LDD: The Haunted Chapel

The objective of the level

This level aims for players to save the nearby town from the distress caused by the chapel.
In a more educational scope, the objective of this level is to learn how to make a level in an already-built engine (in our case, The Divinity Engine 2) while using a one-page dungeon (OPD) as the reference & guide (implementing changes as we see fit).

Summary

The old chapel outside of town holds a terrible secret. Many years ago, a new priest arrived after the former rector died. Some say the new rector went insane, locking his fellow priests inside the chapel and setting fire to it, burning the poor souls alive.

Badly burned himself, the rector confessed to the ghastly murders but died without saying why he did it. The head priest was hastily buried in the burned-out chapel, and the cursed site was abandoned. It is now a crumbling ruin said to be haunted by ghosts of the murdered priests.

Strange events have befallen the town lately, and several locals have gone missing. The townsfolk suspect the haunted chapel is the source of their recent distress. The heroes must go there and end the curse that plagues the town.
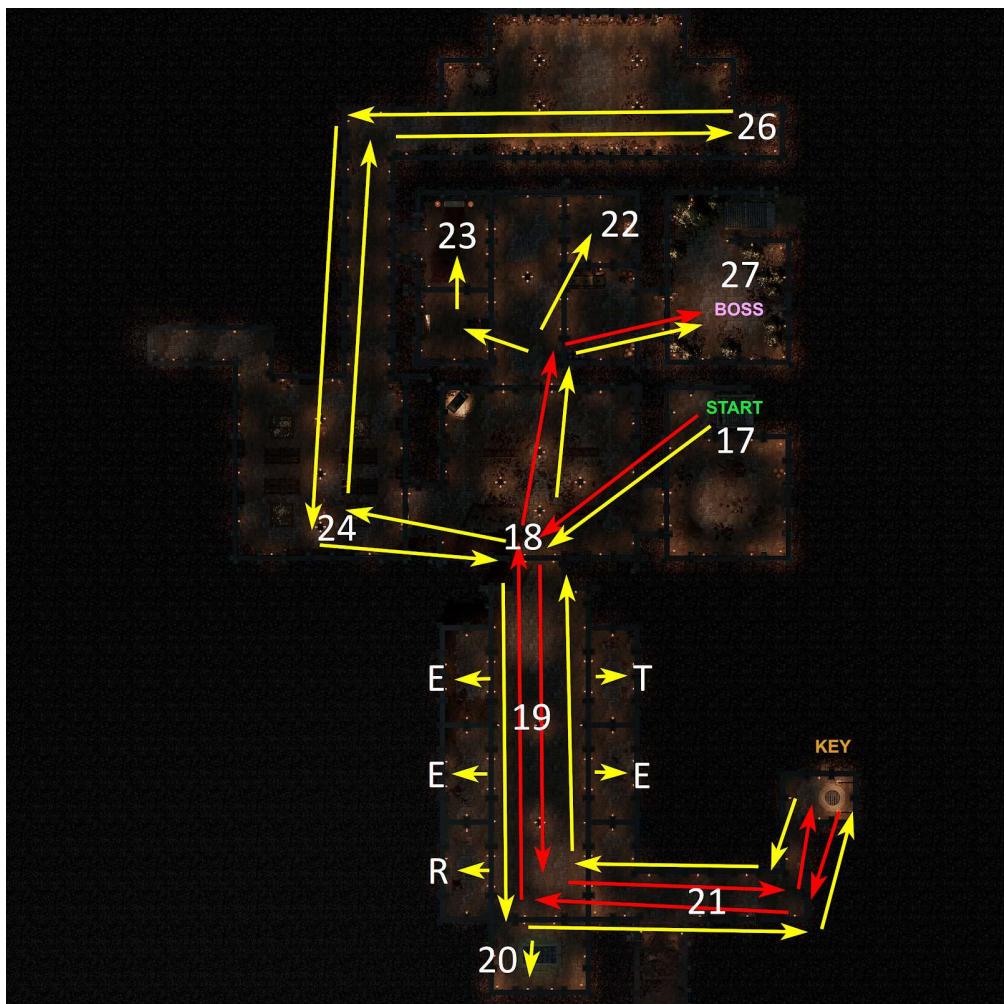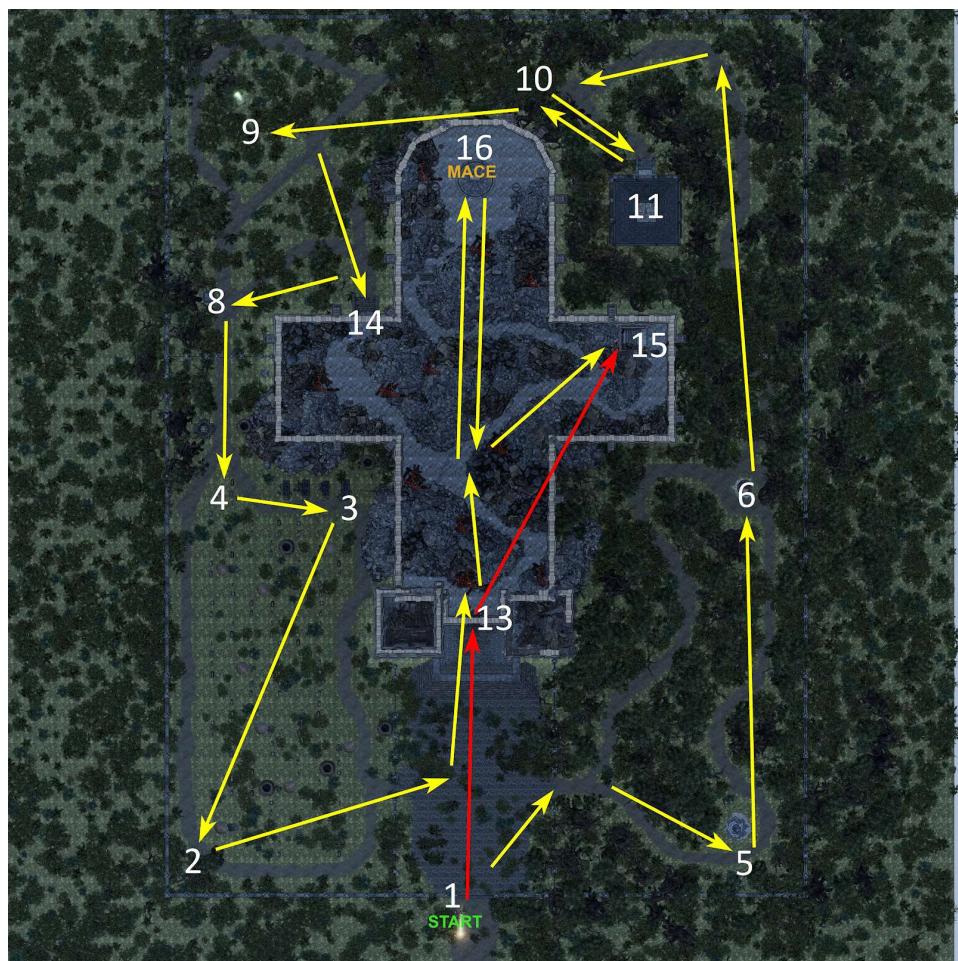
Paths

Players can complete this level however they please, going through some, all or none of the alternative rooms in order to complete the quest. For the sake of this level, we have delimited two separate paths from which we are going to do the level analysis in terms of difficulty and cadence.

The red path is the **critical path**, that is, the path that requires the minimum exploration to achieve the objective. The yellow path is the **golden path**, which, while probably not being the actual path players take, is actually a road that comes across all the interactable events and combats, thus exploring 100% of the map.

Other elements of the map are marked as **relevant items** which are, on the top section, the mace of the late rector; and a key to the supply rooms at the lower section (one is a dead end and the other leads to the boss fight). Finally the other, more obvious keys are the **start** of the level from which players would enter should they follow the path and finally the **boss** room.

The following map shows the two paths following the numbered zones according to the OPD, as it is how we show the progression of difficulty of the level in the following section.

Difficulty progression (Encounters)

Since the player can move through the space freely, there are very few set-in-stone fights that every player will have to do to win, thus making the difficulty progression less relevant since we don't know the order in which the player will face these challenges. It is also hard to convey the actual difficulty since we haven't selected stats and skills for each enemy. Based on the archetypes we have selected and the paths, the difficulty progression is as follows:
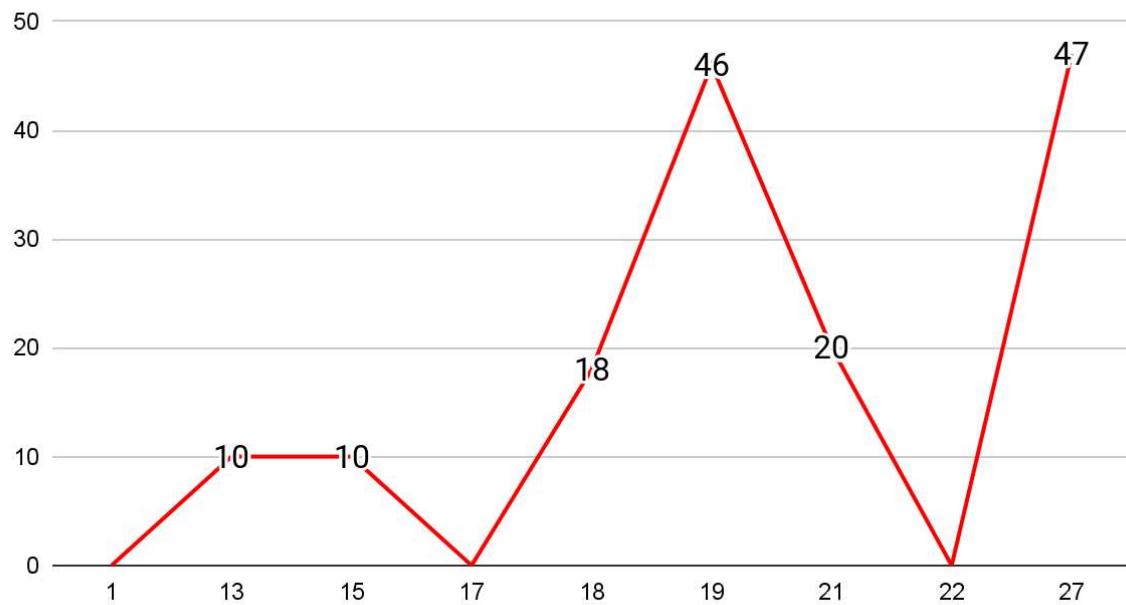
Key Map

| Enemy	Difficulty Value
Giant Rat	**0,5**
Beetle	**1,5**
Centipede	**1**
Giant Spider	**5**
Skeleton Warrior	**6**
Skeleton Rogue	**8**
Skeleton Ranger	**7**
Skeleton Elementalist	**7**
Fire Skeleton	**7**
Ghoul	**9**
Giant Centipede	**8**
Cultist Warrior	**8**
Cultist Rogue	**11**
Cultist Ranger	**10**
Cultist Elemental	**10**

Critical Path
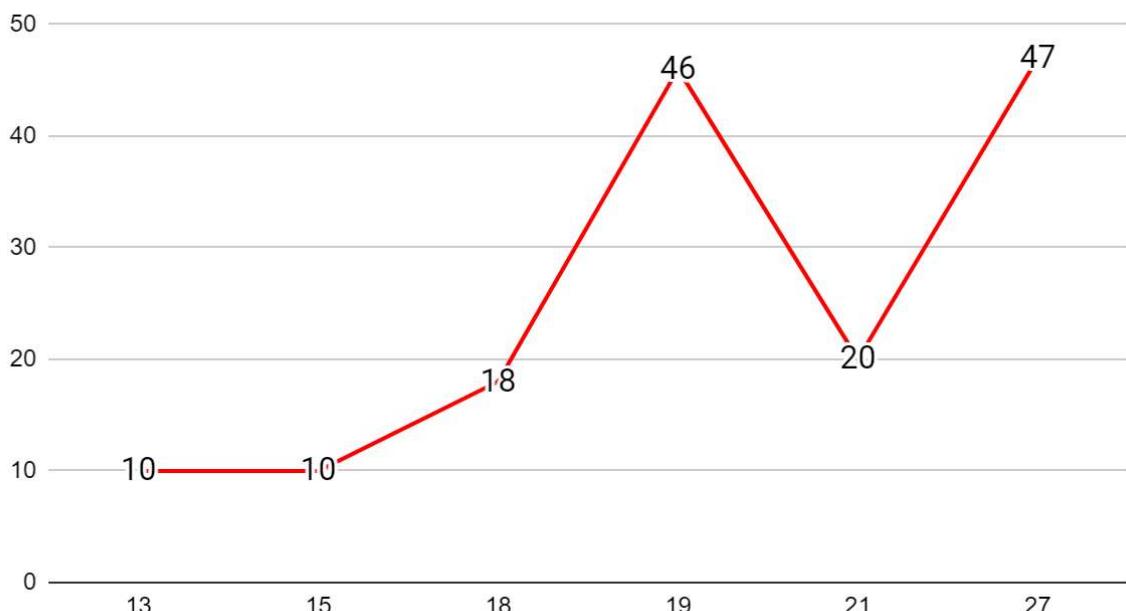
The Critical Path graph shows the progression in difficulty throughout the entire critical path depending on the zone we are evaluating. As the Critical Path allows it, there are zones where no challenges are present, thus its difficulty potential is 0.

Critical Path

The Difficulty Progression graph of the Critical path shows this progression only by the challenges faced in the respective zone.
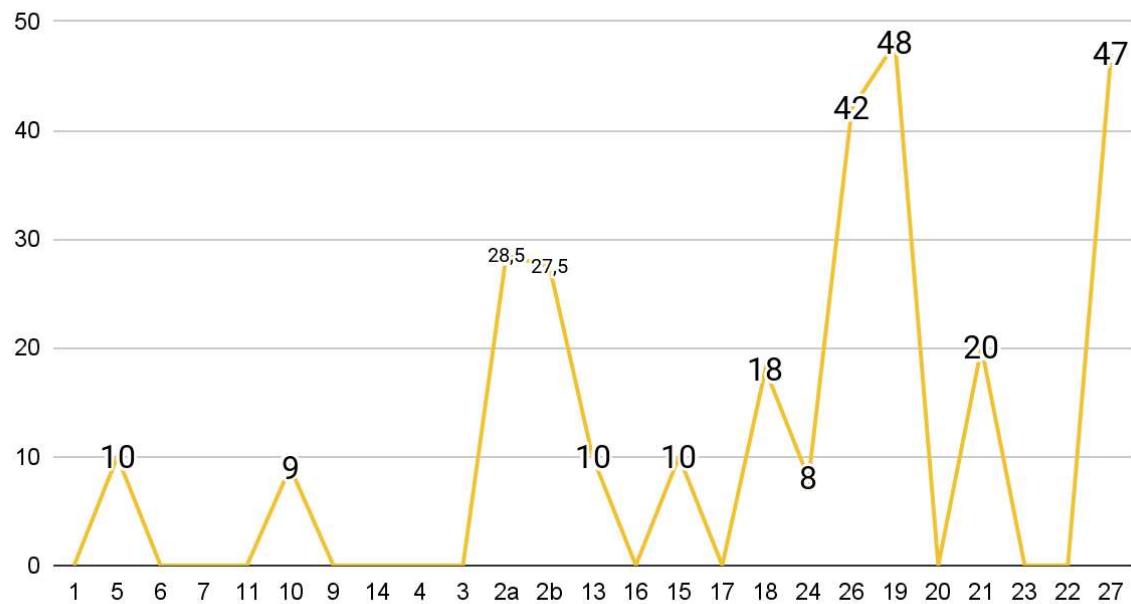
Difficulty Progression (Critical)

Golden Path
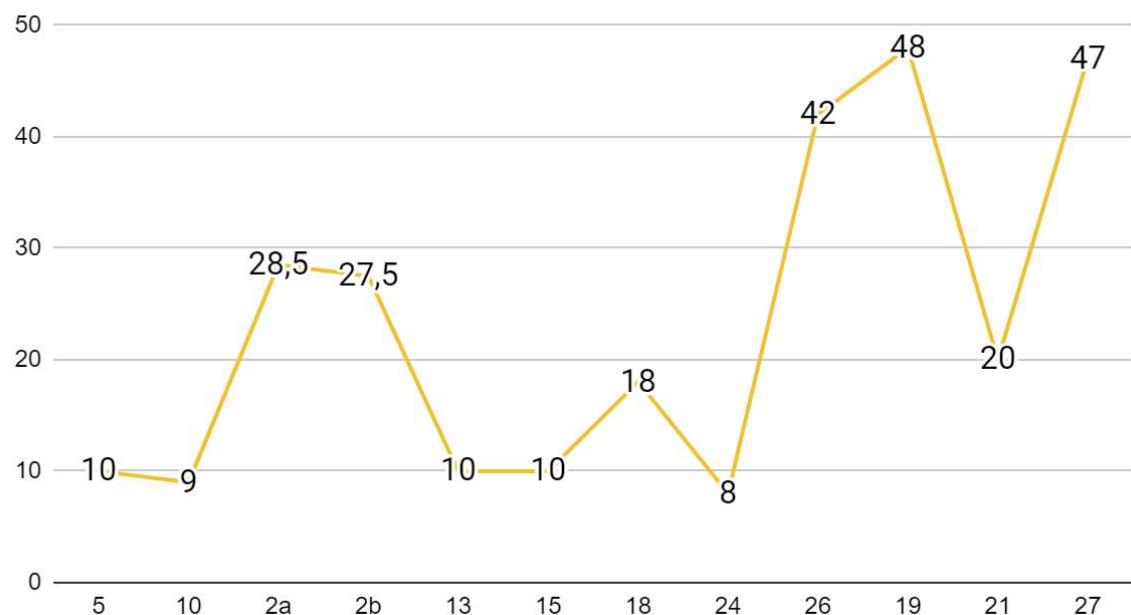
The Golden Path graph shows the progression in difficulty throughout the entire golden path depending on the zone we are evaluating. As the Golden Path also allows it, there are zones where no challenges are present, thus its difficulty potential is 0.


Golden Path
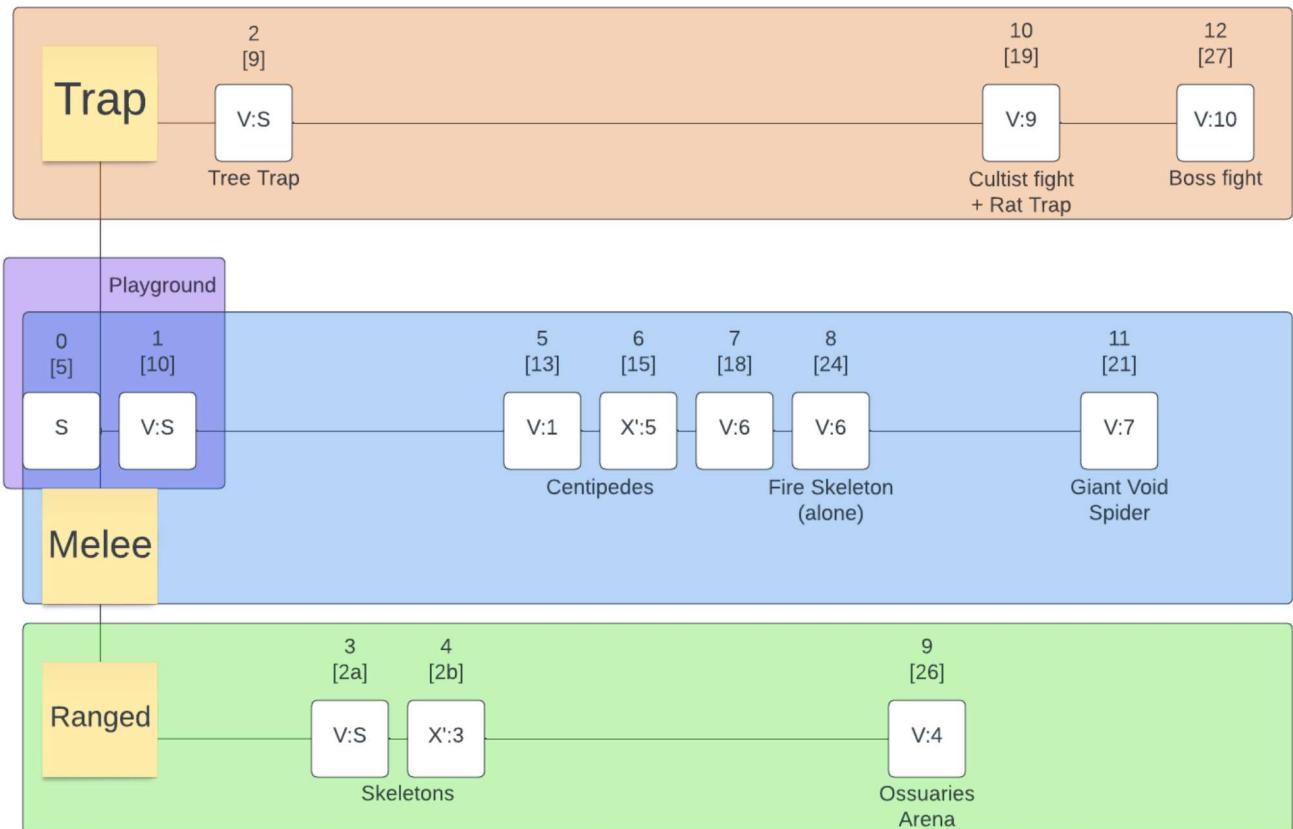
The Difficulty Progression graph of the Golden Path is showing the difficulty progression of only the challenges the player faces.

Difficulty Progression (Golden)

Golden Path

Cadence

We have the same problem as in the difficulty progression, where we are unsure what challenges the player will face since they could avoid most fights which are optional from the start. Below is the cadence of the level if the player would go through the golden path:
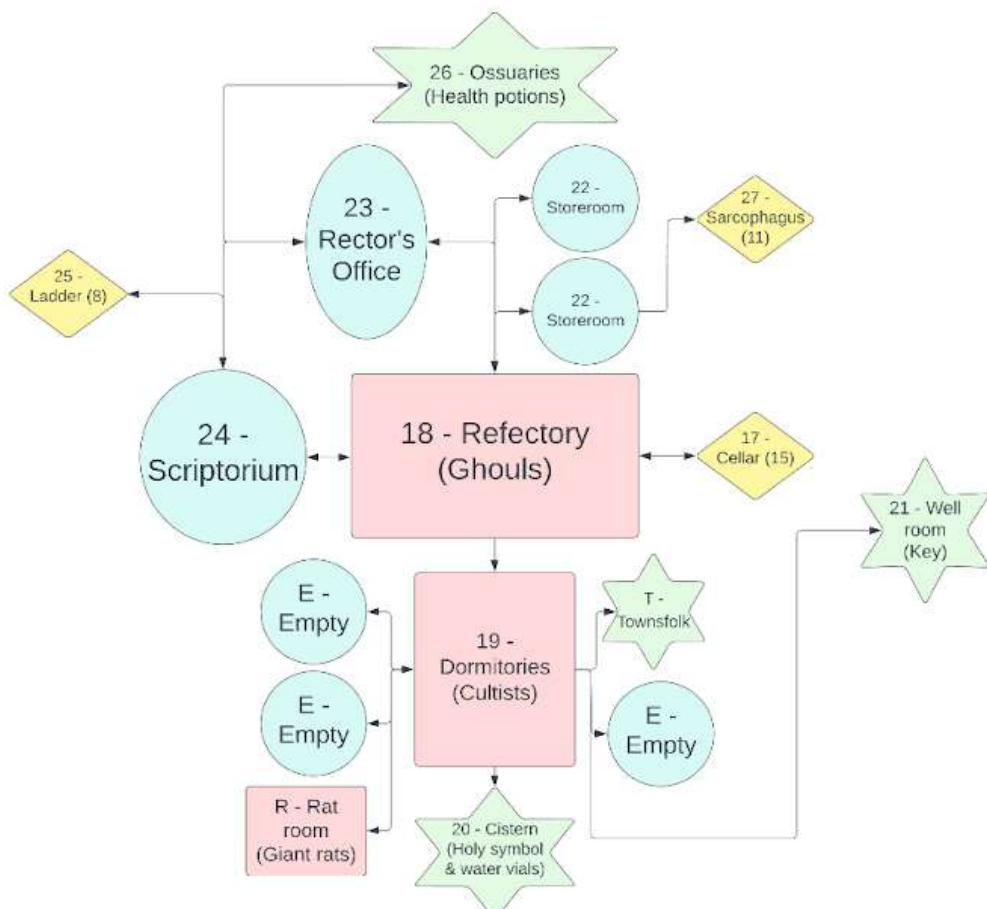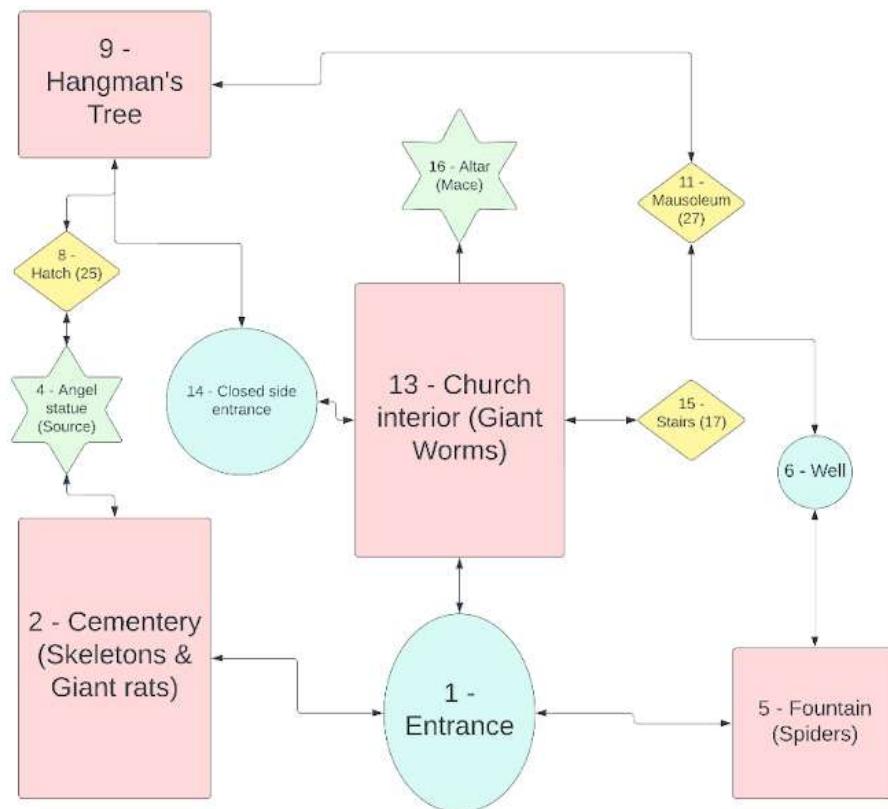

Keymap:
V = evolution (functional, stats, visual) of the indicated challenge
X = expansion of the indicated challenge
X' = very similar encounter / the same encounter as the indicated challenge
[0] = the room where this encounter is located

Flow Chart

Moodboard
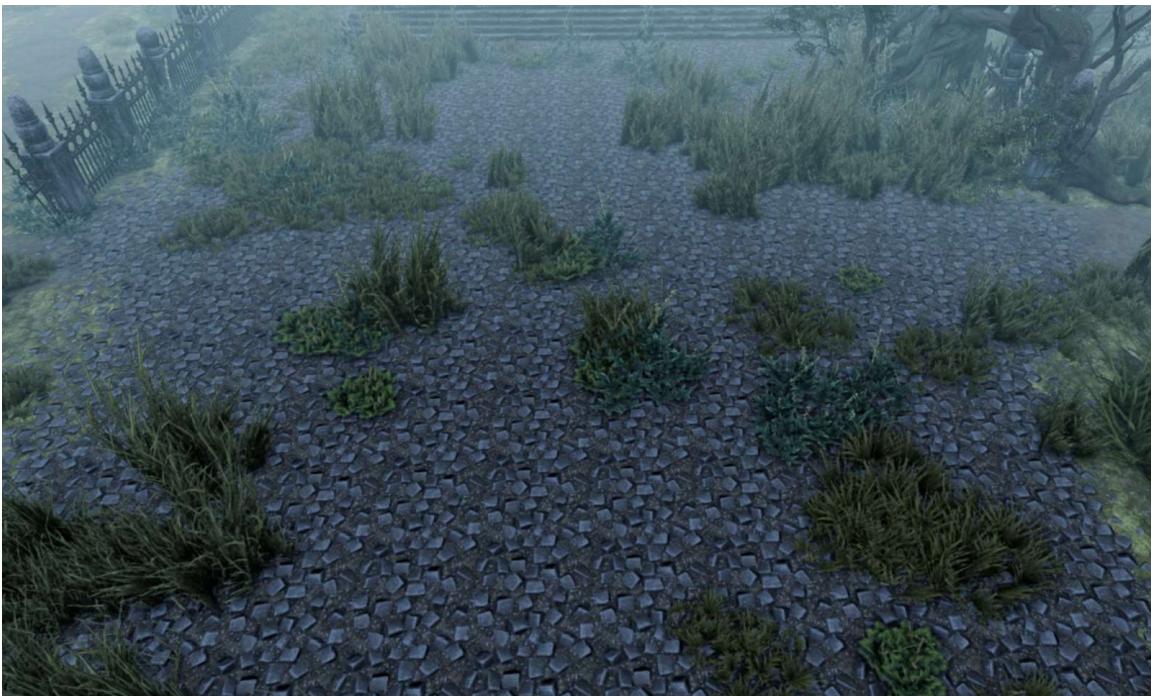
Player Guidance

Since this one-page dungeon is meant to be navigated as the players please in a top-down orthogonal view, it's hard to tell what places they should go first. However, some aspects of the level have been created to indicate the designer's golden path throughout the story.

Starting with the top part of the chapel, the primary way the level signals where the player should go through is by using roadways. Most of this level is surrounded by vegetation and debris used as negative affordance and different pathways with a relatively contrasting terrain material that delimits where players can and "cannot" go.

On the entrance, the central plaza and road are littered with vegetation. We used this to our advantage to indicate what we deemed the first part of the level by increasing the vegetation density and creating leading lines into the right part of the level (the one forest-like section).
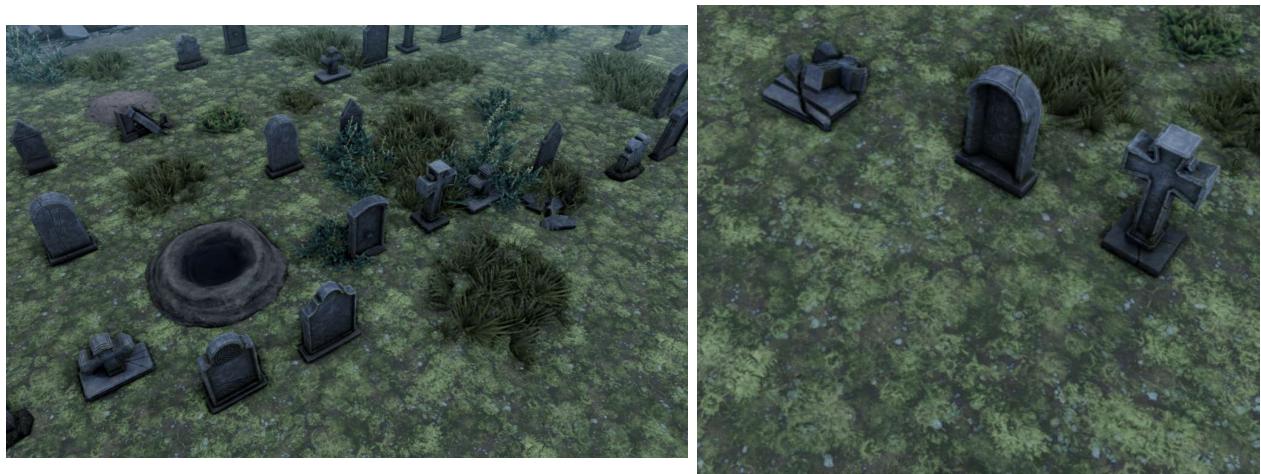

Inside the forest, the road is delimited by a dirt road until one section seems to be cut off by the vegetation from both accesses seems to cut off one area. Since we've established that the plants are a no-go zone, these parts serve as red herrings that the player must detect and overcome to get to this new part, which guards the mausoleum and secret entrance to the bottom. In an ideal situation, these barriers would be physical, allowing the player to destroy them by cutting through them. In one of these sections, a wasp nest and some enemies are used as an obstacle to surpass.
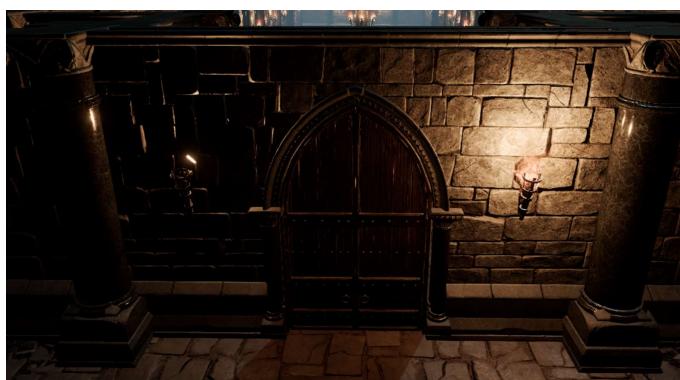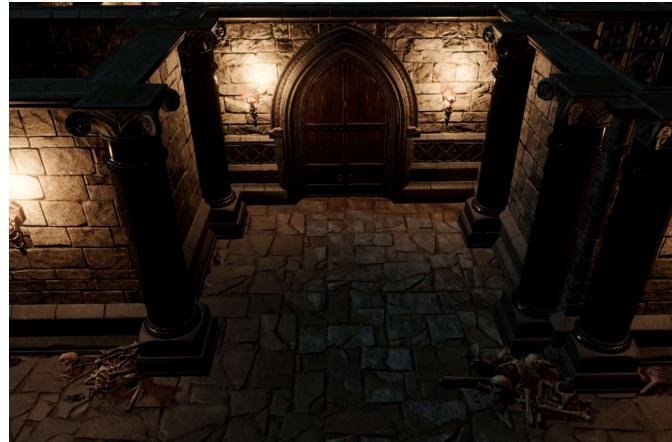
Next up is the Hangman's tree, a trap in clear sight. If the player looks closely, the number of skeletons surrounding the tree will be a pretty straightforward red flag for them; however, the shining green light will be a bait that will serve as a way for them to interact with the tree and get trapped in its poison.
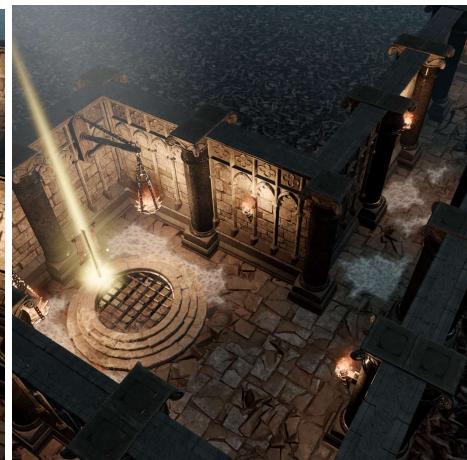
Finally, several holes and dirt patches are usually hidden in the cemetery if the player does not approach their location. Since the camera is not locked to the character's positions, players can roam freely across the map, allowing them to see the road ahead before visiting it. This feature will enable them to notice that some tombstones are separated from each other and destroyed, which are indicators of the different hidden patches of unearthed monuments.

The underground section is intended to have free exploration, the walls surrounding the hallways and rooms being the only delimiters of negative affordance for this area. There are parts where several different trails and breadcrumbs are left to indicate what lies beneath each nook and cranny. In the case of the first room, there are three different trails. Counterclockwise from the entrance, the first uses an unlit torch as a point of interest and differentiator from the surrounding torches, which will become a recurring element throughout the path. The second is framed between 2 skeletons, foreshadowing the ossuary. Finally, the most obvious is the one with a blood trail leading to the intended final boss room in the mausoleum. Blood has been used to signify the critical path of the level.
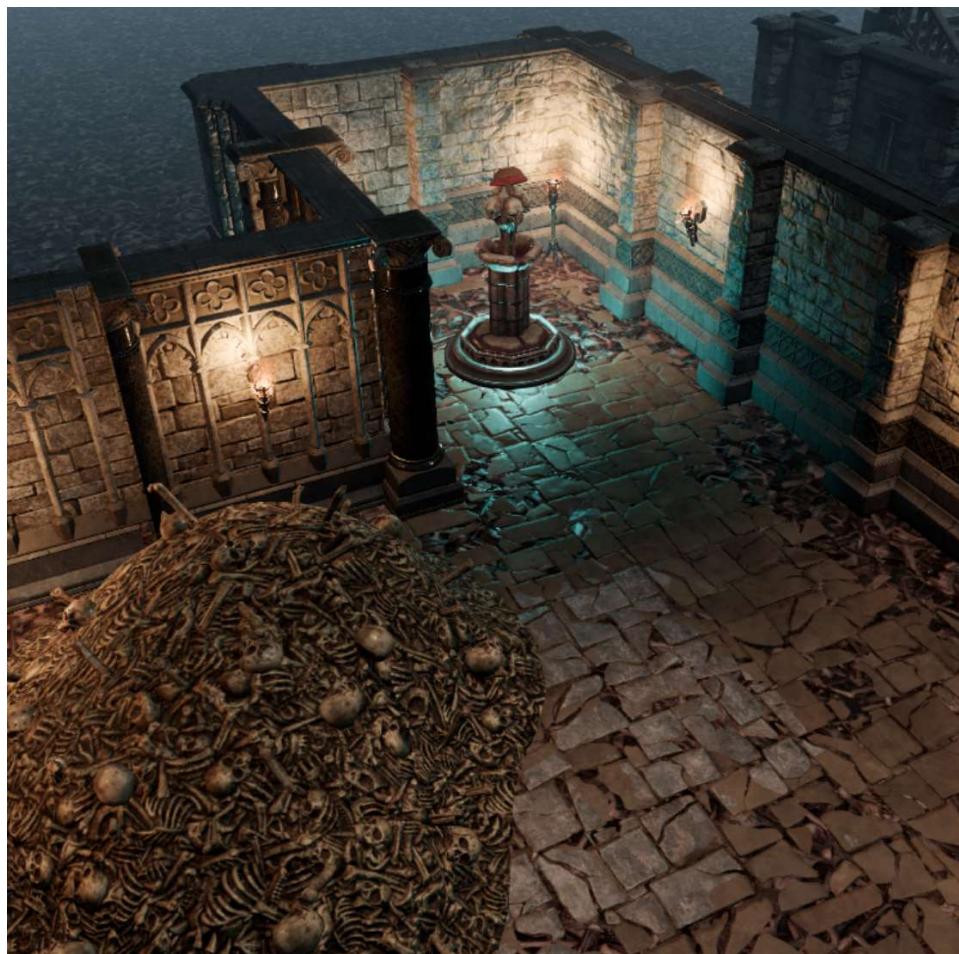
Starting the torch trail path, it's clear that there aren't many elements of player guidance other than two. The first is a similar signifier to the previous one seen in this path: an unlit torch next to a door. Going through this door leads to a corridor with webs and a pool illuminated by a light column coming from the well outside, indicating the boss key's location.

The following path (the bone one) has two directions with different signals. The one on the left contains another corridor with webs and a light source from a hatch outside, illuminating the exterior and a staircase upwards. On the other, the path has breaches from which skeletons come out, serving as another set of breadcrumbs and leading lines headed for the ossuary. On the side, a book tower leans towards the path, indicating to follow it.

Inside the ossuary, a statue is illuminated with a contrasting light source from the others around it, signifying a point of interest and interactability. The bone pile and the wall around it also work as leading lines funneling towards the direction of the tomb.

Finally, as mentioned before, the storerooms have an obvious blood trail signalling the critical path towards the final boss. If the player decides to explore the other rooms instead, they'll eventually arrive at the rector's bedroom, which contains his diary right under the bed. The book hides under the bed; however, the clever use of a red rug indicates the direction the player should be looking at, helping them reach their objective.

Map & Screenshots

THE HAUNTED CHAPEL

A Fifth Era Adventure
by Scott Marcley

The old chapel outside of town holds a terrible secret. Many years ago, after the former rector died, a new priest arrived to take over. Some say the new rector went insane, locking his fellow priests inside the chapel and setting fire to it, burning the poor souls alive.

Badly burned himself, the rector confessed to the ghastly murders, but died without saying why he did it. The head priest was hastily buried in the burned-out chapel, and the cursed site was abandoned. It is now a crumbling ruin said to be haunted by ghosts of the murdered priests.

Lately, strange events have befallen the town and several locals have gone missing. Townsfolk suspect the haunted chapel is the source of their recent distress. The heroes must go there and put an end to the curse that plagues the town.

PLOT! In truth, death cultists secretly work to restore the chapel for evil purposes, and have turned its undead guardians into their deadly servants (or vice versa).
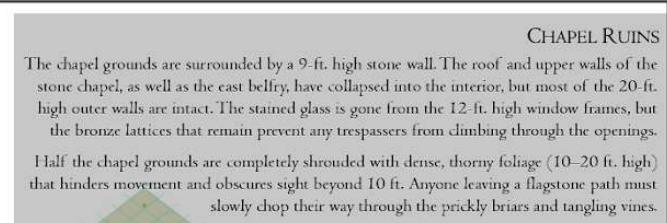
THE CHAPEL GROUNDS

1. Rusted iron gates screech open onto a weed-choked flagstone courtyard. To either side, bent iron fences open into other areas of the grounds. Cracked steps rise to the façade, where one of the 40-ft. high belfries has toppled into a pile of rubble. One chapel door has fallen down; the other hangs loosely on a bent hinge (1-in-6 chance it falls on someone passing through the doorway).

2. Old tombstones stand among rustling weeds. Eight graves were recently turned. Hidden in the grass are huge rat holes (x). Coming within 10 ft. of one attracts 1d4+2 giant rats. Dozens more infest a warren of tunnels below. At night, (8) skeletons roam the cemetery.

3. Four burial vaults are carved with the names and deeds of holy knights. The lids were smashed open and the bodies removed.

4. A marble statue of an angelic figure. The first person to leave an offering receives a blessing for one hour. Nearby, a rusted gate leads into the rear garden.

5. Two giant spiders guard an algae-covered fountain.

6. Beneath the lid of the covered well, a cobweb-filled shaft leads to the well room in the undercroft.

7. The path here is completely overgrown with briars; hacking through reveals a rusted gate into the rear garden.

8. Hidden beneath the dense brush here is a hatch to the undercroft.

9. A deadly hangman's tree stands here. A glint at the tree's base is a lure to attack prey with its strangling vines. Among its roots are skeletal remains wearing a shiny silver pendant and a pouch full of gold coins.

10. The path here is completely overgrown with briars (which hide a huge nest of wasps).

11. A vine-shrouded mausoleum is barred by a locked iron gate. Inside is an ornate marble sarcophagus. Beneath the lid, a tight staircase descends to a foul-smelling crypt.

THE UNDERCROFT
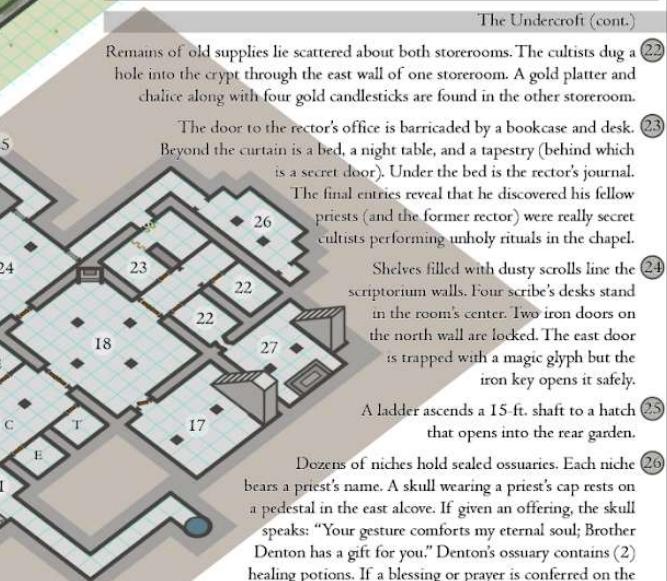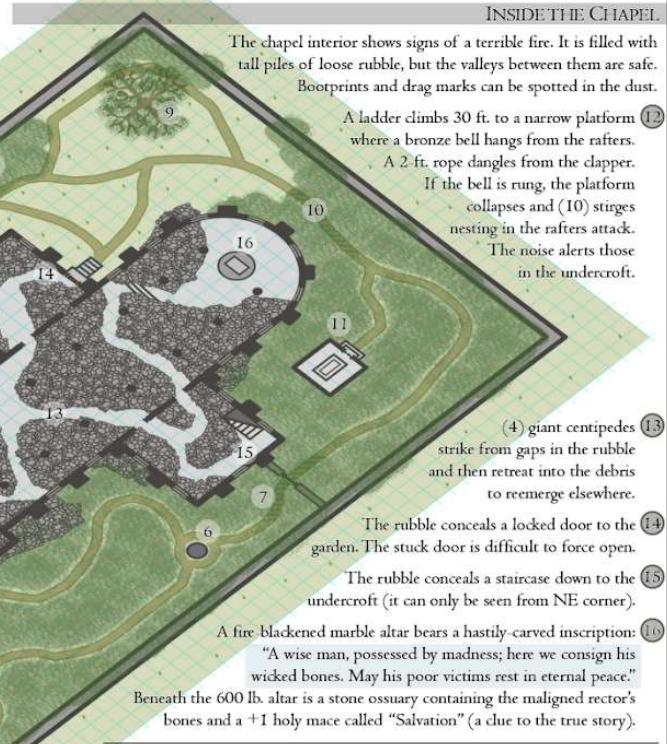
The lower foundation of the chapel mostly escaped the fire's destruction. The vaulted ceilings are 9–12 ft. high.

17. Smashed barrels and crates litter the floor of this musty cellar. The west door is ajar.

18. The refectory is strewn with broken stools and smashed cookery. A simple hearth stands in the corner. Two ghouls in burnt robes hunch over a wide table in the center of the room, hungrily devouring a dead local. These are the former chapel priests who were "killed" in the fire.

19. Dormitory: (6) cultists camp in the common area (C). Three of the five rooms are empty (E) save for broken remains of a bed and table. Room (T) holds (2) kidnapped townsfolk, locals who offer a reward if rescued. Room (R) is occupied by (4) giant rats. A dark hole in the wall leads into their warren.

20. The stone cistern is filled with greasy water. The bones of two missing townsfolk, along with a silver holy symbol and (2) vials of holy water, can be found scattered on the bottom.

21. Well Room: A stairway once led up to the belfry, but it is now filled with rubble. The passage ends at the lip of a fresh water spring. A cobweb-filled shaft ascends to the garden. On the sandy bottom of the 10 ft. deep pool is a sealed jar containing an iron key.

CHAPEL RUINS

The chapel grounds are surrounded by a 9-ft. high stone wall. The roof and upper walls of the stone chapel, as well as the east belfry, have collapsed into the interior, but most of the 20-ft. high outer walls are intact. The stained glass is gone from the 12-ft. high window frames, but the bronze lattices that remain prevent any trespassers from climbing through the openings.

Half the chapel grounds are completely shrouded with dense, thorny foliage (10–20 ft. high) that hinders movement and obscures sight beyond 10 ft. Anyone leaving a flagstone path must slowly chop their way through the prickly briars and tangling vines.

INSIDE THE CHAPEL

The chapel interior shows signs of a terrible fire. It is filled with tall piles of loose rubble, but the valleys between them are safe. Bootprints and drag marks can be spotted in the dust.

12. A ladder climbs 30 ft. to a narrow platform where a bronze bell hangs from the rafters. A 2-ft. rope dangles from the clapper. If the bell is rung, the platform collapses and (10) stirges nesting in the rafters attack. The noise alerts those in the undercroft.

13. (4) giant centipedes strike from gaps in the rubble and then retreat into the debris to reemerge elsewhere.

14. The rubble conceals a locked door to the garden. The stuck door is difficult to force open.

15. The rubble conceals a staircase down to the undercroft (it can only be seen from NE corner).

16. A fire-blackened marble altar bears a hastily-carved inscription: "A wise man, possessed by madness; here we consign his wicked bones. May his poor victims rest in eternal peace." Beneath the 600 lb. altar is a stone ossuary containing the maligned rector's bones and a +1 holy mace called "Salvation" (a clue to the true story).

The Undercroft (cont.)

22. Remains of old supplies lie scattered about both storerooms. The cultists dug a hole into the crypt through the east wall of one storeroom. A gold platter and chalice along with four gold candlesticks are found in the other storeroom.

23. The door to the rector's office is barricaded by a bookcase and desk. Beyond the curtain is a bed, a night table, and a tapestry (behind which is a secret door). Under the bed is the rector's journal. The final entries reveal that he discovered his fellow priests (and the former rector) were really secret cultists performing unholy rituals in the chapel.

24. Shelves filled with dusty scrolls line the scriptorium walls. Four scribe's desks stand in the room's center. Two iron doors on the north wall are locked. The east door is trapped with a magic glyph but the iron key opens it safely.

25. A ladder ascends a 15-ft. shaft to a hatch that opens into the rear garden.

26. Dozens of niches hold sealed ossuaries. Each niche bears a priest's name. A skull wearing a priest's cap rests on a pedestal in the east alcove. If given an offering, the skull speaks: "Your gesture comforts my eternal soul; Brother Denton has a gift for you." Denton's ossuary contains (2) healing potions. If a blessing or prayer is conferred on the skull, it says: "Salvation awaits you in the chapel's heart."

27. The damp air of the crypt stinks of rotting flesh. Two carved pillars support the ceiling. Standing next to a marble sarcophagus on a raised dais are (4) skeletal knights (from the cemetery) wearing chain mail and wielding long swords and shields. When they attack, the sarcophagus lid slides open and a ghast wearing tattered robes and a miter appears—the former rector and secret cult leader. The skeletons and ghast wear a small fortune in jewelry.
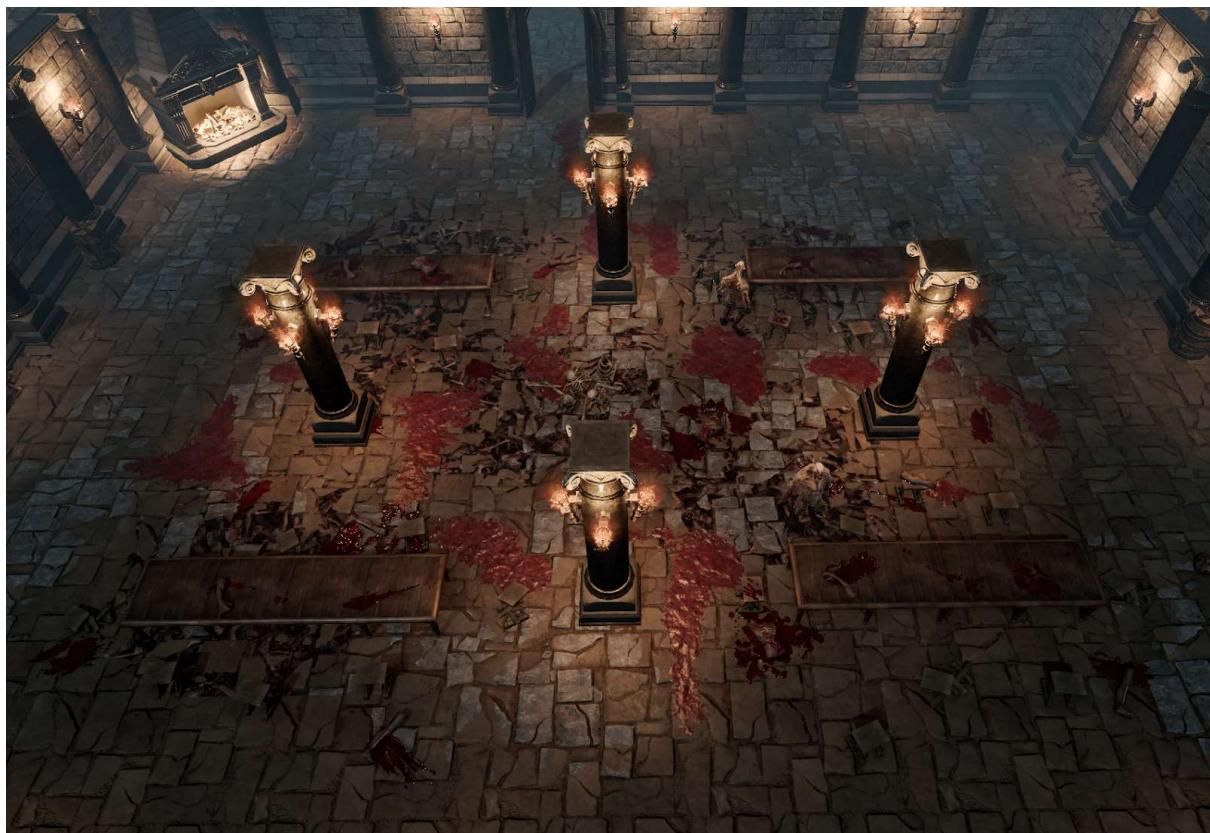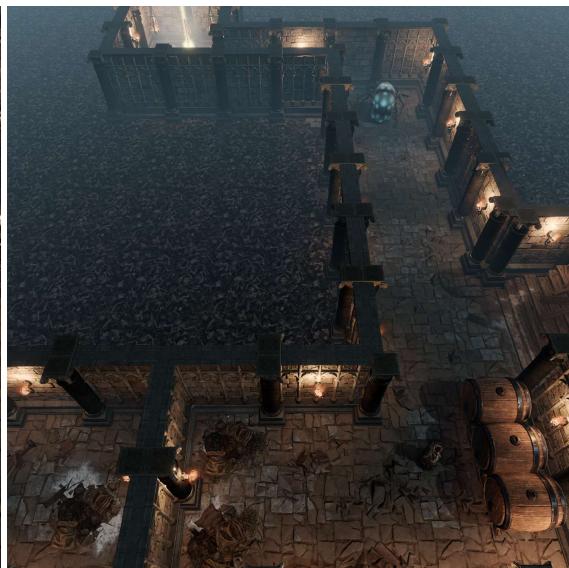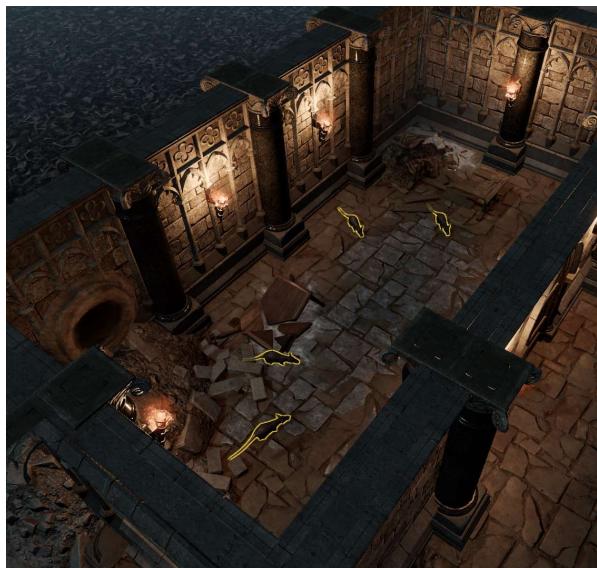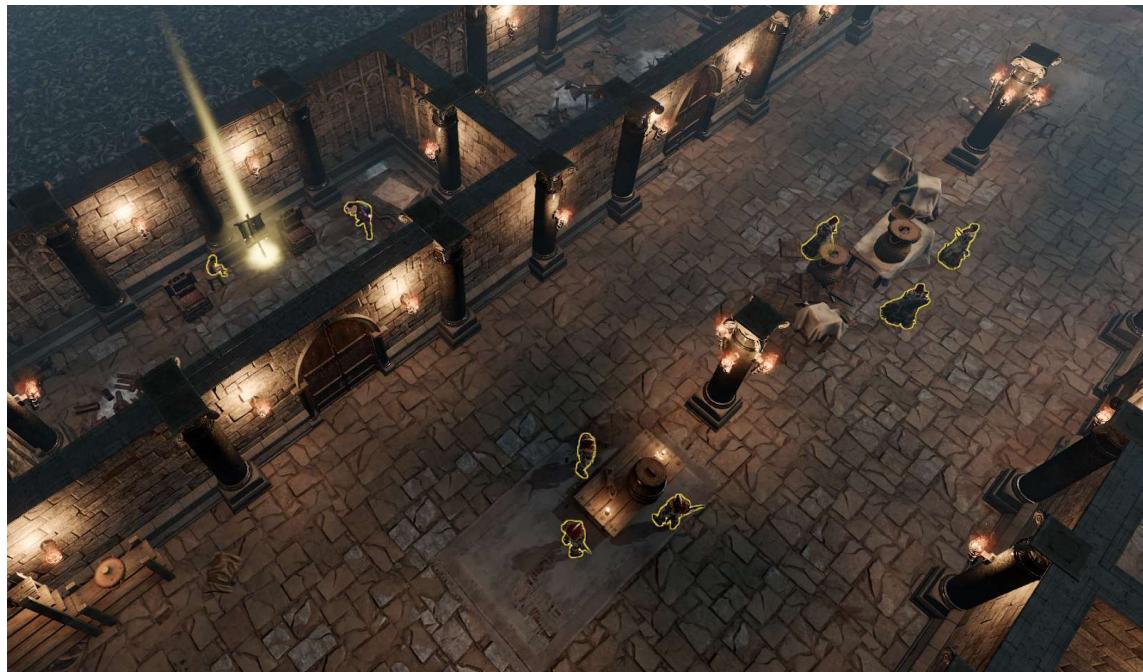
OPD (reference) map
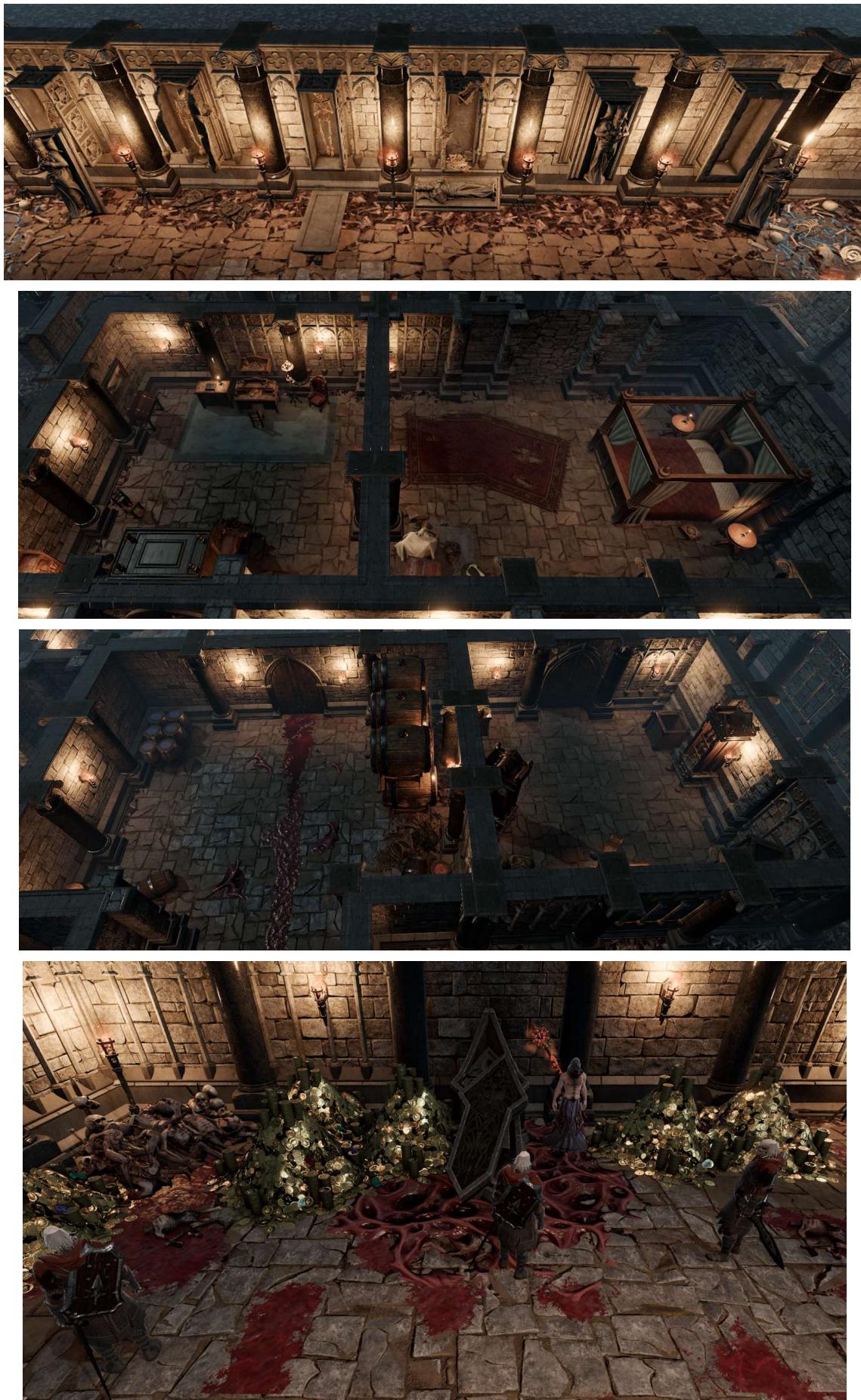
Participation & Changes

It is worth saying that everyone consulted the others when considering changes & making design choices.

Guillem Àlava

- 100% Top section (- entities)
- Underground section terrain
- Unifying the two sections into the same file
- **Changes done:**
    - Since Game Master mode does not allow for different levels to be played in the same setting, there is no teleportation between levels. If they did work, the connections would've been implemented.
    - 1: The door to the chapel does not have a ⅙ chance of falling on top of someone since Divinity 2 does not allow for that functionality
    - 4: The angel blesses anyone that interacts with it by dropping a "source" puddle – which is a resource required for casting powerful spells.
    - 7 & 10: We opted to remove it since there are many ways to destroy plants and allowing some of them to be destroyed by fire and not the others can cause to break the experience.
    - 9: The reference stipulates that the Hangman's Tree uses its vines to harm victims. Since we couldn't make it an enemy that attacks players on sight (which would trigger a battle) nor make it use some sort of spell, we decided that, when interacted with, it leaves a puddle of poison.
    - 12: There are no models of bells in Divinity 2 so, instead, the bell tower's platform is destroyed and inaccessible

Yeray Tarifa

- All entities from both sections in Game Master mode.
- 50% Underground section
    - Walls of rooms 20, 21, 24 & 25
    - Props of rooms 17, 19, 20, 21 (half), 22 (one of the two), 23 & 26
    - Pillars
    - Doors
    - Cistern in room 20 and Well in room 21.
- **Changes done**:
    - Room 17: the ajar door is opened instead as it is easier for the gameplay at the start.
    - Room 19: the rat tunnels are represented by the hole on the wall in the room (R) that will make the player face some rat enemies. Added other props to make the rooms feel less empty and more interesting.
    The kidnapped townsfolks have loot in their inventory and one is in a terrified state, as the game master should change their state and follow the part offering the reward.

- Room 21: changed the use of the key to open both doors in Rooms 22.
  An encounter with a magister first and a giant spider has been set.
- Room 22: both doors are locked with the well key.
- Room 23: the rector's book is near the bed instead of under, as the gameplay wouldn't allow it to be pickable if it was under.
- Room 26: the niches holding ossuaries have been represented with tombs on the walls, with each of the 12 priests representing that someone has looted the tombs.
  A big encounter was added as the room is big and we found that action was suitable in this area (we call it Ossuaries Area).
- Added a skeleton warrior between rooms 24 and 26, guarding the corridor.
- Added an extra pillar between rooms 22 and 23.
- Zone 2: the skeletons in the cemetery are standing still as automatic roaming is not supported in Game Master mode, it should be done manually.
- Zone 10: we used beetles instead of wasps as enemies in that overgrown vegetation area.
- Zone 13: we set two encounters with a giant centipede and 2 regular centipedes each.

Sergi Colomer

- 50% Underground section (- entities)
  - Walls of rooms 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26 & 27
  - Props of rooms 18, 21 (half), 22 (one of the two), 24, 25 & 27
  - Lighting (torches & spotlights)
- **Changes done**:
  - Modified the sizes of all the rooms I did the walls of.
  - Room 18: added additional props (chairs, tables, bodies) than what the reference says to fill the room up more and make it feel more alive. Player guidance with blood trails & open doors.
  - Room 21: added additional props (beer barrels) since it felt too empty.
  - Room 22: added additional props (supplies, beer barrels, water barrels, oil barrels, etc) since the reference didn't specify much about what to put. Added some blood trails as breadcrumbs to indicate a path.
  - Room 24: added additional props (books & bookshelves, papers & scrolls, braziers for lighting) than what the reference says to fill the room up more and make it feel more alive. Also removed metal doors because the structure of the walls didn't allow for the creation of a "door frame" wall. Player guidance with moving objects (rats, books).
  - Room 25: added a ray of light indicating that the stairs lead somewhere outside.
  - Room 27: added gold piles, skull piles and blood puddles to make more ambience & to portray better what the reference suggests.