INTO THE ABYSS
LEVEL DESIGN DOCUMENT

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Production History

Date	Logged Hours	Description
02/14/2019	1	Initiation of Level Design Document
02/15/2019	2	Reference Research, Gameplay Beats & Pacing
02/17/2019	2	Gameplay Flowchart & Node Maps
02/18/2019	4	2D Maps - Paper Sketches
02/19/2019	2	2D Maps - Paper Playtesting
02/20/2019	4	2D Maps - Modification
02/22/2019	8	2D Maps - Paper Playtesting & Digitization
02/24/2019	2	Completion of Level Design Document

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. General Specifications

Target Gameplay Time: 10 - 20 minutes

Genre: 3D Third-person Action title

Aesthetic: Cinematic Gunplay

B. Story Setting / Summary

The "Into the Abyss" is a stand-alone level for a fictional game, a third-person action title with an emphasis on gunplay. The Player takes on a rugged, worn adventurer seeking a legendary Amulet hidden in the depths of an ancient underground catacomb in India, in a race against the hostile Mercenaries.

This mission focuses on exploration, especially using climbing, platforming, and grappling hook as the primary means of traversal through the level. It also enables a variety of combat play styles: stealth and close-range, mid-range, and long-range.

C. Design Pitch

It has been rumoured that there lies a legendary Amulet in the depths of an ancient underground catacomb, the City of the Dead. The intels suggest that the hostile Mercenaries have already arrived at the site and are in desperate search of the treasure, using any means necessary to find it.

In this mission, the Player must infiltrate the premises and retrieve the Amulet before it is too late, and ultimately survive to see another day.

In this mission, the Player will explore an ancient catacomb rich with mysticism and history, and be his/her expectations will be subverted from time to time with surprises. The Player will be intrigued by stumbling across familiar places and be challenged to re-think how to navigate them in different ways. The Player will have a feeling of going down the rabbit hole, only to re-emerge from it with a sigh of relief with hints and cues that assure progress.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

D. Core Design Patterns & Gameplay Loops

1) Dynamic Combat

* Combat spaces should facilitate multiple combat play styles.

* Provide a vantage point to quickly scan out the area and strategize prior to battle.

* Encourage active movement around the battlefield with a variety of traversal options.

* Provide primary, secondary, and even tertiary flanking routes at any given position.

* Cover objects should encourage fluid combat vectors around and between them.

* Accommodate relevant combat scenarios, using narrow corridors for close-range enemies (Specialists), medium-sized throughway for mid-range enemies (Grunts), and open spaces for monitoring enemies (Intels).

2) Looping Traversal

* Reduce the sense of Linearity and enable Player's automity with optional paths.

* Entice the Player with denial spaces and Loots currently out of the Player's reach.

* Reward the Player with a sense of progress (in-game event, new line of sight, treasure, etc.)

* Loop the branching paths back into the critical path and avoid death-end spaces.

* Intrigue the Player in stumbling across previously-visited places from new vantage points.

3) Recyclable Puzzle

* Cue to the Player the possible implications of its mechanism for alternative uses.

* Tease the Player with the reward in plain sight, just out of reach.

* Clearly introduce the interactive objects and communicate the puzzle's mechanisms.

* Clue the Player in the solution through symbols and signs within the environment.

* Clearly signal to the player when the proposed solution is false (eg. punishment).

* Enable the Player to play around with the puzzle to familiarize with the visual patterns.

* Build up to the "A-ha!" revelation moment and make the Player feel smart.
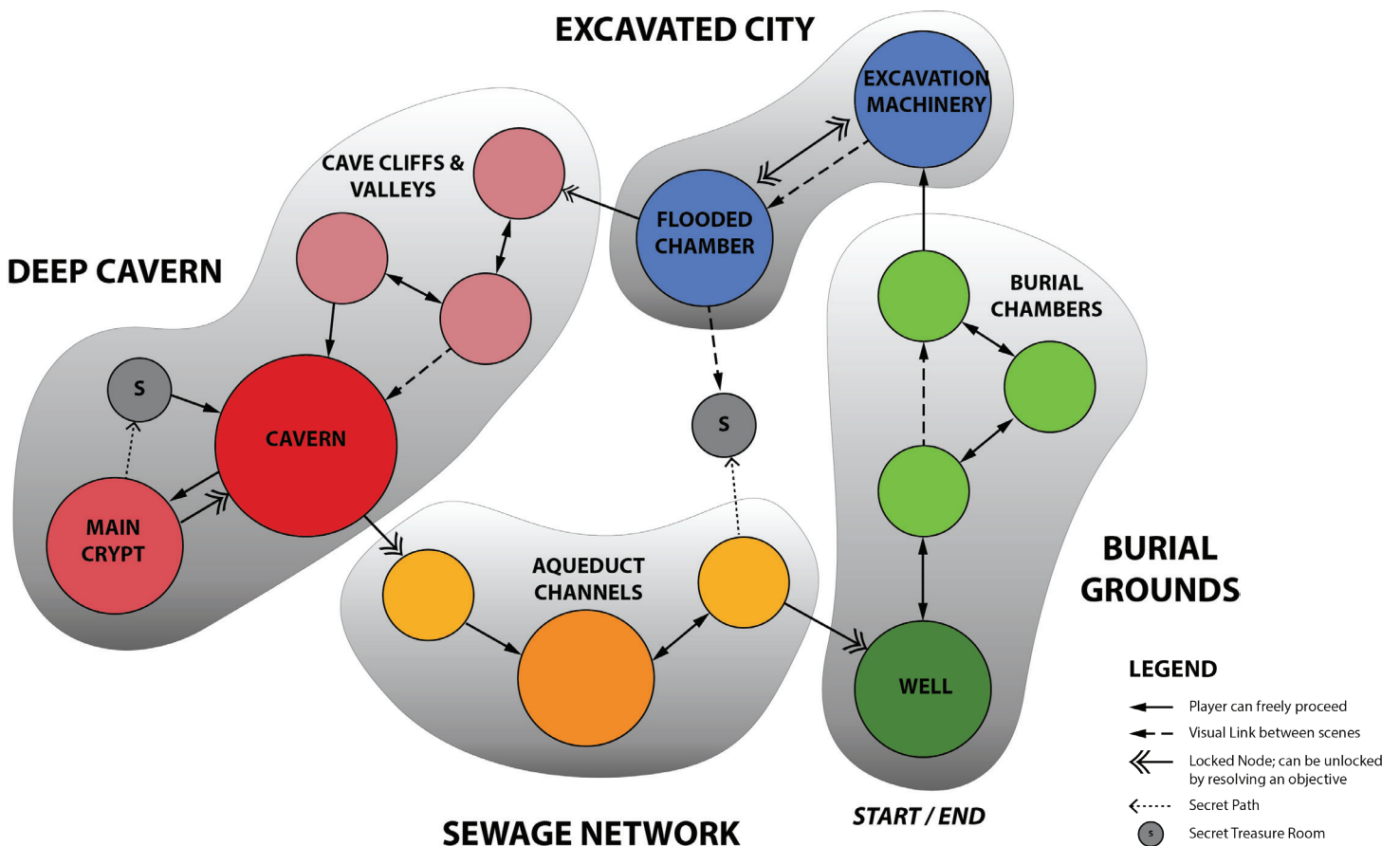
OVERVIEW

A. Design Goal(s)

The design goal for this level is to make the player explore new spaces and use a mix of stealth, gunplay and traversal mechanics. It is also intended to teach the player the habit of exploring optional paths before looping back into the critical path.

The level begins with slow-paced, exploration section with environmental storytelling, and gradually ramping up in enemy conflict and combat difficulty, with puzzles elements put in between to break the repetitiveness of gameplay sequence.

B. Flow Node Map

There are 4 major sections that make up the level: 1) Burial Grounds, 2) Excavated City, 3) Deep Cavern, and 4) Excavated City. They are stringed together into a loop.

EXCAVATED CITY

EXCAVATION MACHINERY

CAVE CLIFFS & VALLEYS

DEEP CAVERN

FLOODED CHAMBER

BURIAL CHAMBERS

S

CAVERN

S

MAIN CRYPT

AQUEDUCT CHANNELS

WELL

BURIAL GROUNDS

SEWAGE NETWORK

START / END

LEGEND

- Player can freely proceed
- Visual Link between scenes
- Locked Node; can be unlocked by resolving an objective
- Secret Path
- S Secret Treasure Room

OVERVIEW

C. Overview Map

The level layout - at both the macro and micro scale - is based on creating spatial loops to give the Player a feeling of stumbling across familiar places, making the City feel intricate and interconnected. The level consists of six major spaces: 1) Burial Chambers, 2) Excavated City Building, 3) Cave Cliffs & Valleys, 4) Deep Cavern, 5) Main Crypt, and 6) Sewage Network.


MAIN CRYPT

START / END

SEWAGE NETWORK

BURIAL CHAMBERS

DEEP CAVERN

Secret

EXCAVATED CITY

CAVE CLIFFS & VALLEYS
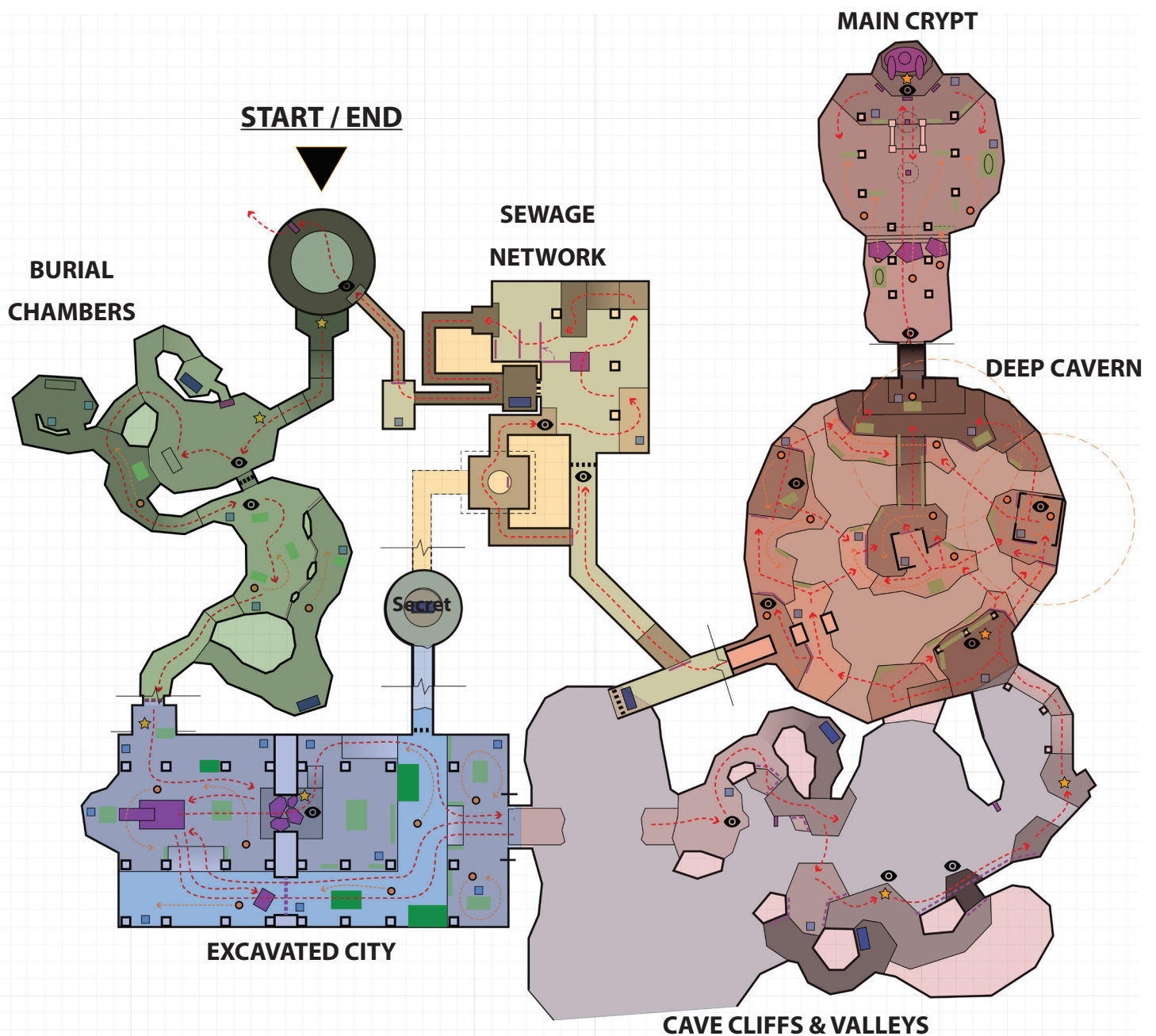
OVERVIEW

D. Callout Map - Burial Chamber

The Burial Chamber, inspired from ancient catacombs, is an interweaving, cascading network of passageways and rooms enticing the Player to explore. Here, the Player is introduced with basic combat encounters that encourage stealth and traversal.
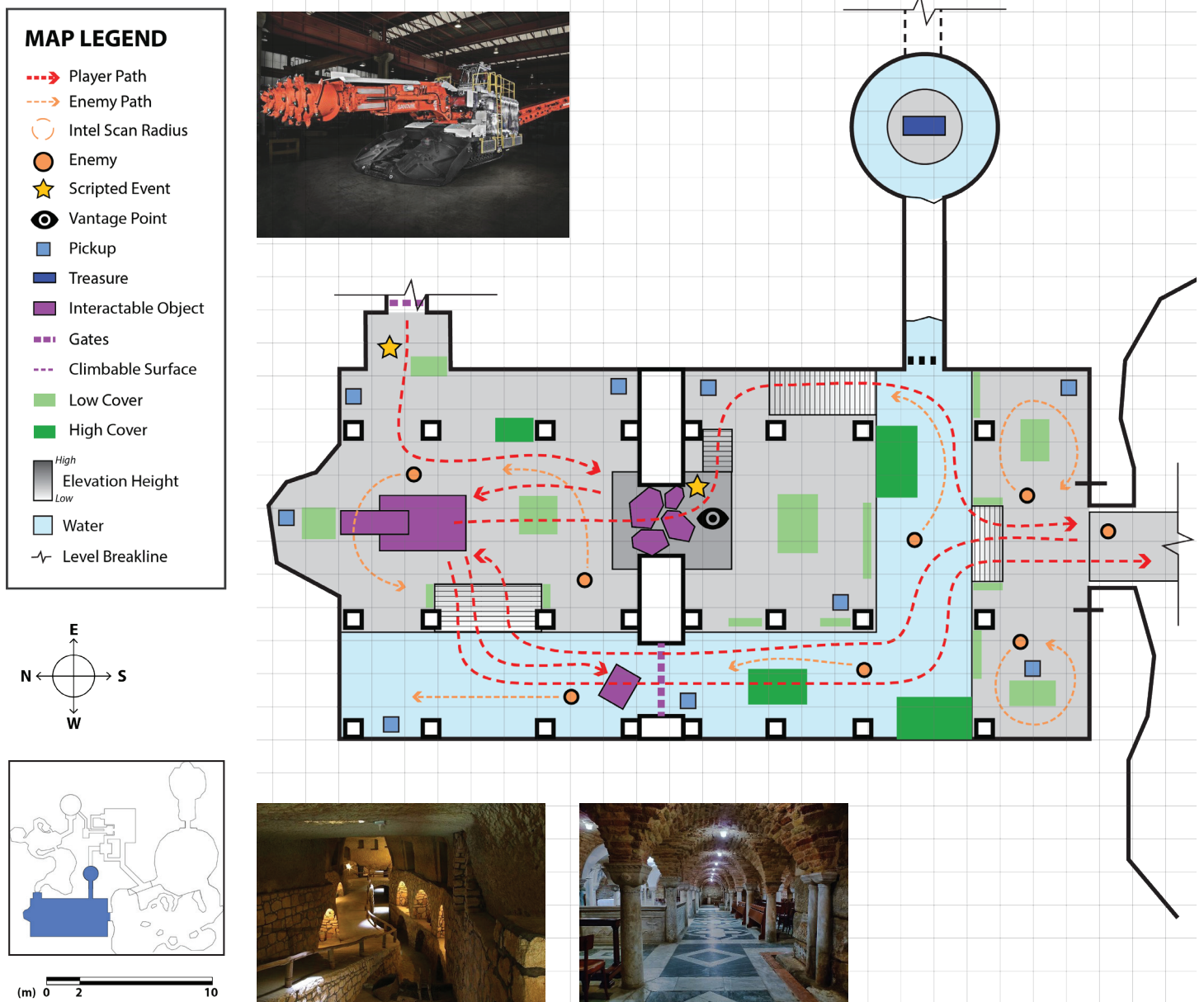

MAP LEGEND

- ➤ Player Path
- ➤ Enemy Path
- ◡ Intel Scan Radius
- ● Enemy
- ★ Scripted Event
- ◉ Vantage Point
- ▪ Pickup
- ▪ Treasure
- ▪ Interactable Object
- ▪▪▪ Gates
- --- Climbable Surface
- ▪ Low Cover
- ▪ High Cover
- Elevation Height (High / Low)
- ▪ Water
- ∿ Level Breakline

E / N / S / W (compass)

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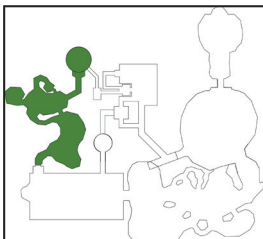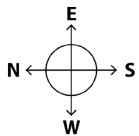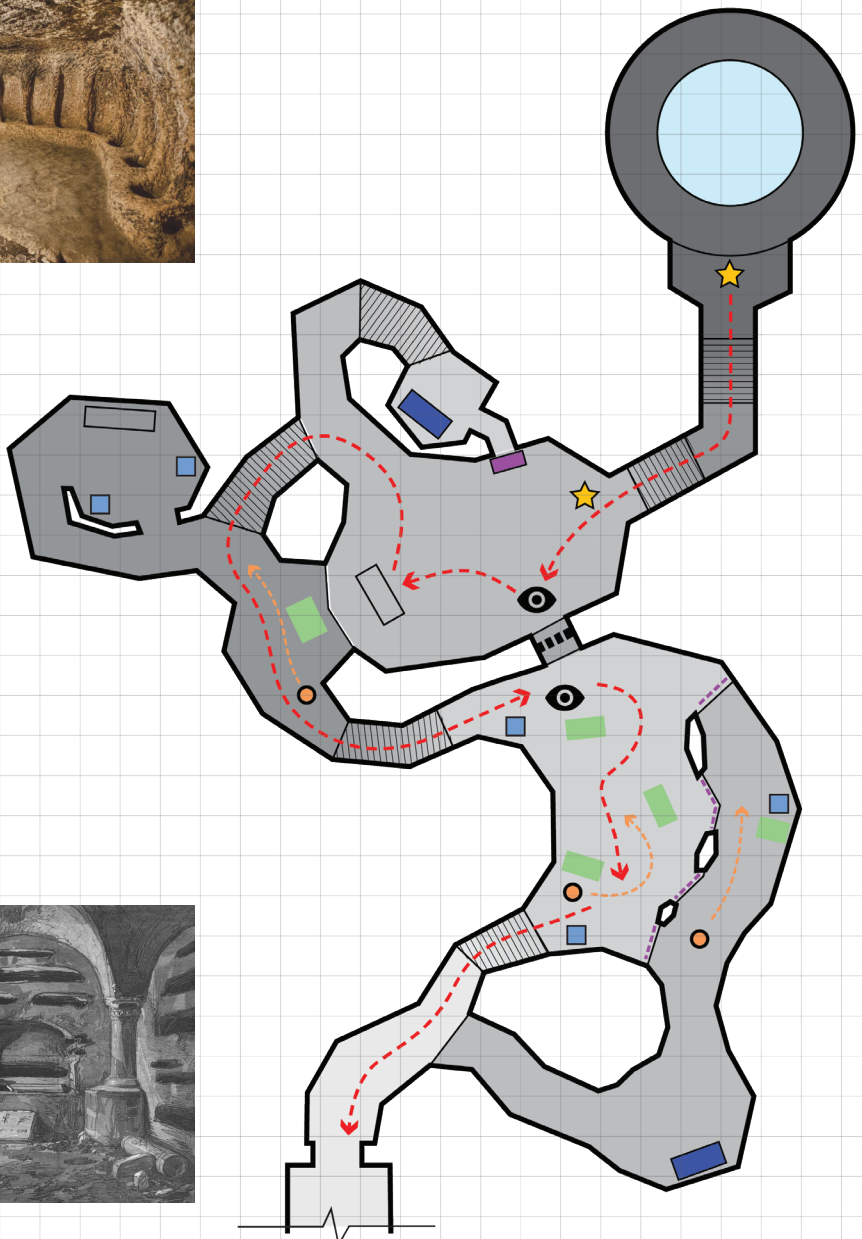
OVERVIEW

D. Callout Map - Excavated City Building

The section consists of two rooms, one of which the Player enters from the Burial Chambers. There are two sets of combat challenges, a light encounter with a squadron of Grunts, and a close quarter combat with Specialists in the second room. This level introduces a navigational puzzle focused around the excavation machine, which the Player must activate and use to destroy obstacles, and create a bridge over the cave opening to proceed.
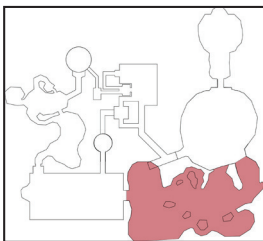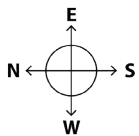

MAP LEGEND

- ►► Player Path
- ---► Enemy Path
- ⌒ Intel Scan Radius
- ● Enemy
- ★ Scripted Event
- ◉ Vantage Point
- ◻ Pickup
- ◼ Treasure
- ◼ Interactable Object
- ■■ Gates
- --- Climbable Surface
- ▮ Low Cover
- ▮ High Cover
- Elevation Height (High / Low)
- ◻ Water
- ⌁ Level Breakline

E / N / S / W (compass)

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OVERVIEW

## D. Callout Map - Cave Cliffside & Valleys

The Cave Cliffside section consists of a network of tunnels and platforms that encourage the Player to utilize various traversal mechanics, either choosing to climb along cliffside walls, jump across platforms, or using the grappling hook to swing over large spans.

MAP LEGEND

- ▶ Player Path
- → Enemy Path
- ⌒ Intel Scan Radius
- ● Enemy
- ★ Scripted Event
- ◉ Vantage Point
- ◼ Pickup
- ◼ Treasure
- ◼ Interactable Object
- ▪▪▪ Gates
- --- Climbable Surface
- ◼ Low Cover
- ◼ High Cover

High
Elevation Height
Low

- ◼ Water
- ∿ Level Breakline

E
N ✦ S
W

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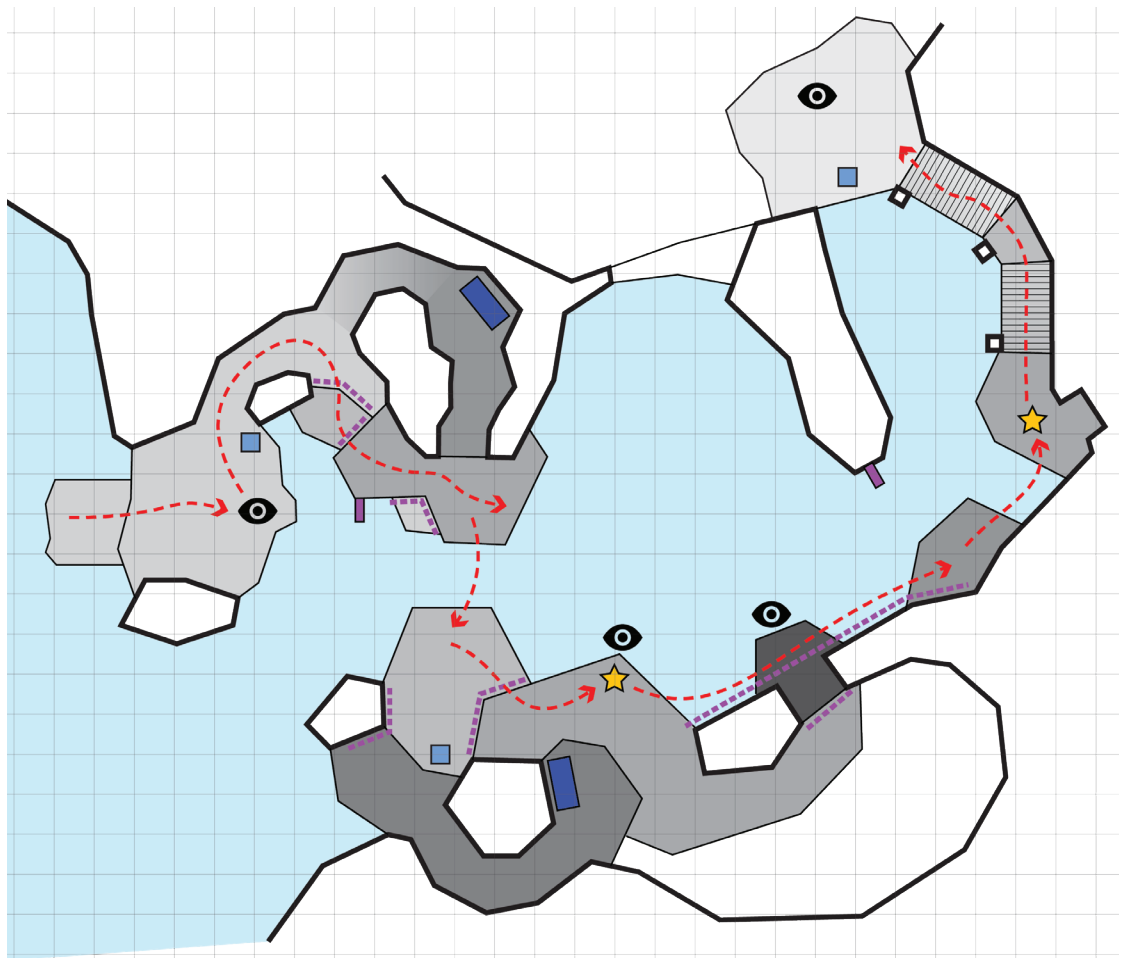
OVERVIEW

D. Callout Map - Deep Cavern

The Deep Cavern area is an arena-style space that introduces the Intel enemy type. Upon enterring the scene, the Player is given a vantage point over the combat space. The Player can then choose what actions to take - either stealth gameplay using the various heights as a sneak advantage, or all-out gun battle.

MAP LEGEND

- ----> Player Path
- ----> Enemy Path
- ⌒ Intel Scan Radius
- 🟠 Enemy
- ⭐ Scripted Event
- 👁 Vantage Point
- 🟦 Pickup
- 🟦 Treasure
- 🟪 Interactable Object
- ▪▪▪ Gates
- --- Climbable Surface
- 🟩 Low Cover
- 🟩 High Cover

High
Elevation Height
Low

- 🟦 Water
- 〜 Level Breakline

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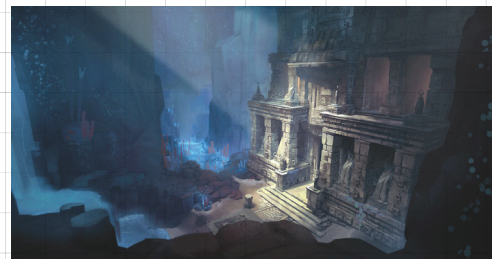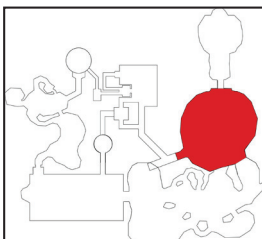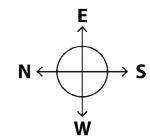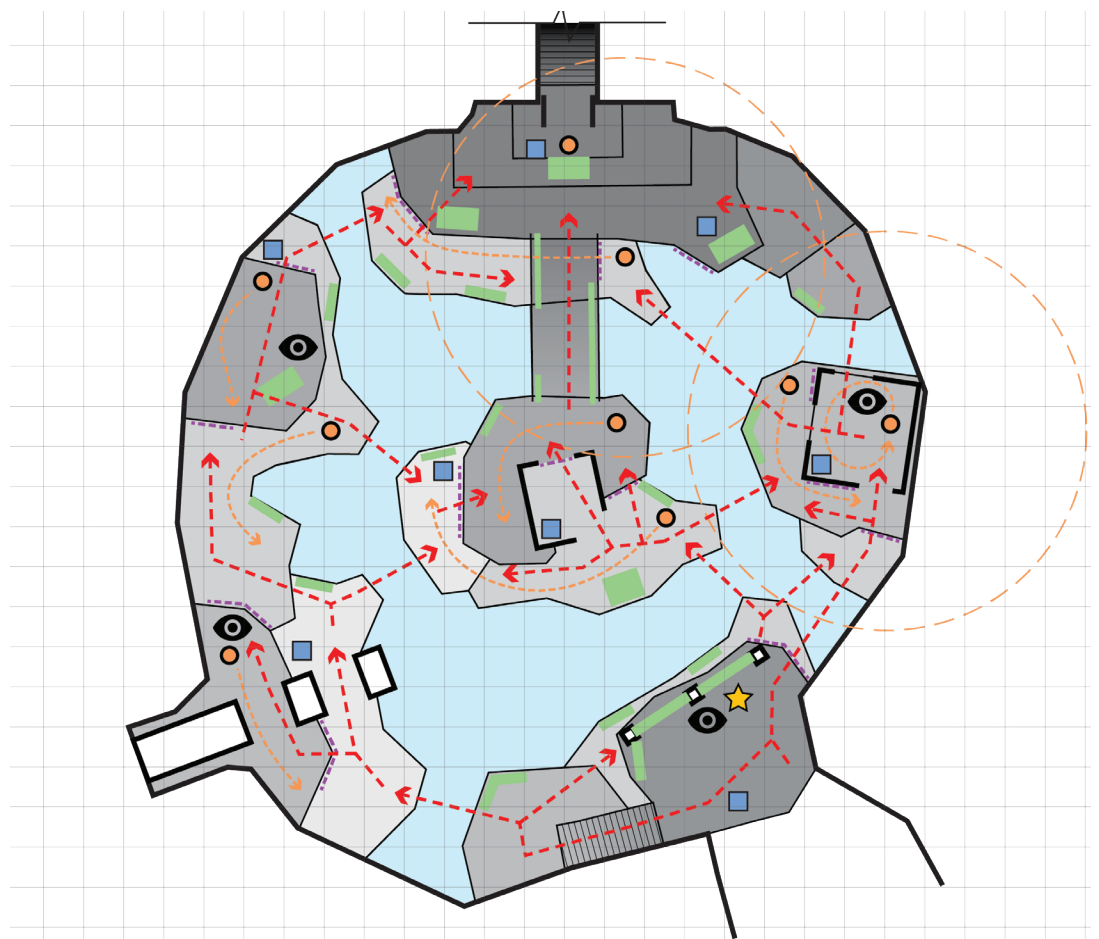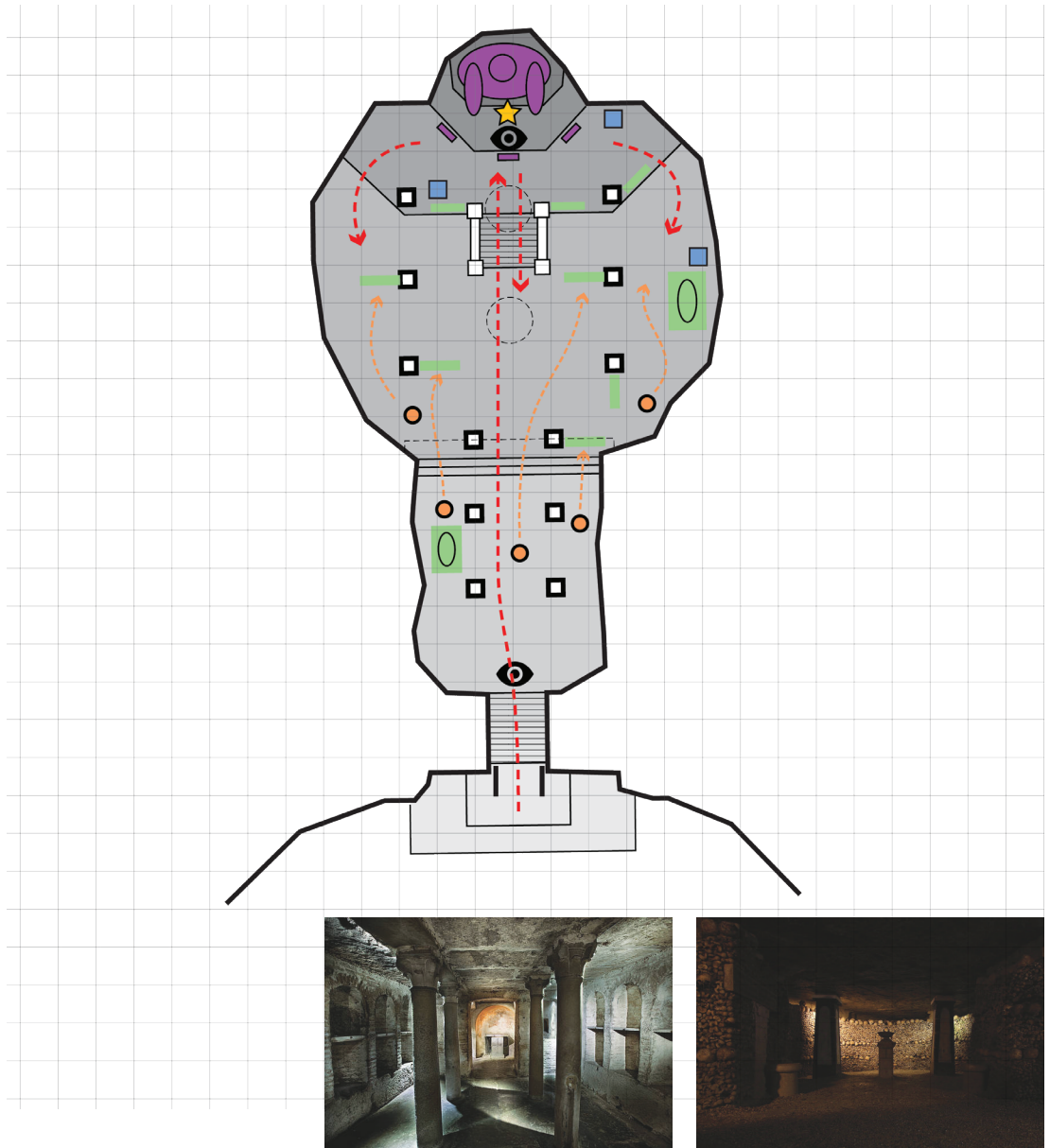
OVERVIEW

D. Callout Map - Main Crypt

The Main Crypt space is where the legendary Amulet is stored. Here, the Player is confronted with a puzzle that consist of manipulating the three levers in front of the giant Statue that rotates its Eyes, Nose, and Mouth respective. There is a total of 4 different types per facial feature. The statue will then move its arms corresponding to the facial expression.

MAP LEGEND

- Player Path
- Enemy Path
- Intel Scan Radius
- Enemy
- Scripted Event
- Vantage Point
- Pickup
- Treasure
- Interactable Object
- Gates
- Climbable Surface
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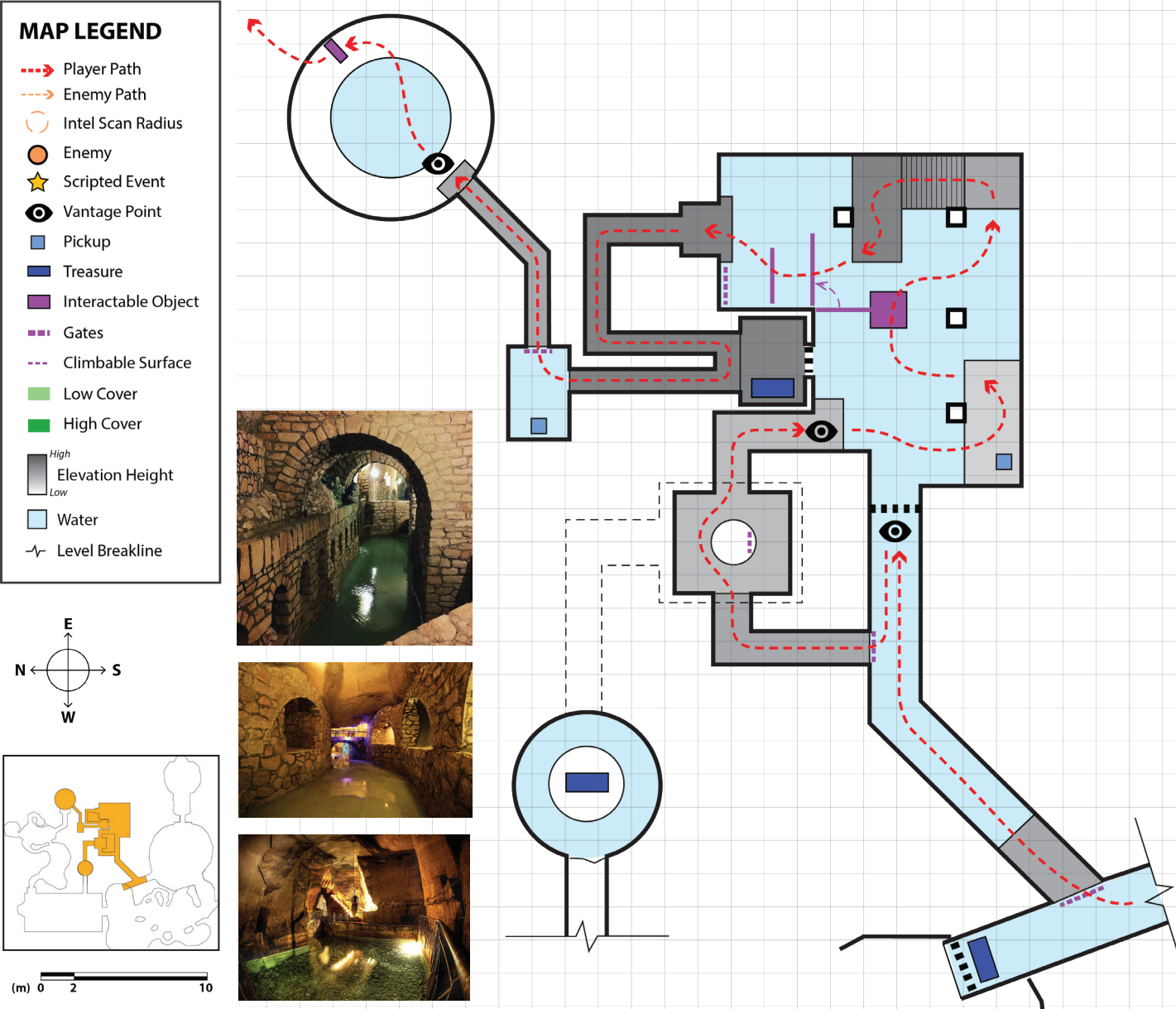- Level Breakline
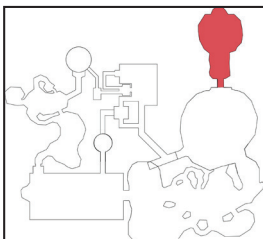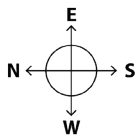
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OVERVIEW

D. Callout Map - Sewage Network

The Sewage Network is a network of channels and tunnels that the Player must traverse through to exit the excavation site. Here, there is a secret path to a Treasure room previously seen in the Excavated City scene.

MAP LEGEND

- ---▶ Player Path
- ---▶ Enemy Path
- Intel Scan Radius
- ● Enemy
- ★ Scripted Event
- 👁 Vantage Point
- ▪ Pickup
- ▪ Treasure
- ▪ Interactable Object
- ▪▪▪ Gates
- --- Climbable Surface
- ▪ Low Cover
- ▪ High Cover
- Elevation Height (High / Low)
- ▪ Water
- ⌁ Level Breakline

E / N / S / W (compass)

(m) 0   2   10

OVERVIEW

Pacing & Gameplay Beats

| | ACT 1
Exposition & Inciting Incident | | | ACT 2
Rising Action | | | ACT 3
Climax & Resolution | | | |

Beat labels (top):
Burial Grounds | Excavation Machinery | Flooded Catacomb | Approach to Main Crypt | Cavern Lower Ground | Main Crypt & The Amulet | Enemy Ambush | Exit the Main Crypt | Cavern Higher Ground | Escape through Aqueduct Channel

Gameplay segments:
TRAVERSAL | TRAVERSAL | PUZZLE | PUZZLE | TRAVERSAL | PUZZLE | TRAVERSAL | TRAVERSAL | OBJECTIVE COMPLETE

Combat beats (bottom):
Light Combat - Grunts | Stealth Combat - Specialists | Arena Combat - Grunts, Specialists, Intels | Surprise Combat - Grunts, Specialists | Frantic Combat - Grunts, Intels

Legend:
●—● Streaming Valves
— Combat Intensity
- - Stealth Intensity

Act 1) Exposition & Inciting Incident

* Cinematic cutscene of the fall into the pond at the bottom of the Well.

* Environmental storytelling of how the burial chambers have been ravaged by the mercernaries.

* Introduce the Player with the habit of going off and looping back into the critical path.

* Introduce the enemy encounters with first the Grunts, and then the Specialists.

Act 2) Rising Action

* Introduce more advanced traversal challenges using climbing and grappling hooks.

* Tease the Player with denial spaces and Treasures and incentivize exploration.

* Introduce the Intel enemies that can sense the Player's movement within 20 meters.

* Provide the Player with a sense of progress by visually framing the Crypt and Amulet.

Act 3) Climax & Resolution

* Surprise the Player with an ambush attack, and confine him/her in the Crypt.

* Pressure the Player in making momentary decisions to grapple hook with enemy fire.

* Reward the Player with a sense of intimate calm after the storm.

OVERVIEW

Player Objectives

	Objective Name		Time (min.)	Target Emotions	
		The Player has to explore through the interweaving burial chambers and find a way into the ancient city. The Player engages in the first combat encounter with Grunts.	2	-Disoriented -Elevated -Curiosity -Explorer	1
Excavated City	Activate the Excavation Machine with a Power Generator.	The Player engages in a brief combat with Grunts. The Player has to hook up excavation machine with the power generator to activate and use it to destroy the obstacles.	2	-Alert -Intrigued -Smart	3
Excavated City	Find a way across the Collapsed Bridge.	The Player fights a squadron of Specialists in close-quarter. The Player must make way back to the previous room to use the machine as a bridge over the large opening.	4	-Surprised -Challenged -Smart	6
	Descend into the Deep Cavern.	The Player has to make way through the network of tunnels, caves, and platforms using a variety of traversal mechanics: climbing along cliffsides and grappling hooks to jump large distances.	2	-Disoriented -Challenged -Explorer -Skilled	4
Deep Cavern	Find a way into the Main Crypt	The Player has to fight through the mixed group of Grunts, Specialists, and Intels in an arena-like setup.	4	-Vulnerable -Alert -Skilled	8
Main Crypt	Retrieve the Legendary Amulet	The Player has to solve the puzzle associated with the Statue's disfigured head, by matching the visual patterns of its facial impression.	3	-Excited -Smart -Satisfied	5
Main Crypt	Find a way out of the Main Crypt.	The Player has to fend off the ambush attack by a group of Grunts and Specialists.The Player must find an alternative way out.	2	-Surprised -Confined -Challenged -Smart	4
Deep Cavern	Survive.	The Player has to find a way out of the Cavern through the Aqueduct Sewage network, amidst immense fire from below.	1.5	-Scared -Vulnerable -Desperate -Frantic	6
Sewage Network	Exit the premises.	The Player has to make way through the network of sewage pipes towards the earth's surface.	3	-Relief -Rested -Fulfilled	2

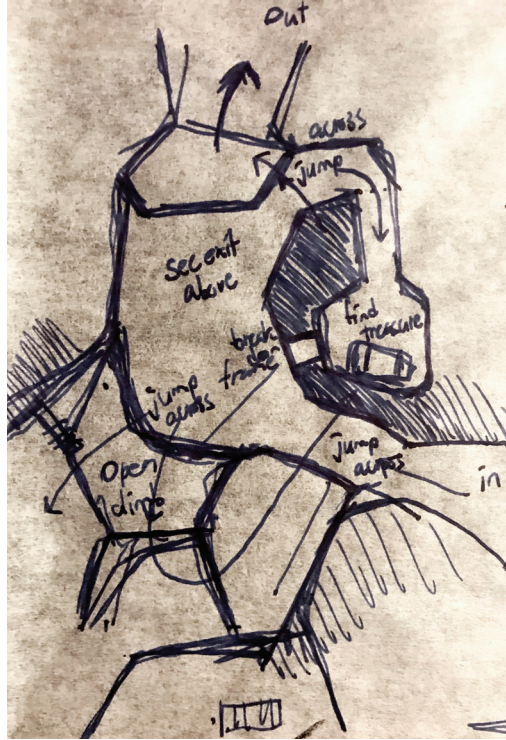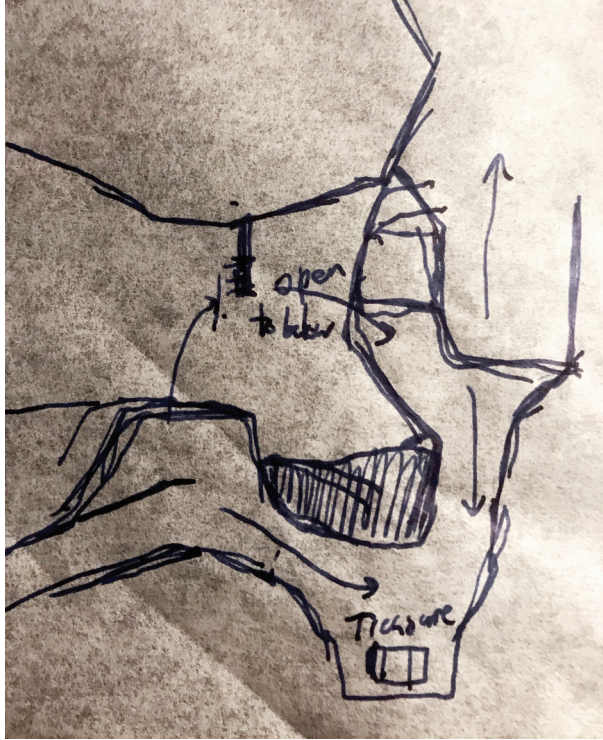# APPENDIX

Design Sketches - Node Maps

Design Sketches - Gameplay Beats & Pacing
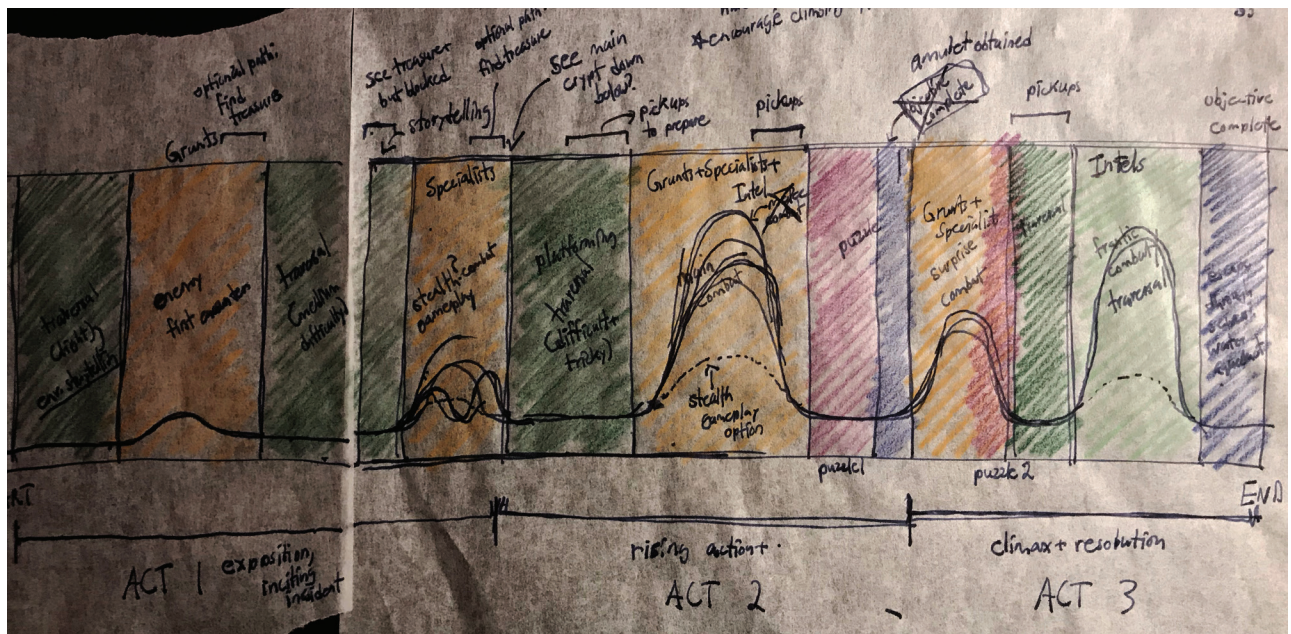
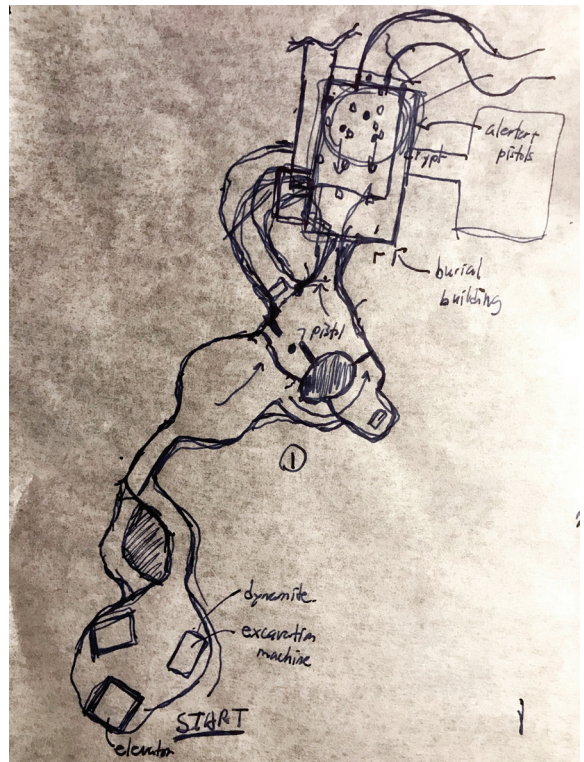# APPENDIX

Design Sketches - Traversal Challenges

Design Sketches - Combat Challenges

APPENDIX

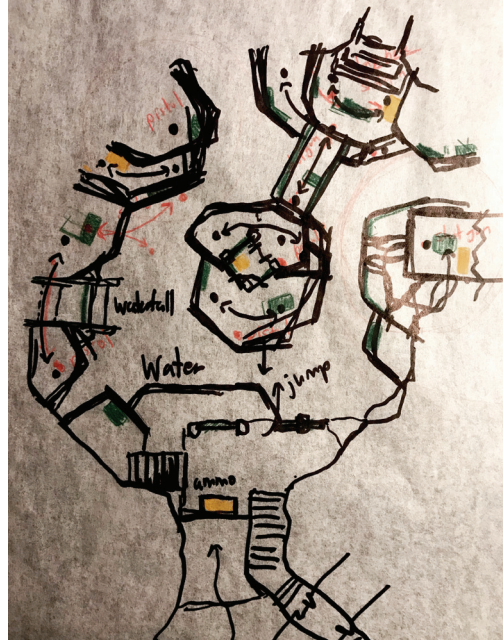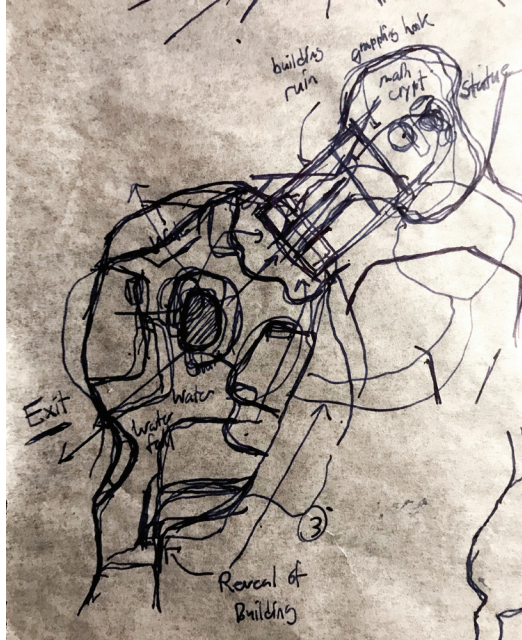**<u>Design Sketches - Deep Cavern</u>**

<u>Design Sketches - Main Crypt & Statue Puzzle</u>