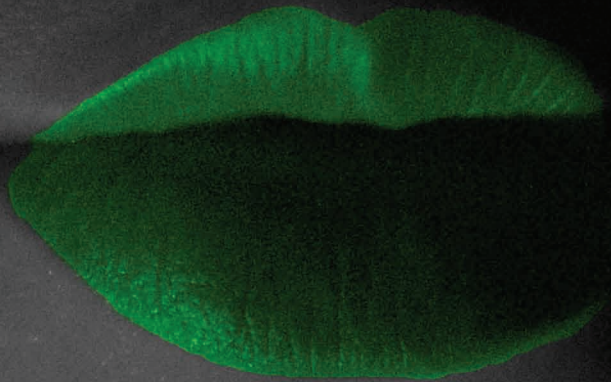


CONTAGION'S KISS



Contagion's Kiss

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Contagion's Kiss is an adventure for a party of 4th level characters. It can be used in any fantasy city or town where wells or cisterns are the main source of water. The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide* and *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* are required for play.

When Aisha, a prominent brothel owner, sought to further her skills at inflicting pain for pleasure, she encountered the embodiment of torture: a kyton by the name of Malii Halak. As Aisha's skills grew, she brought her own apprentice, Abida, to learn alongside her under the tutelage of the tormenting outsider. The two women learned much, and their reputation grew rapidly throughout the city. The kyton was pleased with her protégés, for she saw in them the chance to satisfy her own dark needs. First, Malii enlisted a knowledgeable poisoner known as Aarif the Tainted, and set him to work concocting a dangerous disease with which to contaminate the city wells. At the same time, she stockpiled scrolls of *create water*, intending to use them to hold the thirsty city to ransom. Those not able to pay for water with gold would pay with their flesh.

Synopsis

In Act 1, the PCs encounter a poisoner attempting to contaminate a city well. Unable to prevent his fellow conspirators from completing their mission, the PCs must track down the poisoner's employer.

In Act 2, the PCs arrive at a run down keep, where the kyton Malii Halak has established her base of operations. The PCs must surpass the keep's defences in

order to obtain the components needed for creating an antidote to the clawing cough disease.



Plot Hooks

There are a number of ways the players' characters can become embroiled in the events unfolding within the city:

- Natives to the city, they might stumble on Malii's agents poisoning a well at night, or witness first hand the effects of clawing cough contagion.
- A seer, fortune teller, or medium might have a disturbing vision of chains erupting from the city wells, ensnaring the entire city within their grasp. This may lead the PCs to investigate the city wells.
- Visitors to the city or anyone passing through a main gate may encounter Black Thumb Firouz or another poisoner enroute to the wells. A Perception check should be enough to hint at their suspicious nature.
- The two women, Aisha and Abida, act as Malii's eyes and ears within the city, and although they don't feature in this adventure directly, they are particularly useful for manipulating the powers within the city. One of them might approach the PCs directly, especially if they have reason to silence them, sending them directly into a trap.



Aisha CR 5
NE Female human
expert 5/fighter 2
See the *torturer* in the
Pathfinder
Roleplaying Game
GameMastery Guide.

Black Thumb Firouz CR 3
CE Male human expert
1/rogue 3
See the *dealer* in the
Pathfinder Roleplaying
Game GameMastery
Guide.



Abida CR 3
CE Female human
cleric 3
See the *cultist* in the
Pathfinder
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GameMastery Guide.



Firouz is a small-time criminal who has found himself in way over his head, and is currently suffering a moral dilemma. Because of this he begins with the shaken condition. This condition ends when he flees the scene, for any reason. He will react hostilely to anyone who confronts him, but his purpose is to contaminate the well and then disappear, so he will not stick around to fight.

Firouz was hired directly by Aarif the Tainted, who often provided Firouz with his narcotic wares in the past. The two are well acquainted, although they have little reason to trust one another. Firouz knows where Aarif's base is, and that he is in the employ of someone named Malii, but beyond that he has no further information. Although Firouz is a gifted alchemist himself, he had no hand in creating the clawing cough contagion, and takes a –4 to Craft (alchemy) skill checks involving the disease. Firouz knows that other poisoners are on the same mission as himself, but he can only give a rough estimation of their numbers — one poisoner to every major well in the city.

Act 1 — Uncovering the Plot

Black Thumb Firouz and a number of Malii's agents have taken up position around the city's wells, waiting for the opportune moment to contaminate the city's water supply with clawing cough contagion.

CLAWING COUGH CONTAGION
Type disease, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 16
Onset 1d6 hours; **Frequency** 1/day
Effect sickened, target must make a second Fort save or take 1d3 Con damage; **Cure** 3 consecutive saves



Whether Firouz is apprehended or not, the next morning the success of the other poisoners becomes apparent. Roughly half of the city wells have been contaminated, and already many of the city residents are complaining of an itchy cough. Over the week the symptoms of

the cough worsen, leading to many deaths within the city, unless an antidote is concocted.

Besides questioning Firouz or any of the other poisoners, there are several clues that point to the keep where Malii and Aarif are based.

With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) check a PC can recall that an alchemist going by the name of The Tainted has recently been recruiting from the city's criminal element. A DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check will allow a PC to recall several sites outside of the city worth investigating. Only one of those sites, an old keep, would provide excellent defenses as well. The poisoners left many other clues, such as discarded vials, in the vicinity. The DC for tracking the poisoners back to the fort depends on the terrain in the area, but since the poisoners were moving at night, give the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus on Survival skill checks for the purposes of following tracks.

Eventually, the adventurers' investigations will lead them to the keep, and Act 2.

Act 2 — Contagion

Keep

Malii found the perfect base from which to stage her plot — within the cold stone walls of an old keep. Refer to the following sections, along with the area map, for running the rest of the adventure.

Doors, Walls, and Locks

The old keep was in a relative state of disrepair when Malii acquired it, and she

has since put her hired thugs to work reinforcing much of the structure. A DC 10 Perception check is enough to notice these new additions to the keep.

Wooden doors throughout the keep have Hardness 5, 15 hp, and a Break DC of 18.

Secret doors are stone (DC 20 Perception to spot). They have Hardness 8, 60 hp, and a Break DC 28. Secret doors are locked, requiring a DC 15 Perception or Disable Device check to find and figure out the mechanism for opening them.

The exterior walls are 20 feet high, damaged masonry walls (Break DC 35, Hardness 8, 65 hp, Climb DC 20). Burglar bars (Hardness 10, 60 hp, Break DC 28) on the second story of the keep have been recently replaced. Arrow slits provide a +8 bonus to AC, a +4 bonus on Reflex saves, and the Improved Evasion class feature.

The slate roof slants at a 60 degree angle (Climb DC 5). There are 3 chimneys (25 feet high, Climb DC 20 to scale down the inside).

Locks in the circular tower require a DC 22 Disable Device check to unlock. Other door locks require a DC 20 Disable Device check to unlock. Chest locks require a successful DC 18 Disable Device check to unlock.

A. Front Door and Entrance Hall (CR 4)

Patrolling the perimeter and guarding the main entrance of the keep are 4 sellswords. Their orders are to dissuade anyone from approaching the keep. They are likely to shoot first and ask questions

later. If they have a clear upper hand against an intruder they switch to using their nonlethal saps. Although they often deal with Malii, none of the sellswords have realised she is not human, as she keeps her true visage hidden in shadows and a flowing gown.

Sellswords CR 3

CN human warrior 2 (4)
See the *bandit* in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*.



The first step up to the keep is trapped with an Arrow Trap. The guards avoid the step because of this (DC 10 Perception to notice the fact). If expecting an attack, the main door is barred from inside (Break DC 25).

Arrow Trap CR 1

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20;
Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** none

Effect Atk +15 ranged (1d8+1/x3)

B. Archers' Arcades (CR 2)

More sellswords, 2 in the long arcade and 1 in the small guard room, stand watch with bows strung. Fearing their mistress and anticipating an attack, they are on full alert. They will attack anyone approaching the stairs to the main entrance and are prepared to fight to the death.



C. Main Hall (CR 5)

The main hall contains Aarif's poisoning laboratory — a simple plank bench covered with a collection of vials, infusions, and obscure but deadly ingredients. Aarif has magically disguised the laboratory as a dead giant spider, complete with skulls spilling from its belly. The horrific illusion requires a DC 16 Will save to see through the magic, and failure by 5 or more causes fear, as if the subject had been targeted by a *cause fear* spell.

One eyed Aarif the Tainted crafts poisons and potions for Malii. His greatest work, the clawing cough contagion, was concocted under her supervision. He and 2 cultists are at work here unless the PCs are expected, in which case they hide out in the main bedroom, barricading themselves behind a bed.

Aarif the Tainted CR 4

CE Male human
commoner 2/wizard 3
See the *hedge wizard* in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*.



Contagion Cultist CR 3

NE human cleric 3 (2)
See the *cultist* in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*.

Aarif's ocular jar servitor waits hidden in this room, but, under the direction of Aarif, follows any intruder through the halls of the keep. It gains a +2 bonus on Stealth checks for using the debris and detritus strewn about the keep as cover. It uses its needle probe to attack any PC that presents an easy target.

Ocular Jar CR 1/2

See the *ocular jar* in *Chilling Curiosities — A Field Guide*.

D. Main Tower (CR 3)

Most of the contagion is stored within the first level of the main tower. This room is guarded by Gile, a turnkey responsible for the keep's prisoners. When he is aware of an attack he bars the door from the inside (Break DC 25).

Gile, Turnkey CR 3

NE male human
warrior 5

See the *turnkey* in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*.



The 2 crates of contagion filled vials kept here are useful for creating an antidote. A successful Craft (alchemy) DC 16 check is required to formulate an antidote from the contents. This requires 1 hour of work and a laboratory such as the poisoner's lab in room C.

The room also contains weapon racks with a small collection of mundane weapons. Covered in dust and resting from a hook in the wall is a beautiful elven dagger (+1 *returning dagger*), named Kataris, the Goblin Seeker.

E. Spiral Stair (CR 4)

Expecting an attack, the sellswords boobytrapped the main stairwell. They use the secret passages and the stairs in the archers' arcade to reach the upper level of the keep. A Falling Blocks trap is set at the bottom of the stair, and will target anyone

standing there or on the stair itself. An Arrow Trap is set at the top of the stair. Both traps are activated by a fine trip wire set just above the floor.

Falling Blocks Trap CR 3

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20;

Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** none

Effect Atk +15 melee (3d6); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. square)

F. Kitchen and Dining Hall

The kitchen and dining hall are practical rooms, and have been well stocked in anticipation of the siege that would likely follow in retaliation of the contamination of the city wells. Along with fine stolen goods like wines, the cured meats, grain, spices, and other foods stored here have a combined total of 150 gp. Hidden under a table in the kitchen is a box of *create water* scrolls which Malii intends to use as part of her ransoming the city.

G. Main Bedroom

The room holds Aarif's personal possessions, along with a large locked chest containing his notes, 2 *potions of cure light wounds* (CL 3), and 1 vial of the clawing cough contagion. Using Aarif's notes gives a +2 circumstance bonus to creating an antidote. If Aarif and his 2 cultist assistants are not in the main hall (room C), then they can be found here.



H. Small Cells

A large number of prisoners, many of whom are from the city, have been locked up here. Lots of them are suffering from advanced stages of the clawing cough contagion, while others bear the scars and open wounds of severe lashings.

Prisoner CR 2

N human expert 4

hp 1d6

See the *prisoner* in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*.



I. Bunk Room (CR 2)

If the PCs manage a surprise attack, then half the sellswords from area J are asleep on bunk beds here. The 2 locked chests in this room contain stolen goods, including 10 silver pearls (1000gp), a hand crossbow with 10 bolts, and a shiny but worthless tin helmet — home to a hungry helm lurker.

Helm Lurker CR 2

See the *helm lurker* in *Chilling Curiosities — A Field Guide*.

J. Guards' Room (CR 4)

More sellswords rest within this room. A sellsword, with a warhorn, watches the western and southern approaches to the keep from here. His 3 accomplices sit playing a quiet game of cards. If the PCs manage a surprise attack, the card playing sellswords suffer a –2 penalty on Perception checks.

K. Tower Cell (CR 6)

Malii Halak, a kyton, hangs in a cocoon of chains in the centre of the room. She waits for intruders to come into the cell before grappling them with the chains strewn about the floor, using her dancing chains ability to do so. If she is able to capture all the PCs, she uses them as scapegoats, with Aisha and Abida handing them over to the authorities along with incriminating evidence.

Malii Halak CR 6

LE Female kyton

AC 21; hp 60; regeneration 2 (good weapons and spells, silver weapons)

See the *kyton* in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*.

Two prisoners, Harkonen and Jyra, are held in the cell, cowering in fear of the fate that awaits them. The two are traders, and if rescued can give damning evidence against Malii and her plot.

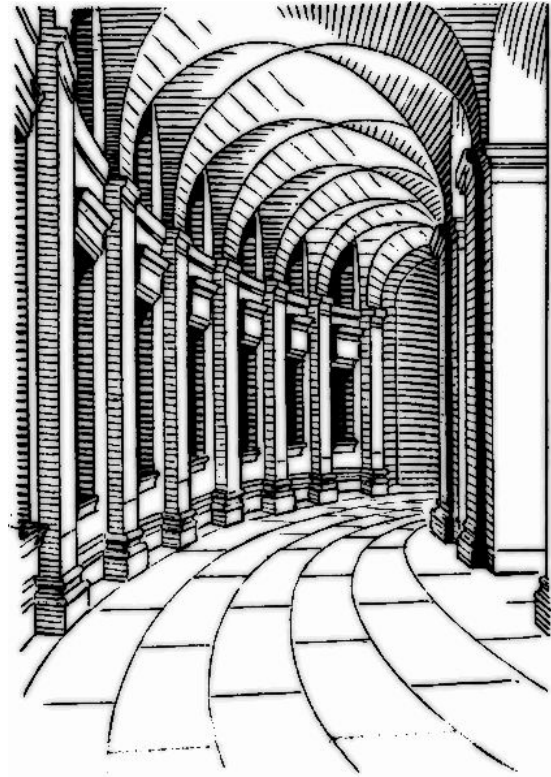


Wrapped within chains at the back of the cell is a *masterwork cold iron longsword*, 2 *scrolls of curse water* (CL 1), a *scroll of detect good* (CL 1), a *scroll of bane* (CL 1), a *scroll of delay poison* (CL 3), 5 bloodstones (worth 50 gp each), a set of masterwork torturer's tools (worth 100 gp, which gives +2 circumstance bonus on interrogation checks), and a *javelin of lightning*.

Conclusion

The PCs should have enough incriminating evidence by the end of the adventure to support their case against Malii and her cronies. Creating an antidote may prove more difficult, but if they can bring enough of the undiluted contagion to an alchemist in the city then creating an antidote should be elementary.

Discovering Abida and Aisha's links to the contagion plot will depend on the interactions the PCs have with the two women during the adventure. As devotees of Malii, if they evade capture, they could prove to be a thorn in the PCs' sides, manipulating their allies against them whenever possible.



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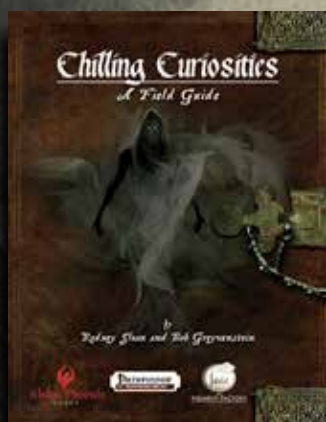
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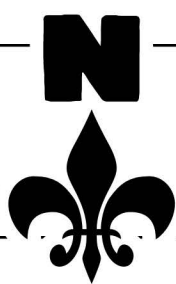



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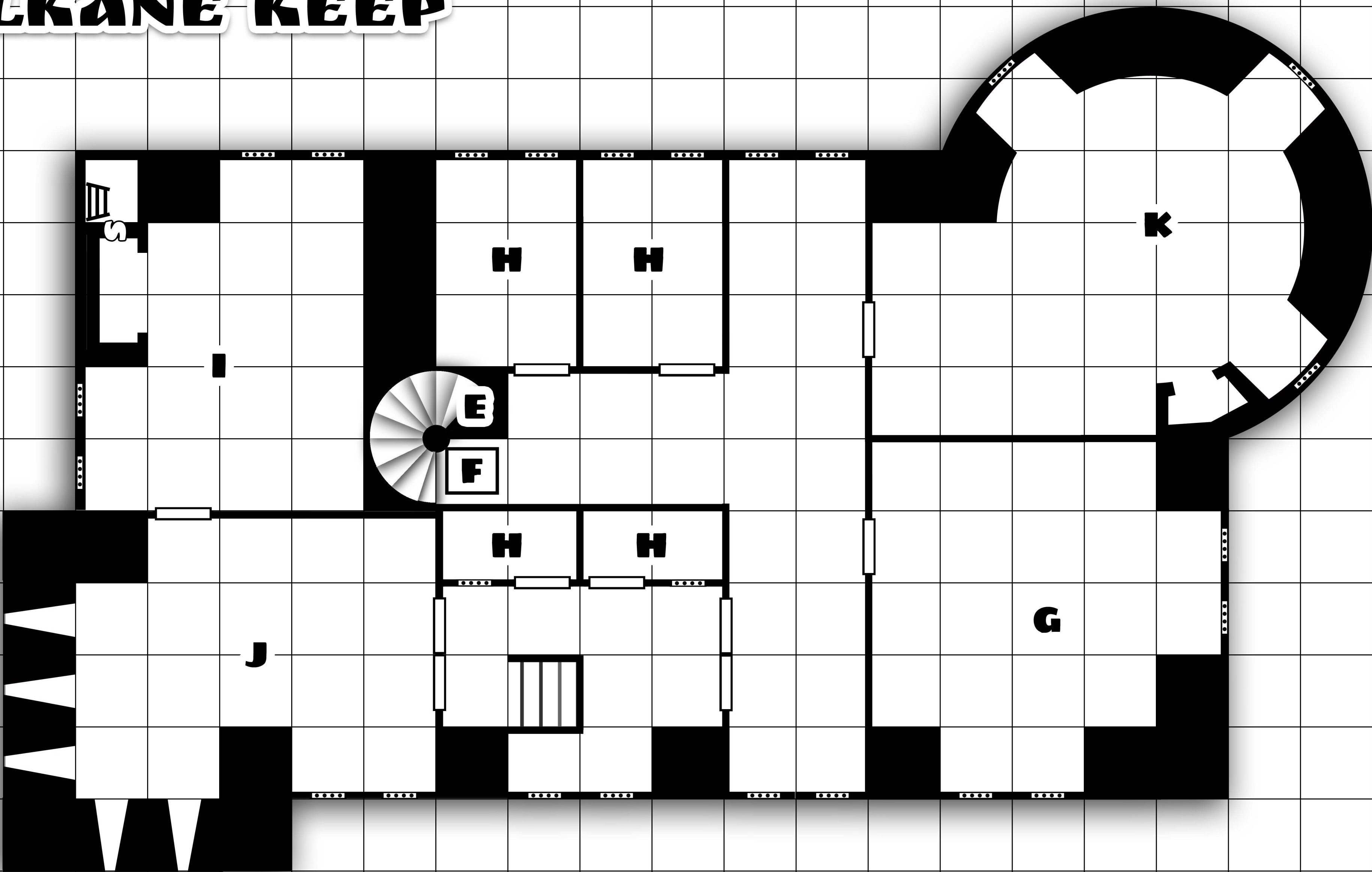
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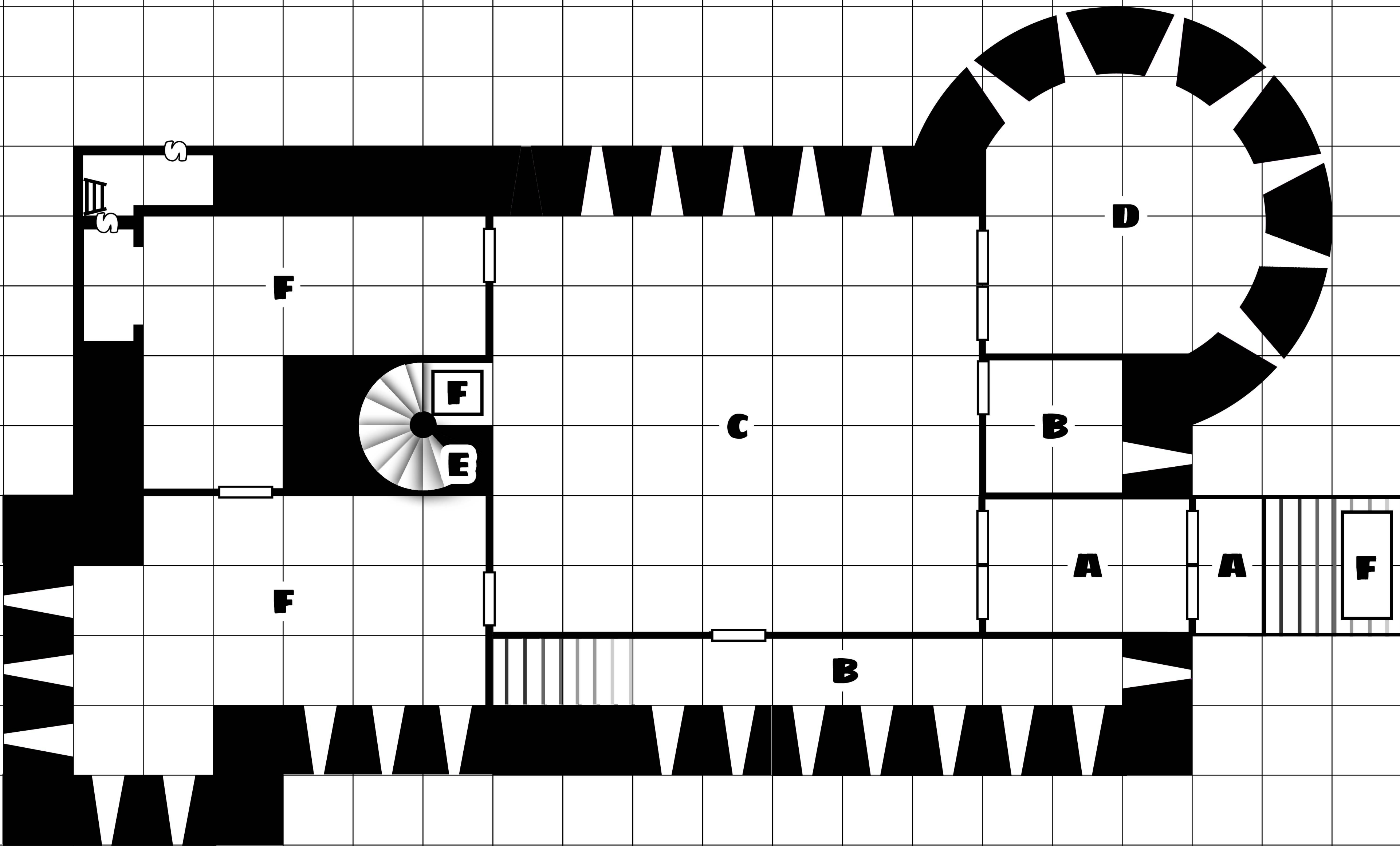
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