



ILLUSIONS & ELUSIONS

6 Difficulty
3 Complexity

A standalone encounter for five adventurers

By Corwin Riddle

Illusions and Elusions is a standalone encounter designed for five characters between levels 8 to 10. The Halls of Glass, a mysterious academy for powerful illusionists, holds many secrets found in—and outside of—reality. Its corridors are lined with mirrors, magic, and tricks, all waiting for those curious enough to try and unravel the layers of deception found in each mirage, apparition, and trick of the mind. As its masters would warn: be on your guard, for seeming means nothing—and nothing is as it seems.

BACKGROUND

A renowned academy of illusionist magic, the Halls of Glass hide between towering mountain peaks and wispy clouds, a glimmering, crystal building, invisible to all but the keenest eyes and minds. Named for its abundance of mirrors—and indeed, its very nature—few stumble upon the school without prior knowledge of its location and existence. It shimmers and fades as a mirage in the desert, dismissed as a trick of the light or a figment of the imagination; many travelers have passed within mere feet of the massive building, all the time unaware of its presence. It is a place of perception and deception, of first impressions and second glances, of smoke, mirrors, and unreality. Active for millennia, many of its rooms have yet to be discovered, and those in use still manage to baffle the wisest scholars on a daily basis.

Inside, wizards, sorcerers, and the magically inclined learn the art of the illusionist; they bring the impossible to a tangible existence, or shroud the truth in a haze of uncertainty, confusion, and deception—it is the study of perception, awareness, and the limits of reality. With its mysterious and unpredictable temperament, the Halls of Glass provide a perfect environment for such practices; apprentices come to learn, and masters stay to unlock the secrets of the academy, hoping to understand more clearly the fine line wavering between truth and a fictional appearance of it.

However, the academy is not only a place of learning; many who enter never find their way out—often driven insane, killed, or lost inside the magic of its countless cor-

ridors—for danger hides behind every reflection and within every crystal ball, waiting to claim any foolish enough to believe their eyes. Some claim that finding entry into the Halls of Glass is easy, while escaping is an entirely separate and infinitely more challenging process. Regardless, those who survive hold to the academy's one and only creed: trust that you cannot trust anything or anyone—including yourself.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

Illusions and Elusions can be used as a standalone encounter, or as the basis of an entire adventure. The players can somehow discover the Halls of Glass, or be sent (or led) there by another character. This encounter is one of many that could take place inside the academy, and can be introduced with one of the following hooks:

HOOK 1: A RECURSIVE DILEMMA

An illusionist named Alluis has been tasked with studying and uncovering the secrets of a mysterious mirror capable of creating tangible copies of items reflected in it. To lessen his work, Alluis took advantage of the mirror and copied himself, handing off his duties to the newly copied Alluis. However, coming across the same brilliant idea, the copied Alluis used the mirror to make his own copy, which he then gave his work to. That copy decided to make its own copy, which made its own copy, and so on. Now, each copy has all of Alluis's memories, believing itself to be the one authentic Alluis and refusing to be destroyed.

Alluis locked the copies in with the mysterious mirror in a room called the Crystal Sanctum, and wants the PCs to head inside and destroy all of the copies before the situation escalates and he's claimed as a victim. The copies can be identified by a glowing runic tattoo on the inside of their wrists; he shows you his blank wrist to prove himself as the true Alluis.

Quest XP: 1200 XP and gems worth 1000 gp for destroying all of the Alluis copies.

HOOK 2: DUST TO DUST

Classes are hard for students learning at the Halls of Glass, and some apprentices will do anything to impress their masters. One such student is an elf named Giera, who has been asked to come up with a significant portion of something called illusion dust. The problem is that illusion dust is only found near spots where certain types of strong illusions have recently dissipated—a tangible trace left behind to those able to spot it.

Giera has heard of Alluis and his troubles, and wants the PCs to look for any illusion dust near or around the destroyed copies in the Crystal Sanctum. Finding illusion dust requires a DC 14 Arcana check. She offers a small reward if the PCs will bring back at least 3 samples.

Quest XP: 500 XP and 250 gp for bringing back 3 or more samples of illusion dust.

SPECIAL FEATURES

THE MYSTERIOUS MIRROR

In the very center of the room lies the mysterious mirror, which plays a large part in the encounter and has the following properties:

- At the end of every round, each PC is pulled 3 squares toward the mirror and each Alluis is pulled 1 square.
- If a PC is pulled into the mirror's square, they take **4d6** psychic damage and the mirror immediately spawns four shadowy reflections, which are hostile to the PCs.
- If Alluis is pulled or pushed into the mirror's square, he takes an immediate **50** psychic damage.
- Shadowy reflections are unaffected by the mirror's pull.
- The mirror is protected by a magical aura and repels blows, spells, and damaging effects.

GETTING STARTED

Regardless of why the PCs enter the Halls of Glass, read this when they first step inside:

There are no idle moments within the Halls of Glass. As you navigate its many corridors, you pass wizards, shadowy beings, and floating objects—many of which appear faded or translucent. Lining the walls are countless mirrors; some reflecting you as you pass by, some functioning as windows to another place. The halls are well lit, although there doesn't appear to be any source of the light. For some reason, you're not surprised.

AREA: THE CRYSTAL SANCTUM

Read this when the PCs enter the Crystal Sanctum:

The doors of the Crystal Sanctum open into an ornate, circular room, lined with mirrors. Even the arched ceiling and smooth stone floors seem to reflect movement and images—though it's not clear as to which side of the reflection the ghostly images inhabit.

In the middle of the room is a tall, ornate mirror framed with polished silver dragons, which seem to slide along the perimeter. As you spread out into the room, you notice the mysterious mirror turns to face you, following you with your own reflection.

Perception (DC 15): The mirror never reveals its back or sides, appearing differently to each individual so as to always seem to be facing whoever is looking at it.

SETUP

5 Alluis (A)

Alluis		Level 9 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (human)		XP 400
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +8	
HP 94; Bloodied 47		
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 22, Will 21		
Speed 6		
⊕ Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) • Weapon		
+9 vs AC; 1d8 + 4 damage		
⊗ Illusory Shadows (standard; at-will)		
Ranged 10; +13 vs Will; 2d10 + 6 psychic damage and the target is pushed 1 square.		
⬅ Phantasmal Force (standard; recharge ☞☞☞)		
Close burst 3; +13 vs Will; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage and every creature within the burst is pushed 2 squares.		
Summon Shades (immediate reaction; usable when bloodied and when reduced to 0 hit points)		
Four shadowy reflections are summoned adjacent to the mirror.		
Invisibility (standard; encounter)		
Alluis becomes invisible until the start of his next turn or until he uses action besides a move action.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common	
Skills Arcana +14		
Str 12	Dex 16	Wis 19
Con 14	Int 20	Cha 14
Equipment Orb Implement, Quarterstaff		

Shadow Reflection		Level 7 Minion
Medium magical creature (illusion)		XP 0
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +2	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 21; Fortitude 20, Reflex 19, Will 18		
Speed 4		
⊕ Shadowy Strike (standard; at-will)		
+12 vs AC; 5 damage.		
↓ Shadowy Grasp (standard; only usable when flanking a target)		
+12 vs AC; the target's next movement action is reduced by 1.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Str 16	Dex 10	Wis 9
Con 5	Int 10	Cha 2

Read this when the PCs near the mysterious mirror:

As you approach the mirror, Alluis casually walks out from behind it and says:

“No doubt you’ve come to destroy me—sent by one of my copies.”

Suddenly, another Alluis steps out behind him, saying: “you mean one of my copies.”

“Clearly,” a third Alluis says, appearing next to them, “they have been sent by one of my copies.”

A fourth and fifth Alluis appear, each adding their own claims of authenticity. One turns to you, saying: “Well don’t expect me to lay down my life on the whim of an illusion. Apologies, but you’d understand if you were in my situation.”

“You mean if they were in my situation,” another Alluis says. “But we can discuss that after they’re dead.”

The others seem to agree, and each one waves their arms at the mirror, bringing it to life. Swirling within are ghostly images floating behind shimmering reflections.

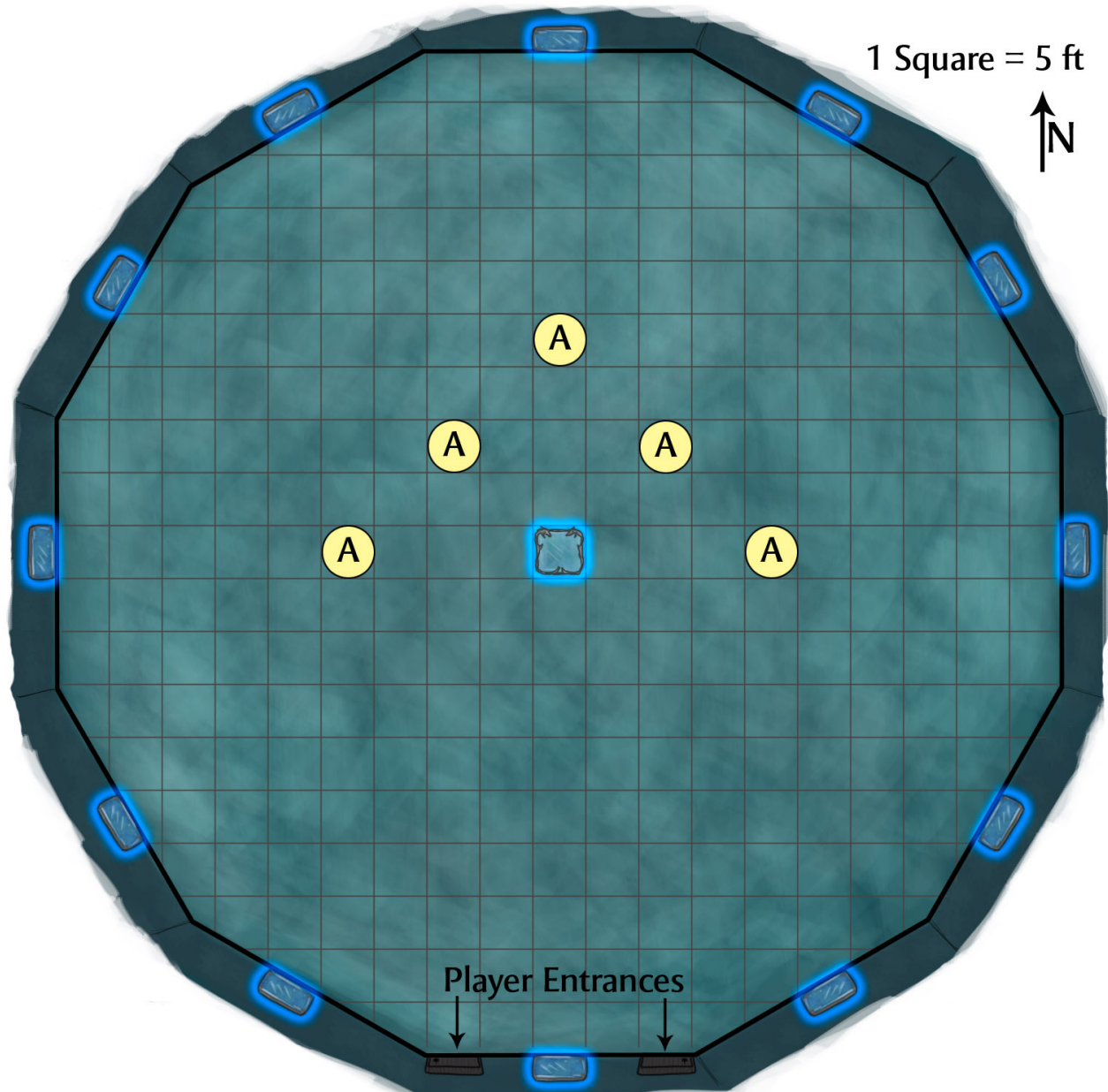
FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: The chamber has a 30’ ceiling.

Illumination: The area is well lit.

Mysterious Mirror: Marked as a mirror in the center of the room. See *Special Features* on how to interact with it.

Wall Mirrors: Marked as white mirrors on each wall. Any creature or player adjacent to a wall mirror and with at least one movement space left can step through a wall mirror and teleport to the space in front of the wall mirror on the exact opposite side of the room. *Consider allowing the PCs to destroy the wall mirrors: 40 hit points and all defenses of 19.*



TACTICS

- Each Alluis will stay as close as possible to the edges of the room, teleporting back and forth through the wall mirrors to avoid melee and attack at range with *Illusory Shadows* and *Phantasmal Force*.
- They know the PCs are being sucked into the mysterious mirror in the center of the room and do their best to use powers to push them into it.
- When first cornered, Alluis will use *Invisibility*.
- Alluis will use *Summon Shades* as an immediate action when bloodied and when reduced to 0 hit points, casting it with his dying breath.
- The shadowy reflections appear adjacent to the mysterious mirror, trying to slow and ambush the PCs between themselves and Alluis with *Shadowy Grasp*.
- When the last Alluis is killed, all shadowy reflections disappear.

PLAYER STRATEGY

- The PCs should try to stay near the edge of the room, and use the mirrors to travel around the perimeter—the many Alluises will avoid the center of the room if possible.
- It is possible to stun, daze, and immobilize an Alluis and push him (or let him be pulled) into the mirror, dealing a significant amount of damage.

COMBAT FLAVOR

If you dislike reading powers and effects to your players, give them hints with the following flavor text.

When the mysterious mirror pulses, read:

You feel a strong force pulling you toward the center of the room. The mysterious mirror seems to be drawing in every creature, including Alluis, who manages to resist some of its power.

When Alluis uses a teleporting mirror, read:

Slipping into one of the mirrors on the wall, Alluis reappears at the opposite side of the room. These mirrors work as a portal of some kind, and don't seem to require any magical power to use.

When an Alluis is killed, read:

The illusionist dissipates into thin air, a look of surprise on his face as he fades away.

When Alluis casts *Summon Shades*, read:

The mysterious mirror glows brightly, and four shadowy copies of Alluis emerge. They seem to be fighting the pull of the mirror as they lunge toward you.

CONCLUSION

When the last Alluis is defeated, he falls to the floor bleeding. He looks annoyed with the PCs, saying as he dies: *"I told you I was the real Alluis, you fools. That's the trouble with being an illusionist... no one believes... anything you tell them."* As soon as he's dead, the mysterious mirror stops pulsing and turns silent; all shades of Alluis disappear. This Alluis has no runic tattoo on either of his wrists. On his body, the PCs will find two level 11 magical items. The PCs can look around to gather illusion dust from each of the Alluis copies.

Upon returning to the other Alluis, he thanks them and reaches out to shake their hands, pausing and rolling up his sleeve to inspect a runic tattoo. Looking disappointed, he says:

"That doesn't make any sense at all. It should have been on my other... ah, the reflection. How unfortunate. Well, there's only one Alluis left now, and that's the important part; being real or imaginary—trivial details, really."

ADJUSTMENTS

If you like this encounter but aren't sure you can fit it into your current campaign, you can adjust and scale it to accommodate your adventure. Here are some suggestions:

We don't have five players:

Adjust the number of Alluis copies and how many minions spawn.

We're not the right level:

*Alluis is based on the Human Illusionist in the **Monster Builder**.*

It's too hard for my PCs, they keep wiping:

The PCs need to balance their position throughout the entire fight, staying a safe distance from the mysterious mirror and minions, and should be using the wall mirrors to teleport around. If they're still having a hard time, have Alluis and the minions be more affected by the mysterious mirror, to even things out.

It's too easy for my PCs, they're breezing through:

If you have a tactical group of PCs that won't find a problem with the positioning and movement, consider not letting them use the teleporting wall mirrors.

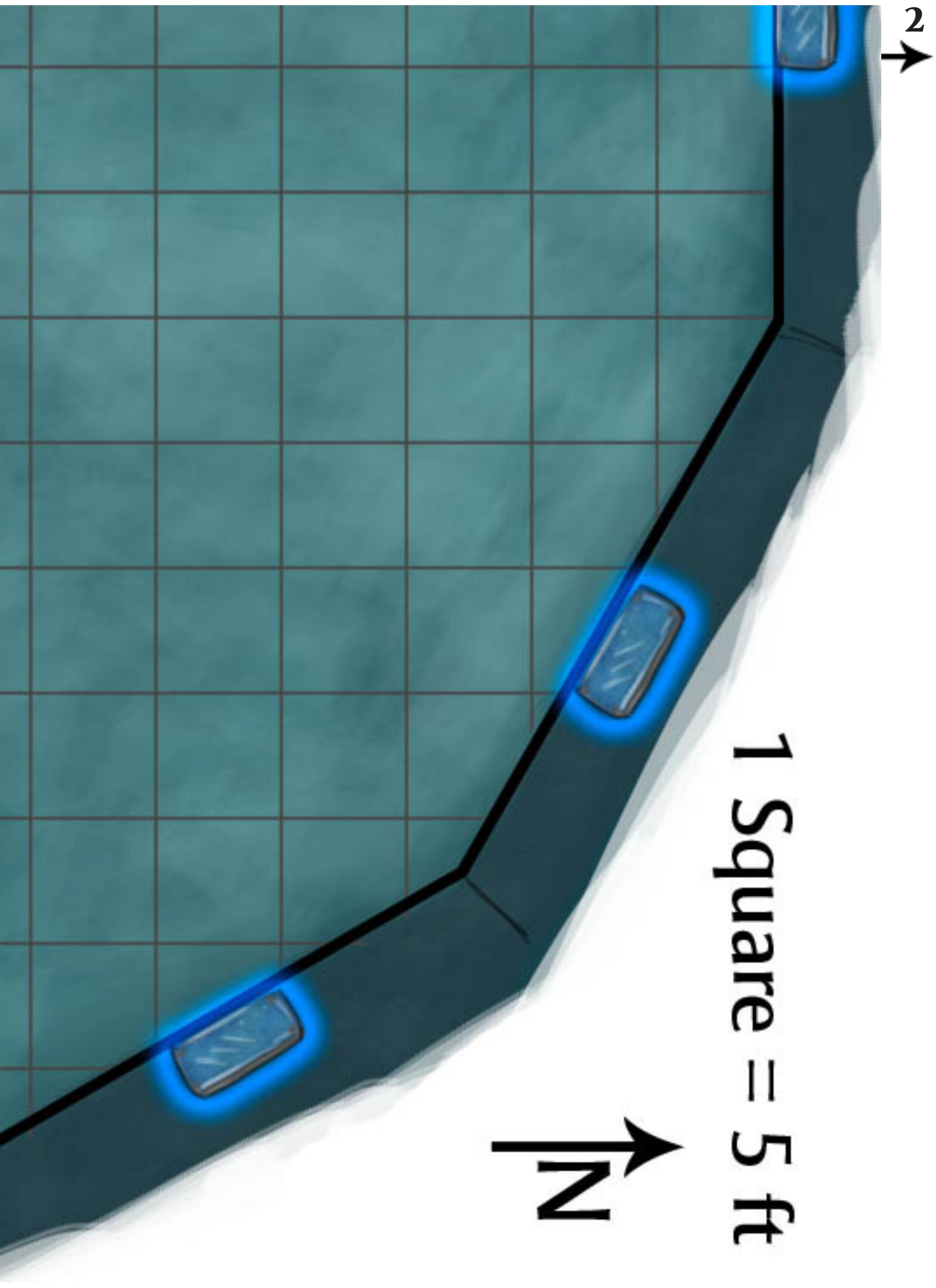
We don't like the theme/characters/combat hook:

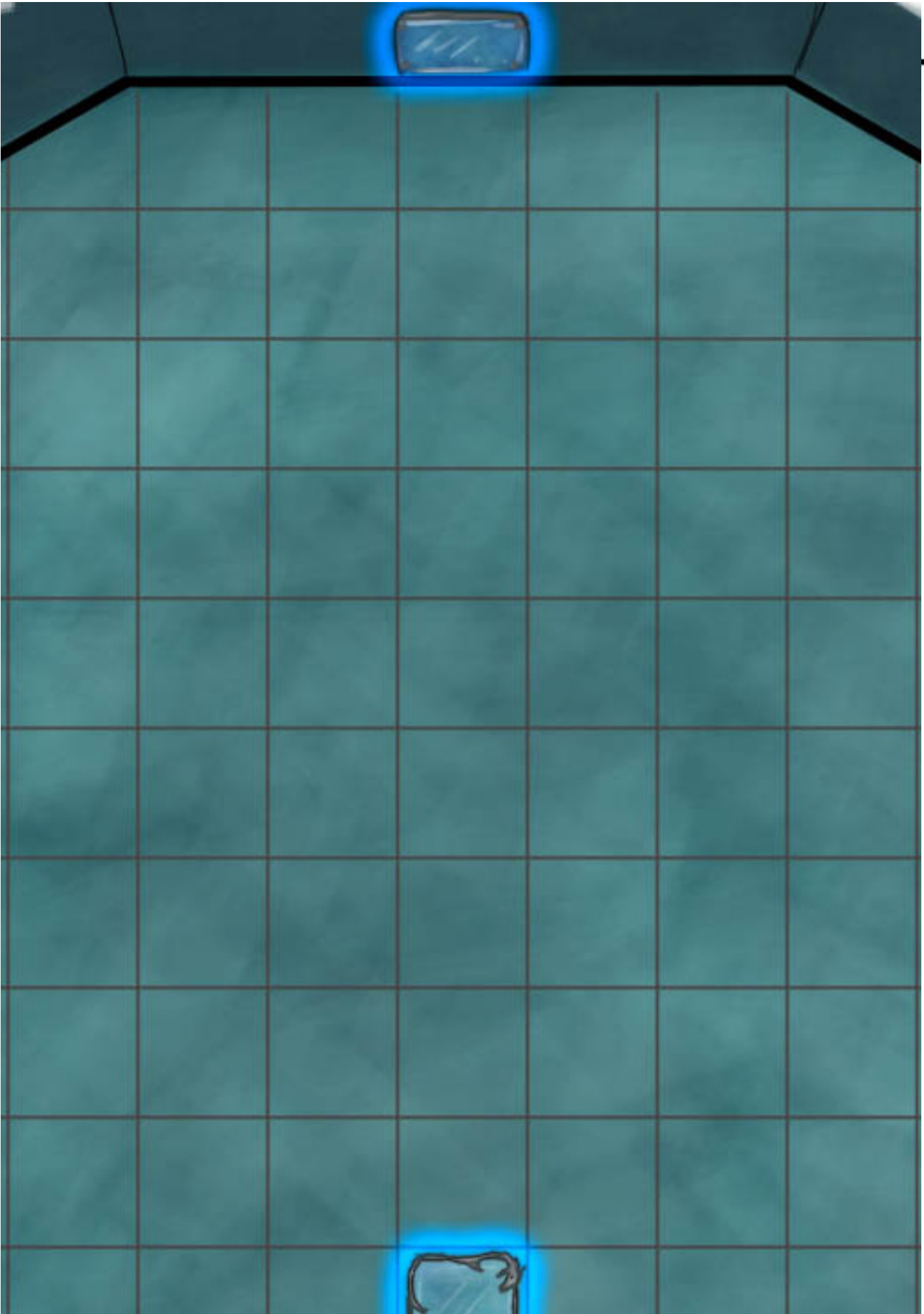
If you don't like parts of the adventure, but enjoy even one of the ideas - steal it and dump the rest.

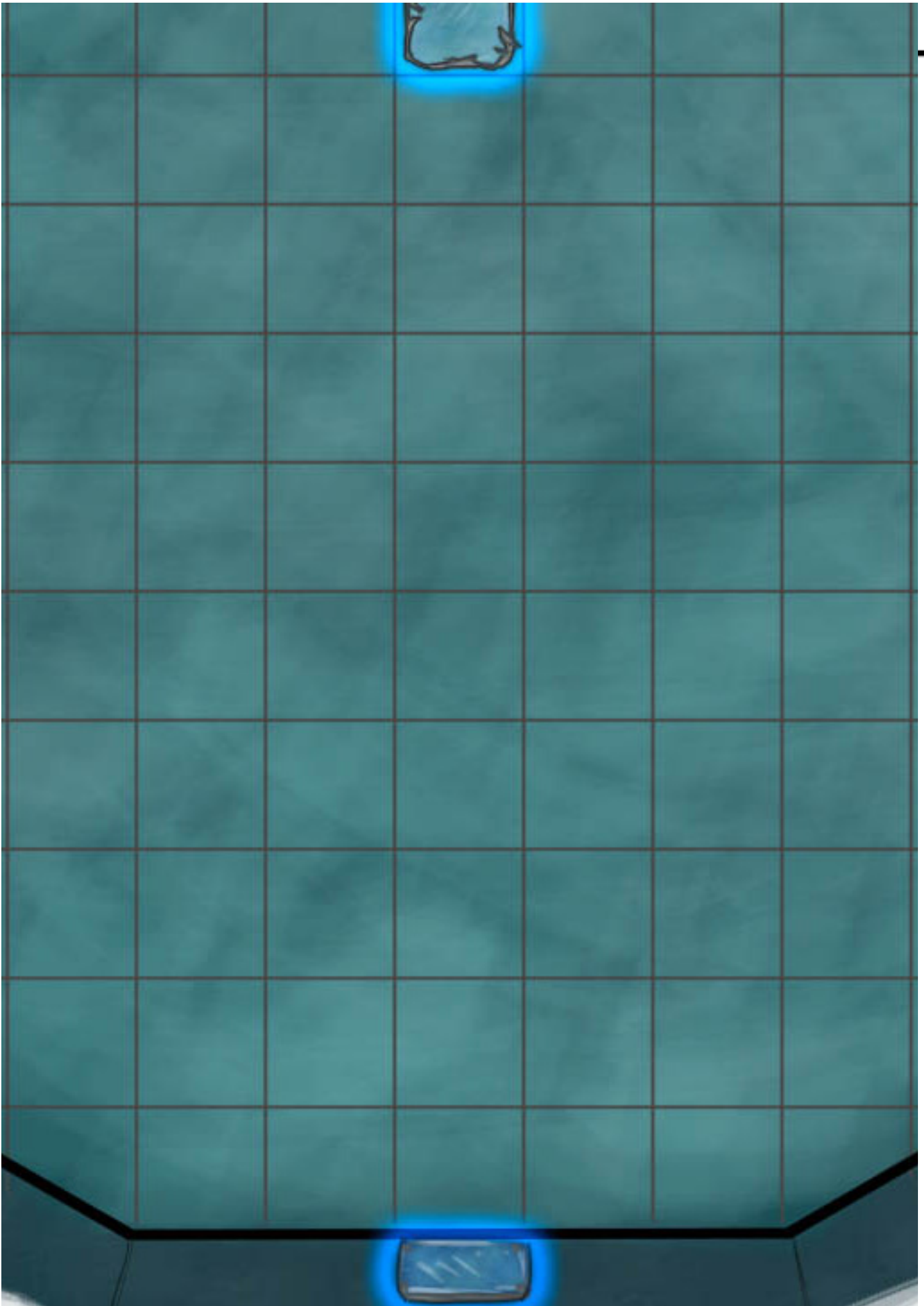
We'd rather play a full adventure than a one encounter:

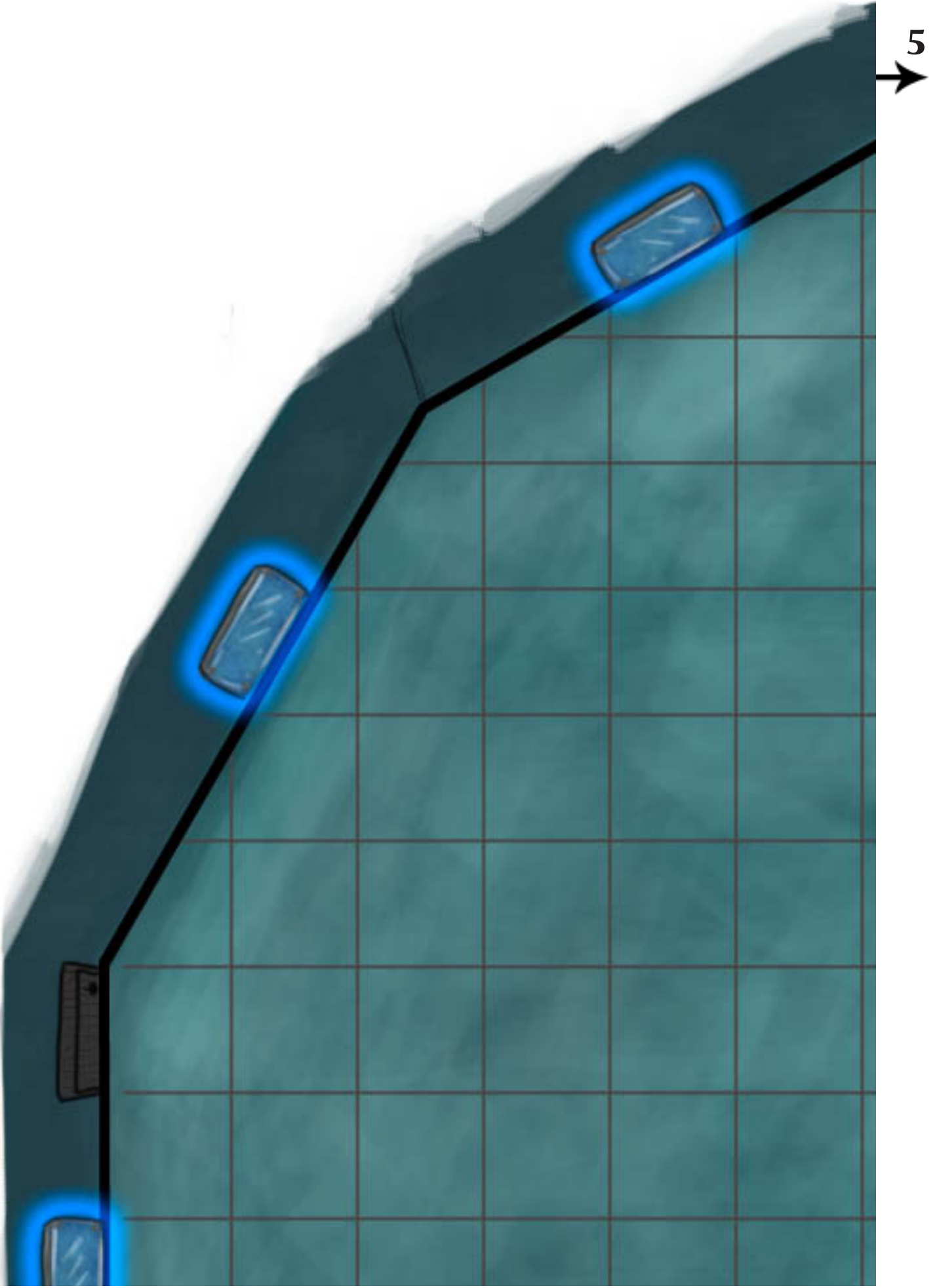
Too bad! Well not really. You can pick any number of cool magical monsters or traps found within the Halls of Glass to create additional encounters—but I do plan to revisit this setting again.











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