actually a large black pearl. Inserting the pearl into the eye will cause the statue to come to life and indicate the existence of a secret passage.

A room is bisected by a deep chasm with a rapid river flowing across the bottom. Small circular wooden platforms hang by thick chains from the ceiling at irregular intervals and heights.

A door that opens once a missing piece of it is found.

A switch puzzle can be used, common in computer role-playing games. All switches must be up or down for the passageway to be clear (or vault open, or whatever). Each group of switches flips itself plus 1 to n-1 switches. That is, if there are 4 total switches, each switch could flip just itself or up to 3 other switches. To set the puzzle up, simply determine what is flipped when each switch is toggled. Set the end state and then flip a few switches following your rules. You can represent the puzzle by using coins, heads or tails to represent the state of the switch

Common or simple puzzles such as the Tower of Hanoi or sliding tile puzzles can be integrated into the game, where they must move objects or pillars in a grid or causing various combinatorial effects based on which discs of the tower are exposed or on top.

The classic Fox—Chicken—Grain puzzle can be altered to fantasy expectations. Variations of the pattern can be implemented considering the situation. Consider having to escort a young groom and bride, where the groom wants to sleep with the bride, and the bride is a thief that wants to steal the groom's treasure. Alternately, consider having to escort back both prisoners, victims, and treasure. Wizards could put you in charge of transporting familiars, all of which are at each other's throat (dog—cat—bird).

Another classic puzzle is the key behind the lock, solved by having the key fall onto a piece of paper and pulled under the door. Letting the players know what they want is inside a closed box is the definition of player-driven play.

QUEST

This trick provides (voluntarily or not) a task or goal for the party.

Examples of Quests:

A fountain statue animates and speaks a riddle hinting at the existence of a magic weapon that will slay the beast nearby.

An un-openable door requires a special key.

A haunted ghost is a deadly enemy but if their restless spirit is calmed by retrieving a token from their former life.

A spirit begins haunting the character, making noise and possibly raising questions about why she is haunted.

A macguffin (artifact, enigma, unidentified treasure, soul-stuff, ambrosia, god-head, etc.) is found and cannot just be ignored.

A problem is only a problem because of something that happened to its habitat. The spiders are fleeing another predator, or the giant in the woods is causing problems because she's sick.

A threat approaches a vulnerable group, such as a village, temple, hospital, or orphanage.

A mechanism won't work unless it is somehow fixed.

Someone falls ill and a cure must be recovered. Complications can include the sick person being necessary to recover the cure, or that the cure turns out to be a fake.

RANDOM

Who knows what will happen? This is the trick version of the Deck of Many Things or the Wand of Wonder. Interacting with this trick causes a variety of non-themed effects to occur.

Examples of Random:

An arch randomly appears in a doorway after someone passes through. Passing through the arch will cause one of the following to happen: reduce or enlarge the PC by 50%-90%, or teleport the character to a secret chamber where plants bear gems instead of fruit.

A statue that randomly performs one of these actions when approached within 20'. Turn and point in a random direction, scream, recite a meaningless poem, or pontificate.

Four stones, rings, or crowns rest on plinths. Choosing one causes the others to vanish. Each is a different item.

Levers rest nearby a giant mechanism; pulling them produces a random treasure, trap, or monster.

A magic portal will send characters to one of three destinations nearby.

RIDDLE

A challenge is given. If solved correctly, it gives a positive result. Otherwise. . .

Riddles are often exactly that—spoken riddles. They are often used to bar passage or provide hints to the location of treasure.

Examples of Riddles:

An idol sits on a pedestal in the far end of the room. When the party enters, its eyes turn red and it recites a riddle in Draconic. It repeats the riddle once a minute for five minutes If the riddle is answered correctly, the players receive one wish. If the players fail to answer, poison gas streams from its ears.

A door has a riddle on it in ancient Elven. It will only open once the answer is said.

An ancient powerful deathlord asks those who brave his lair questions to seek anyone who is his equal.

A raven follows the party and asks the characters simple riddles in a singsong voice, as guardian for a druid or green dragon.

A spirit is bound to an ancient dungeon, asking all who approach it a riddle about the dungeon.

SECRET

This trick works best in a sandbox game because of the frequency in which the players tread the same ground. Vary rarely or only under certain conditions something special happens.

Examples of Secrets:

A door that pivots to the left, with a non-cumulative 1% chance that a secret stud will be noticed when passing through the door. When depressed, the door instead pivots to the right, leading to a secret chamber with a magic fountain.

On nights of the full moon, a doorway appears in the enchanted fen. If unlocked with a pearl of at least 100 gp value, it opens to a secret underwater Elven palace.

A nearby portal provides passage to different places based on the phases of the moon.

An entrance is opened deep within a structure that leads to a shortcut near the surface.

Treasure hidden by illusion, invisibility, behind concealed panels in the floor, ceiling, or walls.

Everyone in a village, dungeon, temple, or other gathering of creatures knows a dangerous secret, and all are reticent for any outsider to find it out. Perhaps they are using some helpless creatures as food or fuel, hiding a profitable crop smuggling scheme, or they are cultists.

SHINY

This trick looks strange and pretty, but does little else.

Examples of Shiny:

Encased in a crystal floor is the skeleton of a large dragon.

A room is filled with plants that, when a breeze blows, catch the wind and sing.

Gentle glowing globes glide gracefully.

A room contains 9 rats and 3,000 copper pieces.

Two spirits play an ancient game of chess.

A strange animatronic dispenses random advice.

The entire dungeon is made from diamond or some other amazing substance.

SHOP

This trick is a very specific kind of tool trick. It works very simply; give or sell something – get something in return. This trick is best if it's located in a fairly distant or inhospitable place or only works intermittently (1/week or less) or is expensive. Otherwise your campaign should be prepared for the results.

Examples of Shops:

A crystal statue of a man with a small pile of gems inside his hollow body. If a gem is placed in his outstretched cupped palms of at least 100 gp value, the statue will answer one question.

A powerful group of creatures run a forge where adventurers can trade certain regular goods for enchantments or unique magical items.

A vending machine will exchange potions for gems. Players should question why it hasn't been vandalized yet; there may be a good reason in the form of a guardian or trap.

A shrine contains a useful blessing dependent on charity.

A magical beast or creature lives nearby that will trade one rare item for another.

Gods will answer questions or grant small amounts of experience, in exchange for the character's time and devotion.

Spirits of a forest prevent entry for all who do not carry the fee, a single fresh carrot. Inside all kinds of bargains can be made with the fae denizens of the woods.

TERRAFORMER

This trick alters the environment in some way, either making the passable impassable or creating an alteration of some sort to the space.

Examples of Terraformers:

A room is filled with a dark mist, which clings and grabs, causing everyone to act as if they are entangled while in the room.

A lever across the room will flood a tunnel or section of the dungeon, allowing access to new areas.

A room containing monsters has a central light source that randomly illuminates a section of the room. Every time it does, there is a chance it sucks the soul of anyone caught inside.

The floor of an area is a shifting unstable mess, e.g. ice platforms or lily pads on water, rocky ground under burrowing creatures, sections of the dungeon or room being destroyed as the battle continues.

Poison gas, acid, or magma is slowly destroying the available area, complicating whatever task the players are attempting to accomplish.

TIME-WASTER

The sole purpose of this trick is either to slow the party down or make them waste time, so that additional wandering monster checks are made.

Examples of Time-Wasters:

An unopenable door covered in lights and levers has a distinctive keyhole. Pulling a lever changes the colors of the lights. Inserting a key causes the door to "eat" the key.

At the bottom of a pit sits a (literal) ton of broken furniture. Glints and reflections indicate not treasure, but worthless tin shavings.

Many hundreds of boxes lie on the walls, all filled with worthless papers and bones, but the only way to be sure is to check them all.

A locked treasure sits nearby, with a wall of switches. The switches flip lights, which certainly appear to open the door, if they can only be lined up.

A harpy lairs far from the characters' reach above, with plenty of very good cover from ranged weapon fire. She has no compunction over casting aspersions over their virility and possible overweight bovine ancestry of their mothers.

There is a sealed off passage that is difficult to open. If the effort is expended, a blocked tunnel is their reward.

There's a large sand timer that is counting down. Once the timer ends, there is a significant pause, and then the timer rotates and begins again.

A series of signs lead deep into a nondescript side passage.

TOOL

This trick performs a specific function. Unlike Shop, it does not always require a cost, and unlike Bane/Boon, the effect may not be negative or positive – it simply is.

Examples of Tools:

A contraption that when a gem is placed inside and a button depressed it tumbles the gem into a smooth cut gem.

A face is carved into the wall. Anything said within earshot of the face is repeated in Dwarven.

A chute will exchange lower value coins for higher value coins.

A dispenser exudes paste that will allow anyone who places on their shoes to walk on air for a short period of time.

A disk will move characters from one platform or area to another.

A strange fungus will allow characters to breathe under water for a short time.

A pair of portals that increase or decrease the size of an object by 50% depending on the direction travelled.

TRANSMUTATION

This trick involves the mutation, change, or replacement of one object to another. It can either transmute an object, or involves an object that has been transmuted from one for another.

Examples of Transmutation:

Water in a pool is actually sharp like razors, cutting and slashing anything in the water for damage every round.

A large banquet is laid out, but when examined, all the food is actually made of stone.

Inside the room there are gems and rich treasures, outside the room they are dull rocks and heavy lead medallions.

A pool will transform gems into enchantments for armor and weapons.

A trap switches the appearances of two characters, permanently.

A rope or chain turns into a living snake.

A switch turns a wall into empty passable space.

A pedestal will age any item placed on it by 10,000 years.

There is a mystical local shrine that if you bathe beneath it under the full moon, your gender changes to what you wish.

A metal pole turns into lightning and allows travel during stormy weather.

Short pillars allow you to change the direction of gravity.

An orb will cause any fine vellum or paper to be enchanted as a random scroll, and it is recharged by sunlight.

TRANSPORT

This trick is in some way related to locomotion. Transport tricks either transport the party mechanically or magically or allow them to access new and different areas.

Examples of Transport:

A lengthy corridor 20' wide, with a 20' wide room at the end. When entered and doors shut, it imperceptibly slides back over the same length of corridor.

The archetypical elevator room.

Portals open to random demi-planes.

If you fill an archway with smoke, it opens a gate to a distant place.

A coin or other small treasure will always seek its pair at midnight, transporting anyone who has one to the other.

A cage will be flown to the requested destination by violent bird things.

A grandfather clock has a door that leads to a different place, depending on the hour of the day.

When the fruit of a certain plant is eaten, it puts you into the ethereal realm of dreams allowing you to dream-walk.

An ancient creature will act as a ferry, bringing characters to a specific unreachable destination.

A deadly impassible obstacle, e.g. a lava flow, a wall of ice, deadly fjords, is actually a portal to another plane.

WEIRDNESS

This is a catchall category for anything that doesn't fit one of the above categories.

Examples of Weirdness:

Characters enter a room, where a tightly packed group of humanoids move laterally to the party, shifting one step closer every time they hit a wall. An orc holding a treasure on the other side of the room occasionally runs between two doors.

There are nine holes in the ground, and once a round a giant mole pops out of a hole and whacks anyone nearby.

The characters open a door and it leads to outer space.

The party have an encounter with a character from another fictional universe.

Characters travel into the real world and fight in world war two or meet their players.

Characters sit down and roll up fantasy characters in a fantasy adventure game, Darkness & Dangers. Each player has their character, rolls three six-sided dice six times and then. . .

A film crew follows the adventurers around for the session.

A procession of ex-partners of the characters all show up at the same time.

For some reason, during this session, everyone has to sing anything they want to say.

DESIGNING A TRICK

It is a bad idea to exclusively use random generation to design tricks. It can be useful for inspiration, but if every decision is without intent, then all decisions are meaningless.

What is it that makes a good trick? Player agency, significant and noticeable consequences for choices, and verisimilitude.

Player agency.

What this means is that the person sitting at the table must make an informed choice at some point in order for the trick to exert some consequence for the player.

Does this mean you have to give the trick away? Absolutely not! Here is an example of a trick without player agency:

DM: You see a room through the doorway.
PC: We enter the room.
DM: The ceiling falls on you and you die.

Now here is an example of the same trick with player agency:

DM: You see a room through the doorway. The floor inside the room has a light coating of dust.
PC: We enter the room.
DM: The ceiling falls on you and you die.

They must discover the dust is pulverized rock, some indicator of abnormality so that their choice has meaning. If they notice anything interesting you describe, use empty rooms and red herrings by adding unimportant details to allow many of the interactables to do nothing. Specificity and consistency in description will increase trust and put the focus on the decision the player must make to act or acquire information.

Significant and notable consequences.

It is important for the enjoyment of the players sitting at your table that the consequences of their actions be both significant and notable. If you have a room filled with 10 levers and all of the levers affect things 4 dungeon levels (and 2 months of play) away, then there is no consequence for pulling the levers. Regardless if it changes anything or not, if they players don't notice the change, then the change doesn't occur. If there aren't any consequences to pulling the lever, then the choice to pull or not pull the lever is essentially meaningless.

Another example of this is the unforeseen secret solution. No one wants to guess at one specific chain of actions that lead to a solution. Having to befriend an unremarkable innkeeper for a hoozit, which then goes into an unmarked tree in the forest to get a doohicky, activated by a command word that can only be discovered by magic so that it can be used in a totally unrelated room later on or your passage is barred from the rest of the adventure, and the only way to discover this is a wizard who lives in a tower forty miles to the east, but it has never come up in game once so the players have never heard of him to get to the next stage of your game. This isn't a question of intelligence; people are unable to read minds. If you wish them to solve a puzzle, a good rule of thumb is that you must ensure the players have a minimum of three (normally five) clues to every step in the process. You may not simply place the clues, but you must make sure the players have seen them (i.e. if you put them in out of the way places, then you really aren't giving out the clues).

In the lever example above, clues could be a secret passage in the room that leads to where the levers activate, symbols over each lever that are matched by a similar symbol near what they affect (or effect, depending), and a guide in an ancient language that describes each lever and what they do on a shelf with other books in a room nearby. Nearby monsters could also be questioned and have some information about the levers.

The consequences of an action must be significant; otherwise they are meaningless and are de facto not consequences. A trick that raises a stat 1/1000th of a point might as well not have done anything at all.

Verisimilitude

This word means that although we are playing a game where much is abstracted, this does not allow you to break the suspension of disbelief or dictate the actions of the player characters. You cannot make the players do anything—only describe the situation, listen to their responses, and describe the results of their actions.

Remember, every trick, empty room, and trap is an encounter. Each should be set up just like any monster encounter. It is important that tricks provide reasonable consequences—per OD&D Greyhawk "*It therefore behooves the campaign referee to include as many mystifying and dangerous areas as is consistent with a reasonable chance of survival remembering that the monster population already threatens this survival.*"

Important! Another key factor is that tricks must occasionally have a positive (and rarely, a very positive) effect. If every trick results in something negative, then your players will quickly learn to avoid your dungeons. If forced into them, they will cover their peripheral vision and walk straight to the goal as quickly as possible.

WALLS / FLOORS / CEILINGS

Like doors, walls, floors, and ceilings deserve special mention. They are components of every room and constants within the dungeon. Occasionally having a strange or special effect associated with the structure of the dungeon itself can keep a party on its toes. Surface refers to the appropriate wall. These are also useful as examples of standard tricks.

Surface acts like water, rippling when touched
Surface is unstable, constantly rolling
Surface retains impression of whatever comes into contact with it for a few minutes
Surface is covered somehow (vegetation, skin, scales, cloth, crystals)
Surface is translucent, reflective, transparent
Surface is gone
    Net or web or grate
    Pool or molten substance
Surface absorbs sound
Surface is removed or partially incomplete
    Only a path around perimeter
    Stepping stones suspended in air
    No floor, but magical transport
    Tightrope and rope bridge
Surface is aligned; differently aligned creatures take damage when crossing
Surface causes spell effect
Surface moves in some way
Surface is carved
Surface is of a strange material (block of ice, metal)
Surface has mosaic
Surface acts like a trampoline
Surface is divided into sections that have various heights that may rise and fall at random
Surface is divided and records something about the characters as they pass (name, portrait)
Surface is magnetic
Surface has sections “removed” that may be filled with dimensional viewing portals
Surface has unusual shape
    Bowl
    Dome or bubble
    Pyramid
    Upside down pyramid
Surface turns anything it touches invisible
Invisible caltrops on floor
Surface alternates between two states (rock/mud, water/ice, stone/air, acid/base)
Surface is electrified
Surface is quicksand (looks like sandstone)
Surface makes noises when touched

Surface is phosphorescent
Anyone touching surface speaks a different language
Anyone touching surface *blinks*
Floor is 30' deep except for a single path; room is filled with water 1' higher than the path
Surface drops for every increment of weight applied
Surface is spongy, may or may not be covered in liquid/damp
Surface releases disease or spores on contact
Surface is illusionary
Surface glows
Contact with surface extinguishes all torches
Surface exudes anti-magic zone
Surface is covered in spikes, blade, or nails
Surface is uneven or not level
Surface produces its own gravity
Walking in a certain direction across a surface grows or shrinks characters
Touching surface disintegrates anything that comes into contact with it
Anyone touching surface can communicate telepathically with anyone else touching surface
Surface is covered in a strong adhesive
Touching surface creates a double or doppleganger that hates you
Surface acts like a *forbiddance* spell, preventing inappropriately aligned planar creatures from touching it.

Use a combination of the above

COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF THINGS IN ROOMS

Interesting empty rooms and tricks need a greater depth of options for contents. Following is a list of things that can be found inside interesting empty rooms, expanding upon and giving you possibilities for "objects". This table is also of use for tricks and special rooms. Bold entries are well suited for related objects that are factors in tricks.

Altar

Air *(clear, foggy, steamy, hazy (dust, smoke), misted)*

Air Currents *(breeze (slight, damp, gusting), cold, downdraft, still (chill, warm, hot), updraft, wind (strong, gusting, moaning))*

Arch

Bed *(feather, water, bunk, canopied, curtained, enclosed)*

Container (*amblic, backpack, bale, bag, barrels, basket, bin, bread box, basin, beaker, bottle, bowl, box, bucket, cabinet, can, canister, canteen, carafe, case, cashbox, cask, casket, cauldron, chalice, chest, chest of drawers, closet, coffer, coffin, crate, cup, decanter, drinking glass, ewer, flask, foot locker, goblet, gourd, hamper, hatbox, hope chest, jar, jewelry box, jug, lock box, molds, music box, narrow-mouthed jar, pan, pannier, phial, pillbox, pitcher, portmanteau, pot, pottery, pottle, pouch, powder box, puzzle box, sack, satchel, sea chest, shadow box, shelves, strong box, spittoon, tinder box, trough, trunk, tub, urn, valise, vase, wineskin.* Any of these may be *broken, in shards, full, empty,* or *torn,***)**

Clock *(small, grandfather, mantle, pocket watch, table, tall, wall)*

Clothing (*apron, belt, blouse, bodkin, boots, braies, buskins, cap, cape, cowl, barbette and fillet, cloak, coat, coif, doublet, dress, fez, frock / pinafore, garter, gauntlets, girdle, gloves, gorget, gown, hat, habit, hood, hose, jerkin, jupon, kerchief, kirtle, leggings, linen, mantle, pantaloons, petticoat, pouch, purse, robe, sandals, scarf, shawl, shift, slippers, smock, stockings, surcoat, toga, trousers, tunic, veil, vest, wallet, wrapper*)

Decoration *(arras, armorial bearings, bell, column (half), curtains, drapery, flag, fur, gilt/gilding, hide, inlay (ivory, metal, tile stone, wood), map, mirror, molding (plaster, wood carved), niche, paneling, paint, plaster, rail chair, relief (molded, sculpted, bas, high, sunken), sconce, sheeting (metal, stone), shield, skin, tile (mineral tile, wood), wallcloth, wallpaper, whitewash, weaving)*

Dias

Clay / Dirt / Mud / Dust / Filth / Sand / Sewage

Dome

Fasteners *(banding, bolt & nut, nail, peg, pin, cotter pin, clothespin, rivet, screw, strapping, washer)*

Fireplace *(firepit)*

Forcefield

Fountain / Lake / Pool / Font (*holy, unholy, magical, poisoned, birdbath*)

Fresco / Mosaic / Painting (*parchment / tiles*)

Furnishings (*armchair, armoire, bedroll, bench, blanket, bookshelves, buffet, bunks, chair, coat rack, cots, couch, cresset, cupboard, cushion, desk, divan, end table, forge, furnace, futon, hamper, kneeling bench, lectern, loom, mat, mattress, oven, pallet, platters, pews, pillow, podium, quilt, rocking chair, sand table, screen, shelves, shrine, sofa, stool, stove, table, throne, torture equipment, tub, wall basin, workbench)*

Food / Waste *(alcohol, butchery, carnage, cocoa, coffee, cooking oil, fish, flour, grain, herbs/spices, honey, lard, meat, molasses, nuts, salt (fish, meat), syrup (corn, maple), tea, toilet, vanilla, vinegar*)

Idol

Illusion / Magic (*crystal ball, magic circle, rune stones*)

Light (*brazier, candles, candelabra, chandelier, coals, fire, lamp, lantern, oily rags, smoke, torches, torch stub, wax*)

Markings (*books, tomes /manuals, scrolls, runes, scratches, summoning runes, writing*)

Machine (*buttons, crane, crank, gantry, hourglass, inclined plane, levers, metronome, pendulum, pulley, switch, sundial, telescope*)

Monster (*you've got to be kidding me*)

Money (*coins*)

Musical Instruments (*bagpipes, bells, blocks, chimes, cymbals, didgeridoo drums, dulcimers, fiddles, fifes, flute, gongs, harp, horns, hurdy-gurdy, lutes, lyres, mandolins, ocarina, organ, pan pipes, recorders, tambourine, triangle, trumpet, whistle, xylophone*)

Nests (*web*)

Odors *(acrid, chlorine, dank, earthy, fetid, manure, metallic, moldy, ozone, putrid, rotting vegetables, salty, smoky, stale, sulphurous, urine)*

Organic (*animal parts (wings, bones), arms, ashes, bees, blood, bones, bugs, buzzing, dung, ears, eyeballs, feathers, fingers, fish, furs, guano, hides, horsehair, ichor, insects, legs, petrified body, pets, rats, skeletons (animal, human, monster, giant), skins, slime, snakes, spiders, toes, vermin*)

Passage / Door / Hallway / Portal / Gate / Tunnel

Pedestal

Pillar / column

Plant (*flowers, fungi, fruit, leaves, mold, pipe weed, seeds, spores, straw, tobacco, trees*)

Restraints / Torture *(bastinadoes, branding irons, cage (bird, animal), chains, chain with straps, clamps, cressets (wall), fetters, finger stocks, gags, gate, glue, grill, hooks, hoists, iron boot, iron maiden, irons (branding, poker), locks, manacles, needles and pins, padlocks, pillory, pliers, huge pot, portcullis, pressing board & weights, rack, ropes, stocks, strappado, tar, tongs, thumbscrews, "u" rack, vice, wheel, whips*)

Sounds / Noises *(bang/slam, bellow, bong, bubbling, buzzing, chirping, chanting, chiming, clanking, clashing, clicking, coughing, creaking, drumming, footsteps (ahead, approaching, behind, receding, side, faint), gong, grating, groaning, grunting, hissing, hooting, horn/trumpet, howling, humming, jingling, knocking, laughter, moaning, murmuring, music, rattling, ringing, roaring, rustling, scratching/scrabbling, screaming, scuttling, shuffling, slithering, snapping, sneezing, sobbing, splashing, splintering, squeaking, squealing, tapping, thud, thumping, tinkling, twanging, whining, whispering, whistling)*

Stairway (*chute, elevators, ladders, shaft, slide*)

Statue

Structure (*alcove, balcony, barred window, bridge, catwalk, depressions, freestanding wall, glass window, hook, iron bar, mirrors, nails, pipes, protrusions, railing, rope bridge, stadium seating, stone slab, walking paths*)

Surface / Floor / Ceiling / Wall

Tapestry (*banners, carpets, rugs*)

Traps (*see trap section*)

Trash/refuse *(broken arrow, broken bottle, corroded chain, splintered club, bent coin, hilt, dung, dust, cracked flask, food scraps, fungus, guano, hair/fur, cracked hammerhead, badly dented helmet, bent rusted iron bar, leather boot, leaves & twigs, mold, handle, broken pole, pottery shards, rags, rotten rope, rubble & dirt, torn sack, rusted spike, sticks, small stones, straw, broken blade, loose teeth, loose fangs, torch stub, wax blobs, rotting wood.)*

Things *(ashtray, ambergris, balls, beads, blocks, blotter, cards, chalk, comforter, cover, crystals, curios, cushion, dolls, doll houses, dye, fake jewelry, kaleidoscope, figurine, gambling chips, geode, gravels, gypsum, headdress, hook, humidor, ice chest, jacks, incense, incense burner, ivory, jewelry, lye, makeup, marbles, mask (animal, demonic, exotic, feather), metal ingots, metal sheets, mobile, offertory dish, oil, perfume, pipe (brass, briar, calabash, clay, corncob, meerschaum, stone, reamer), pitch, potash, practice targets, prayer wheel, puppets, quilt, reliquary, resin, ribbon, rosary, sand, seashells, sheets, symbol (holy, unholy), tablecloth, tack, tallow, tar, tiles (ceramic, slate), tea leaves, towel, toys, toy soldiers, trophies, turpentine, washcloth, whale bone, wool)*

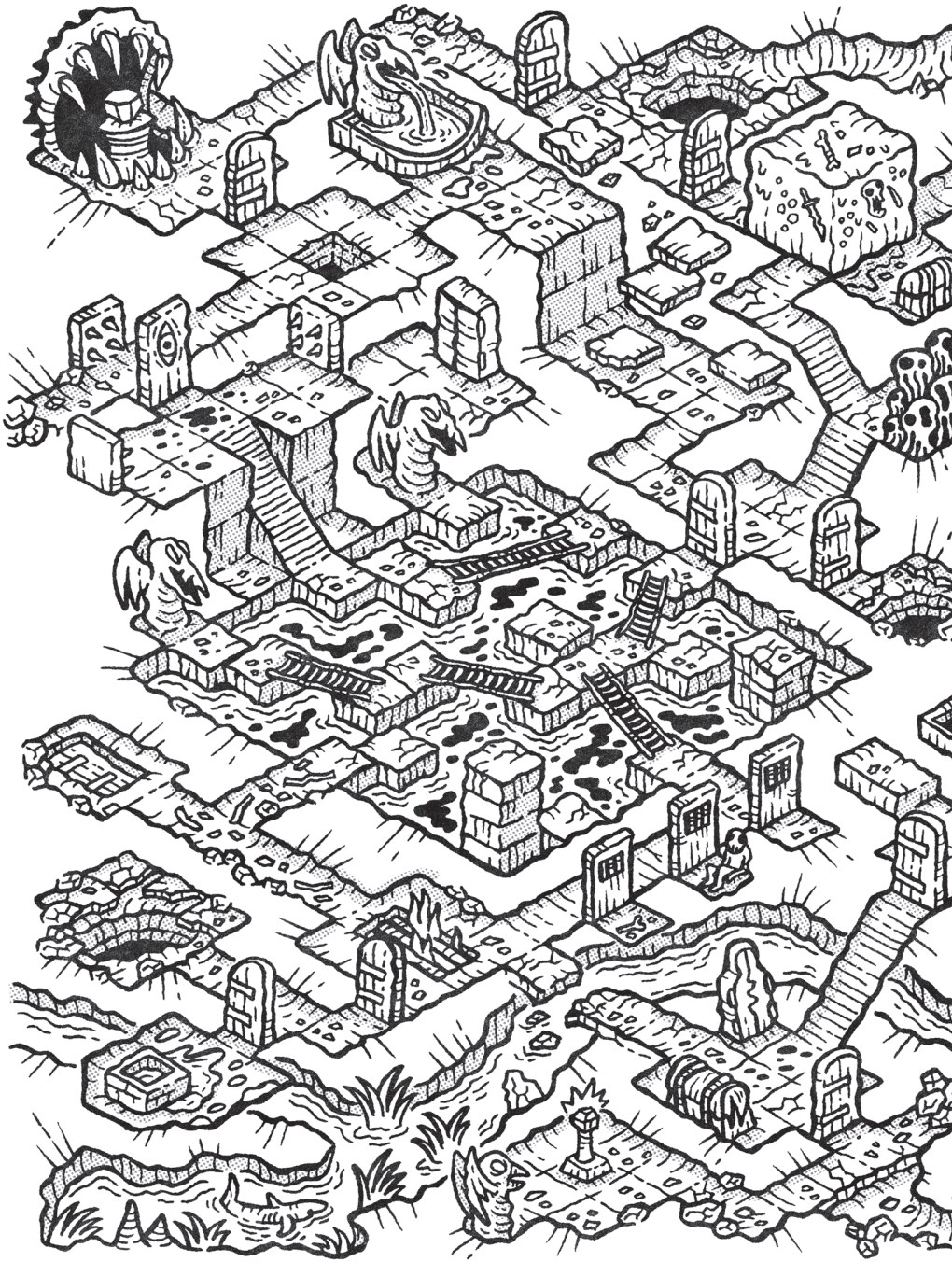
Tools (*adhesive, astrolabe, alembic, adze, ankus (to prod animals with), anvil, athame (wood, gilded, bone, ivory) auger, awl, balance & weights, bangles, beaker, bell, bellows, belt axe, binoculars, bladder, block and tackle, bottle, bow drill, bowl, branding iron, brush, broom, buckle, stopper, callipers, candelabra, candlestick, cards, carding comb, carpenter's square, cauldron, chain cutter, china, chisel, cigar cutter, clamp, cloth, coffin, combs, compass, cord, corkscrew, crowbar, crucible, cup, dice, drill bits, drill, drinking jack, drinking horn, dolls, door handles, dust pan, ewers, eye-patch, feather duster, file, finger-pick, fire poker, fish-hooks, flagon, forge, fork, game pieces, gavel, gimlet, grindstone, goblet, gouge, hangers, hammer, hatchet, hilt, hoe, hook, hollow reed, holy symbol, ink, ink pot, kettle, key ring, knives, ladle, loom, mallet, mantle, masks, maul, measuring (line, stick), mirrors, molds, mortar & pestle, monocle, mop, mug, nails, needles (knitting, other), nippers, offertory container, paint, pan, peg-legs, pickaxe, pitcher, pitchfork, pen case, planner, plates, platters, pliers, plow, plumb line, pots, potters wheel, pouches and small boxes, pulley, quill, rake, rasp, right angle, rope, salt cellar, saw, sawhorse, scissors, scepters, scythe, shears, shepherd's crook, shovel, sledge, spade, spit, spikes, spoon,spyglass, straight edge, stein, string, thimble, thread, tiles, trays, tongs, toys, vestments, vise, wedge, wheelbarrow, whetstone, whitewash, wire, whistle, wrench, yarn*)

Vehicle (*boat, chariot, wagon*)

Water (*aquarium, bath, damp, moisture, puddle, trickle, river, stream, waterway*)

Weapons / Armor (*broken, cracked, dented, rusted*)

Well



Do you sometimes wish you didn't have to put in so much effort into engaging your players in tabletop role-playing games?
Wouldn't it be nice if they couldn't wait to play around in your world?
If they were pushing you to spend more time in the land you create?

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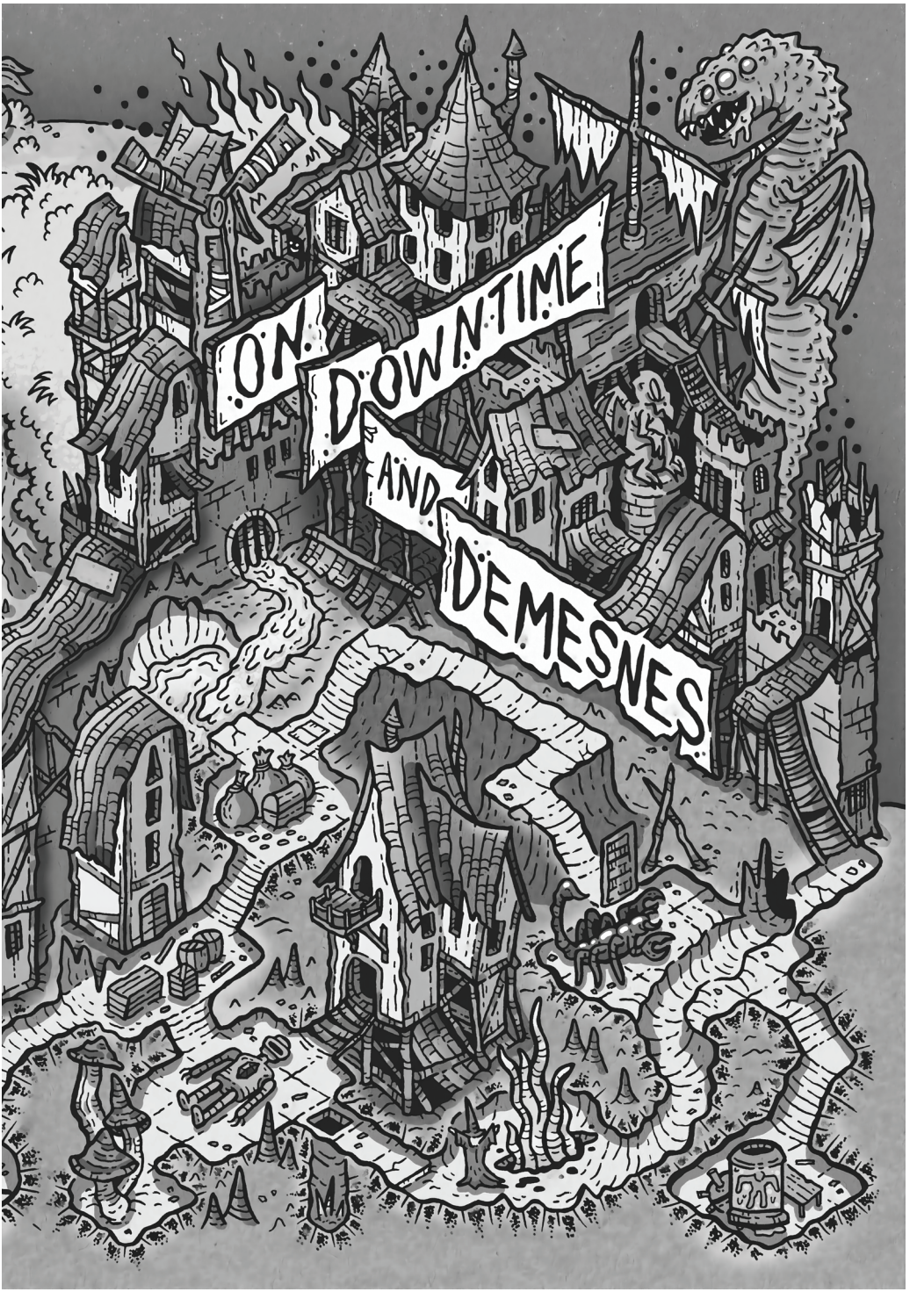
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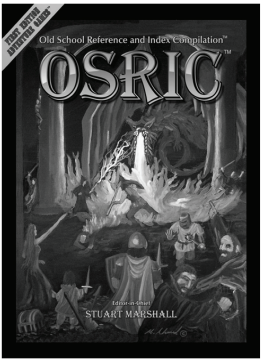

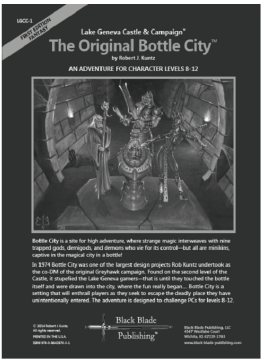

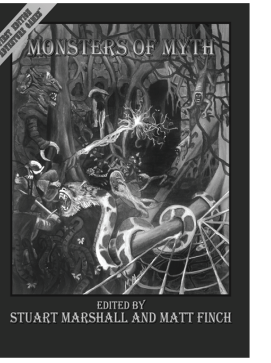

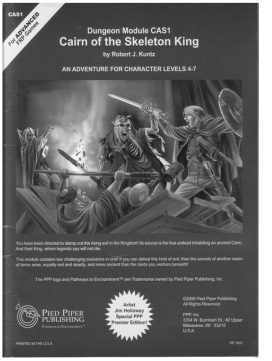

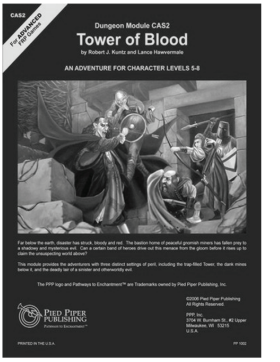

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