

# INVERTED PYRAMID OF THE NAMELESS ONE

-A LEVEL DESIGN DOCUMENT BY P MICHAEL NORRIS-

## FEATURES

- Third-person action adventure with great moment-to-moment action
- Systemic designs encourage strategy with emergent gameplay payoff
- Plenty of exploration to be had without loss of pace
- Enemies and dynamic objects provide opportunity for strategic engagement

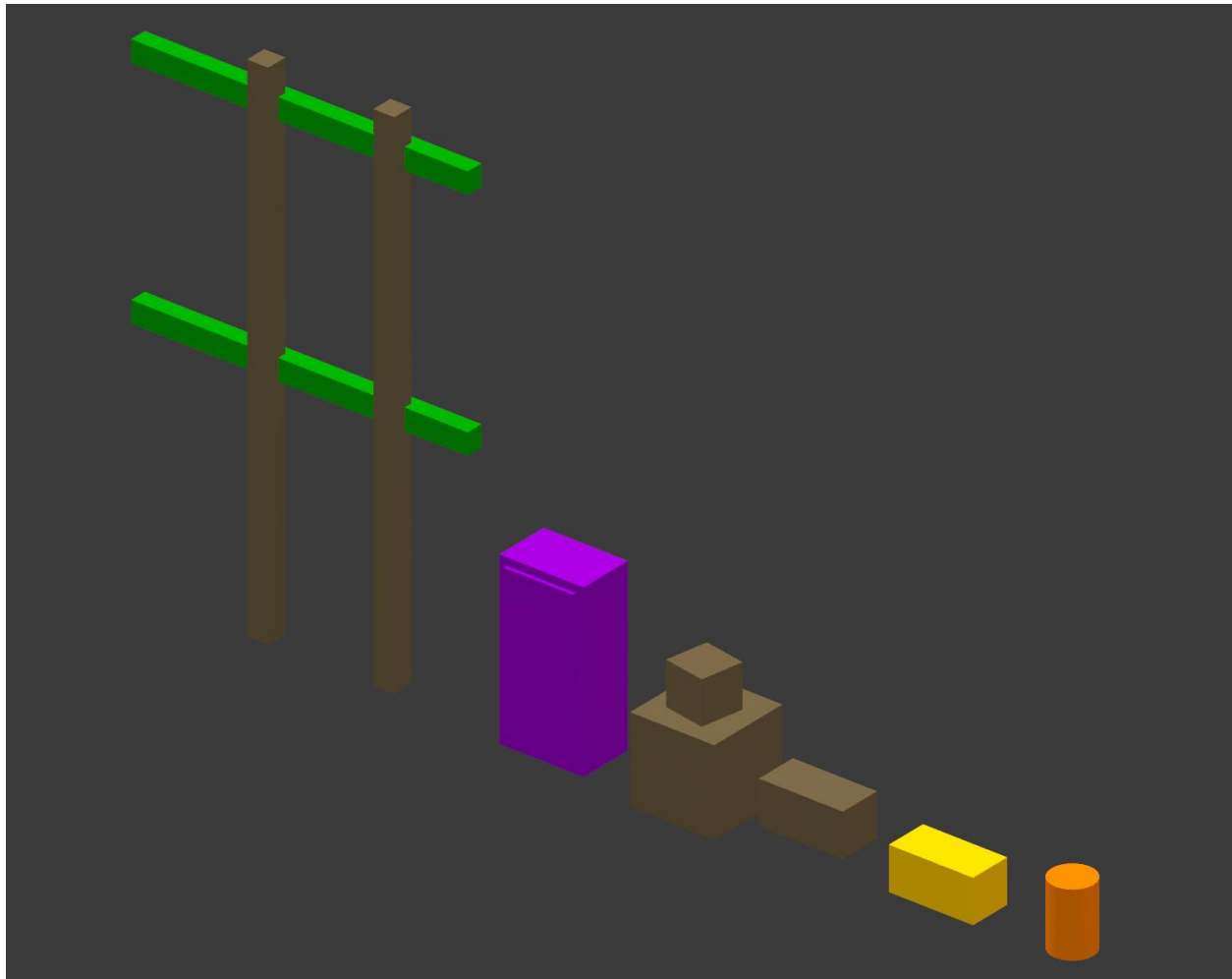
## LEVEL GUIDE

- Overview
- Level mechanics
- Enemies
- Level Walkthrough
- Cinematic
- Escaping the Ruins
- Design Notes

## OVERVIEW

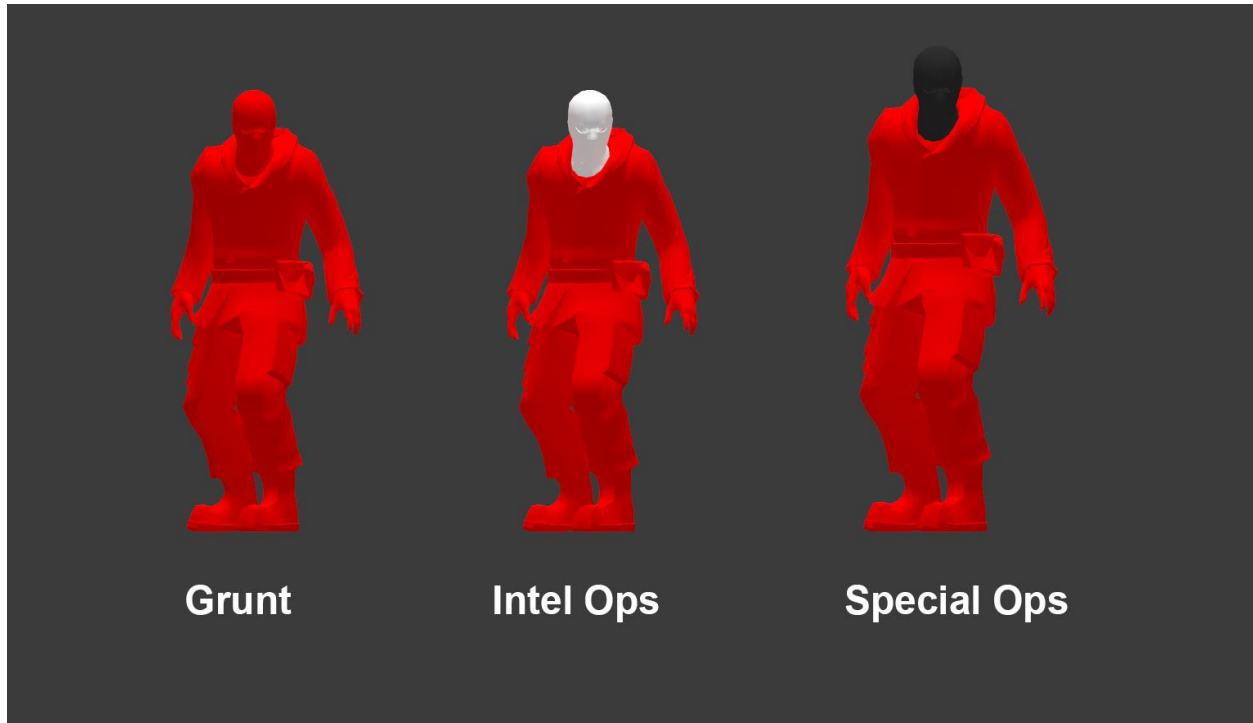
Our hero - Ethan Hitchcock, through rigorous study of his late father's collection of forbidden texts, deciphers the location of an ancient phylactery whose contents are said to be the blood of the Nameless One - a Great Old One who shook the earth in eons past. Ethan's journey lands him at the footsteps of the Inverted Pyramid deep within the ruins of the Nameless City.

## LEVEL MECHANICS



- **Scaffolding Crossbeams:** Interacts with the player's grappling hook ability. Highlighted in GREEN.
- **Gunpowder Kegs:** Oh, cliché, but necessary for the emergent gameplay I want to have happen in this level. When fired upon, the keg explodes dealing damage and knockback to player, enemy, and other objects within blast radius. Highlighted in ORANGE.
- **Dynamic Objects:** Specially designed props that are reactive to certain mechanics as indicated by some feature or VFX. Highlighted in PURPLE.
- **Wooden Objects:**
  - **Crates:** Crates provide cover - to a point. They absorb x-amount of damage regardless of faction (player or enemy). Large crates absorb twice the amount of damage as small crates. Munitions Crates count as large in regards to damage absorption, but their lootable ammo is tied directly to their damage taken. IN short, the more they are damages, the less the reward.
  - **Scaffolding** serve as rickety platforms that dynamically react to explosions.
- **Munitions Crates:** Lootable containers with varying types and amounts of ammunition.
- **Water:** I took the liberty of allowing the player to swim on water surfaces (not dive). He is able to climb into and out of water where there is a ledge of 3 feet or less.

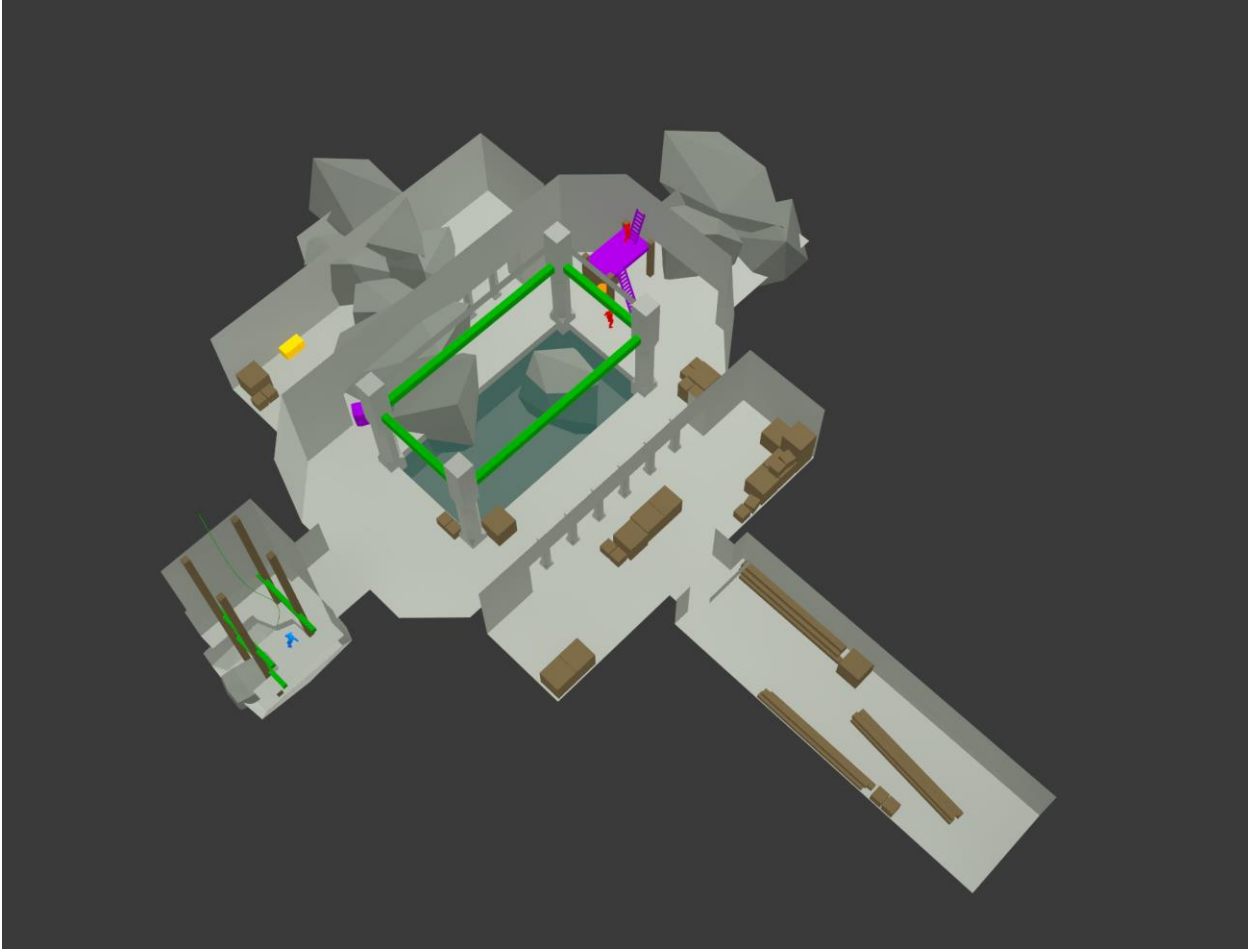
## ENEMIES

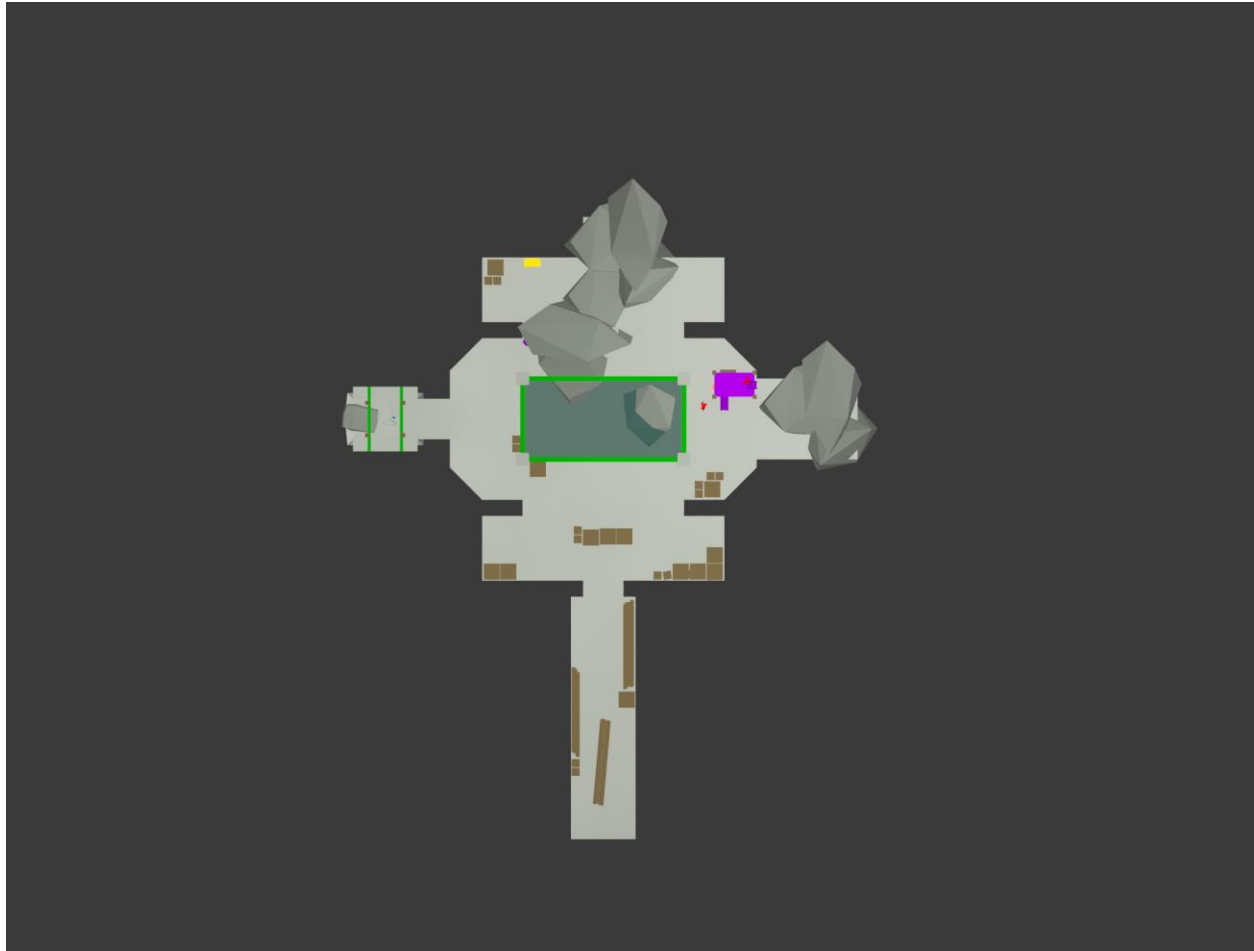


## LEVEL WALKTHROUGH

### AREA 1: NARTHEX

The Narthex originally served as the entry hall of the Nameless One's tomb. Though that was ages ago, time in this place has cyclic tendencies.





#### Features

- Mercenary Grunt (2)
- Secrets (1)

#### Collapsed Chamber:

After a brief cinematic, the Player finds himself in a small chamber at the bottom of a tall shaft. The room is empty, save for a large rock and some scaffolding leading to another room above. This starting chamber provides the player with a safe space to learn both ledge climb and grappling hook mechanics. The rock is climbed upon and the scaffolding's crossbeams are compatible with the grappling hook. Once the hook catches the selected beam, control is momentarily taken away from the player as he ascends up the rope, and is given back once the player is (literally) left hanging. While hanging, the player can engage in normal ledge mechanics (move left, move right, hoist up, drop, etc.). In addition to these, I'd recommend an option to swing back and forth to gain momentum for a forward detachment.

#### Main Narthex:

Once the player has ascended, he finds himself in the main Narthex – the tomb's entrance hall. The room is dominated by a rectangular pool of stagnant water. Beyond the pool, on the far side of the

room, a pair of Mercenary Grunts attempt to pry gems from a frieze. Beyond them, a colossal statue can be seen through a small opening in some collapsed rubble. I wanted this first encounter to be low-risk and continue with the safe tutorialization of level mechanics we began in the collapsed chamber. Exposed overhead beams around the pool provide yet another way of triggering the encounter here. I wanted players to see the enemies without being seen to give them opportunity to play with the contents of the room. In many ways, all of Area-1 is a tutorial.

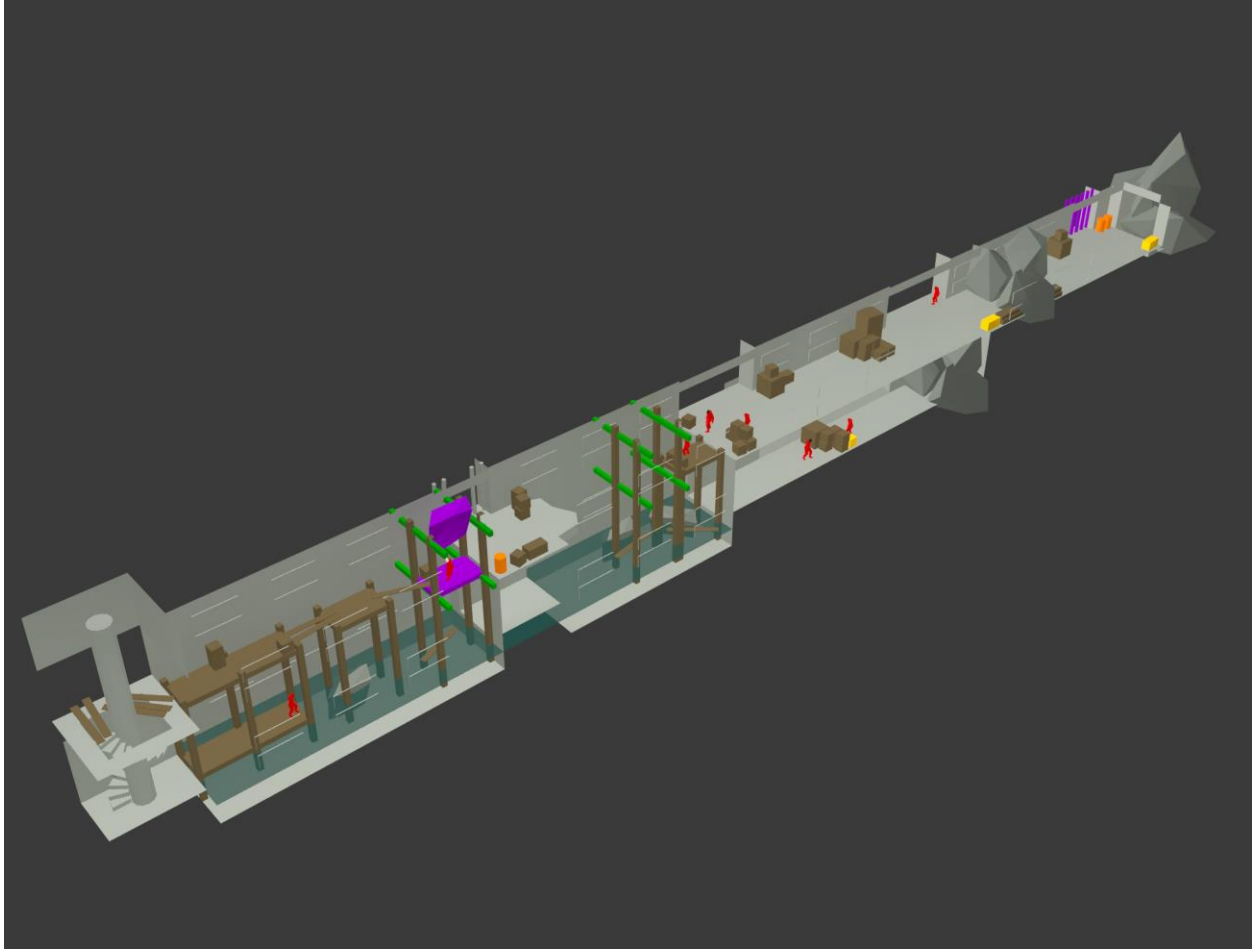
For example, Grunt #1 is adjacent to a Gunpowder Keg and Grunt #2 is on top of a rickety ladder. If engaged from across the pool, Grunt #1 will move to gain cover behind the left column with the Keg directly behind him. Chances are good that during this first fight, the player will miss a few times. Any rounds passing by Grunt#1 will likely find purchase in the Keg, causing an explosion. Grunt #1 will be killed by the blast, and his body possibly thrown into the pool. Further, Keg explosion mechanics are systematic – all wooden objects are reactive to their fire. In this encounter, the Keg's explosion will cause a portion of the scaffolding to collapse and Grunt #2 will fall to the floor. It will take about 2-4 seconds before he can engage.

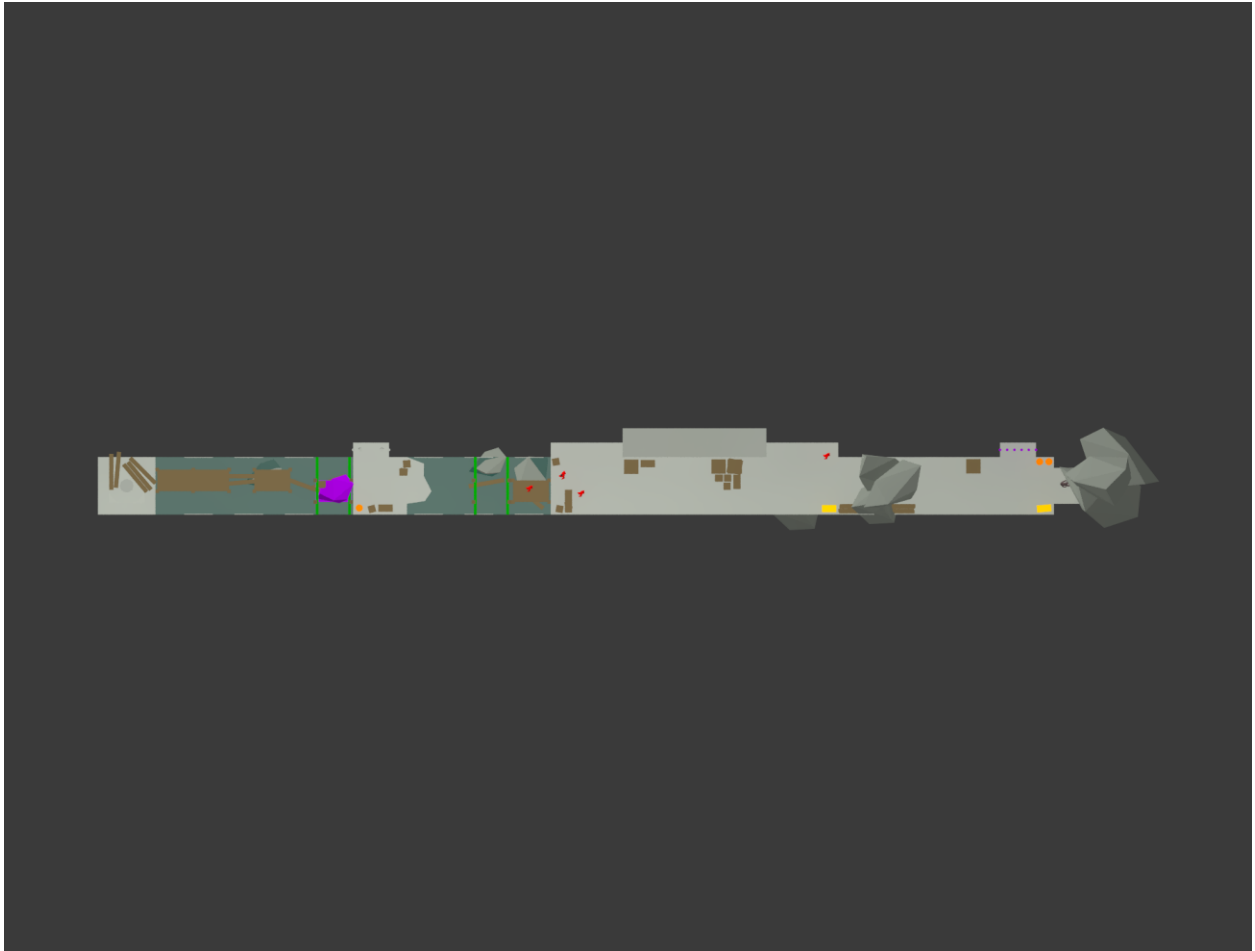
#### Side Chambers:

To the left of the pool is a half-collapsed room containing a lootable Munitions Crate. The tomb was originally symmetrical, but time has brought many of its walls down - including those of the hallway leading to the main burial chamber from this side. The room can be entered by rolling aside a loose rock and slipping between some debris to the front left of the pool. Through the colonnade to the right is a storeroom where various crates are kept. From this room, a hallway is accessed that leads to Area 2.

## AREA 2: HALL OF SWORDS

This hallway was built to house the lesser cultist warriors of the Nameless One. Either wall along this narrow corridor is lined with niches containing their corpses, dead, yet dreaming.





#### Area 2 Features:

- Mercenary Grunt (5)\*
- Mercenary Special Ops (2)
- Mercenary Intel Ops (1)
- Secrets (1)

#### Upper Level Hall

The halls surrounding the main burial chamber house the remains of those who served Elder Ones in niches along its walls. Scaffolding has been erected along the collapsed and flooded corridors to ensure safe(r) passage.

A Mercenary Intel Ops is stationed on a scaffolding platform supporting a large overhead rock. A Gunpowder Keg is located behind her, in blast range of the rock. She is not defaulted to aggro, but she is alerted. This is so allow the player time to survey the encounter before engaging. Once the player reaches the first scaffolding platform in Area 2, or opens fire, she calls in 2 Grunts and takes cover behind the crate to her right. The Grunts enter from the A5-1 doorway behind her and engage normal, as does the Grunt on the lower level.

The second landing contains 2 Mercenary Grunts and 1 Special Ops. Players have a range of approach methods. Once engaged, the Grunts will take cover and fire while the Special Ops will exit through the doorway into Area 5-1 in an attempt to flank the player. The player proceed by using his grappling hook, dropping into the waters below, or using the Special Ops' flanking method of exiting to Area 5-1 and reentering further ahead.

Once the player has exited to Area 5-1, reentering Area 2 is non-required. They are, however, incentivized to explore on account of a poorly-guarded Munitions Crate at the far end of the corridor. Accessing the Munitions Crate on the lower level is somewhat more challenging.

#### Flooded Hall

Before entering the hallway proper, a spiral staircase gives the player the option of exploring the flooded lower level. If the player chooses to descend, he has the option of sneak-attacking the Mercenary Grunt as he urinates off of the platform. The player can continue across the flooded lower level to the ramp leading to Area 5-1, or use his grappling hook on any of the scaffolding crossbeams to ascent to the upper level. If the player hasn't engaged her already, the Intel Ops on the destructible platform will detect the player and send 2 Grunts down after him.

#### Secret Room

This is a secret room accessible by shooting the Gunpowder Kegs beyond the hall's protective gates. The explosion destroys the gate and rewards the player with a munition crate. This secret room is accessed from Area 5-1.

#### AREA 5-1: MAIN BURIAL CHAMBER, P1

The Inverted Pyramid's namesake chamber is dominated by the colossal, featureless statue of the Nameless One. In its embrace are three sarcophagi belonging to its cult's most venerable leaders. Both the statue and the inverted pyramid's many steps are bound in scaffolding, and collapsed stones form a winding, three-dimensional pathway for the player to navigate. The overall space is divided into open "playgrounds" where the player can explore and play with mechanics, and tight chokepoints.





#### Area 5-1 Features:

- Mercenary Grunt (11)\*
- Mercenary Special Ops (3)
- Mercenary Intel Ops (1)
- Secrets (1)

#### South Burial Chamber

As stated in the section above, this area serves largely as a playground, with several methods of advancement to the next area (Area 3). Unless deliberately attacked, enemies in Area 5-2 will not engage the player, but rather play out ambient animations to indicate they are aware of his presence.

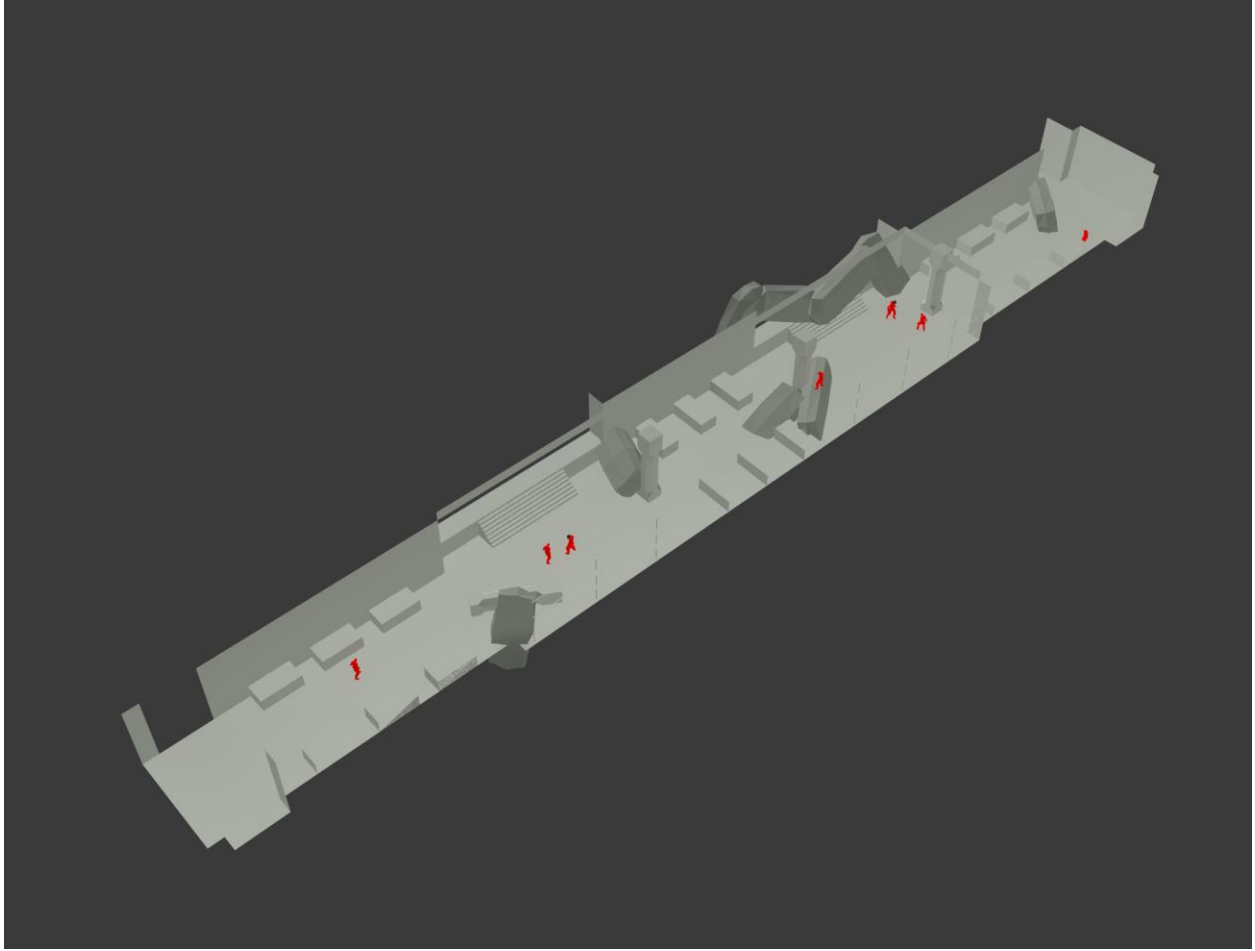
One of the first encounters in Area 5-1 is a trio of Mercenaries standing below a poorly-stacked pile of lumber. Next to the lumber is a conveniently-placed Gunpowder Keg. If fired upon, the keg's explosion knocks the lumber onto the enemies below. There is a trade-off, however, in that the explosion resonates throughout the area. All enemies in the vicinity either agro or become aware that Ethan is in the room (they were already aware he was on the premises).

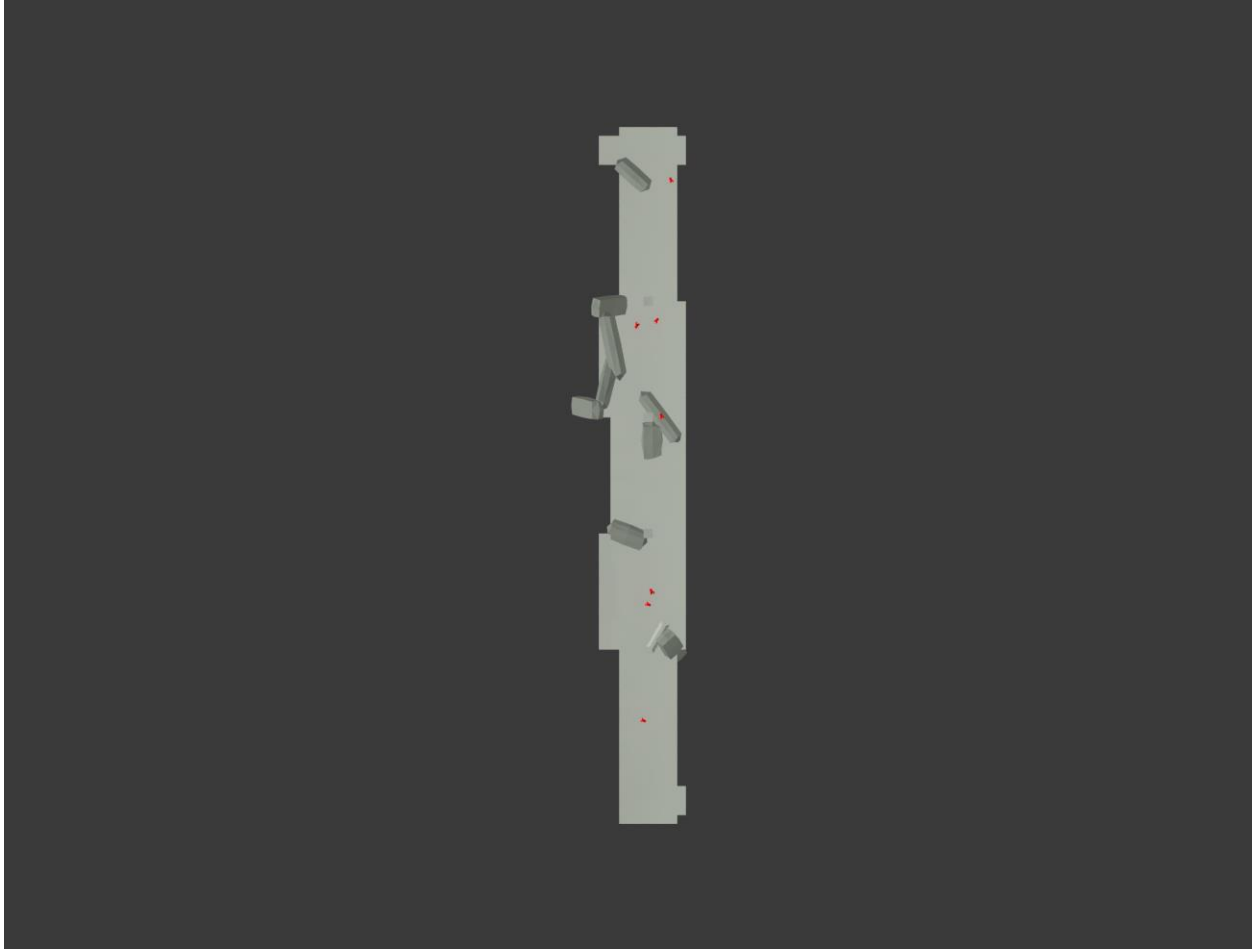
Another dynamic encounter is found at the rear of Area 5-1 - an Intel Ops stationed on a scaffolding platform over a gunpowder Keg. Just beyond The Intel Ops is a staircase leading back to the upper level. Gunpowder Kegs are positioned en masse to discourage enemy kiting; as such enemies would detonate the kegs to the player's demise. However, if detonated, the upper level kegs will destroy a loose rock revealing a secret room containing a Munitions Crate.

The basin at the bottom center of the pyramid contains a floating Munitions Crate. The grappling hook is required to leave the basin, once entered.

From the top of the staircase, the player backtracks along the uppermost step where a Grunt patrols (provided he hasn't already been aggroed). The southernmost doorway leads into Area 3.

### AREA 3: ROYAL CRYPTS





#### Area 3 Features:

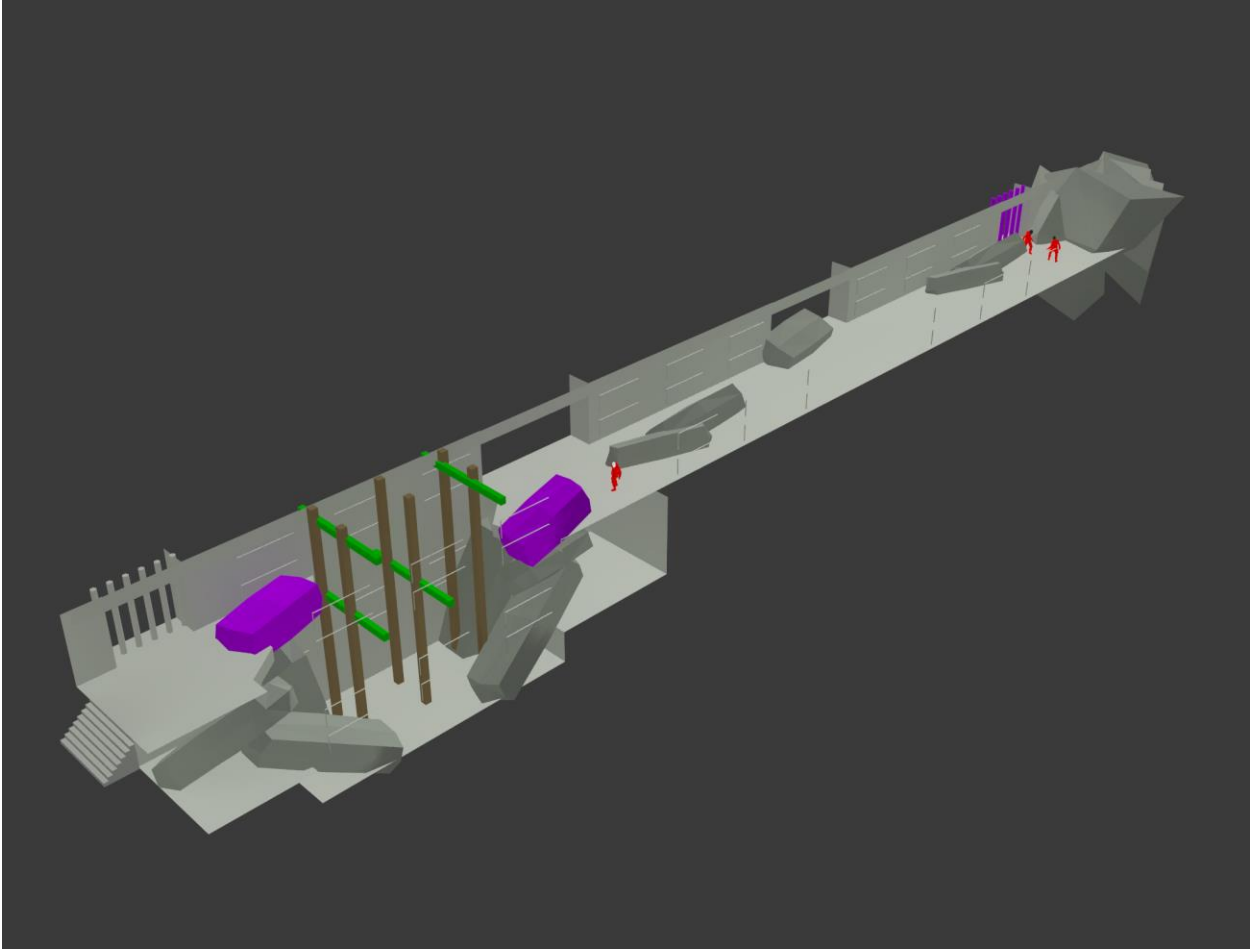
- Mercenary Grunt (5)
- Mercenary Special Ops (2)

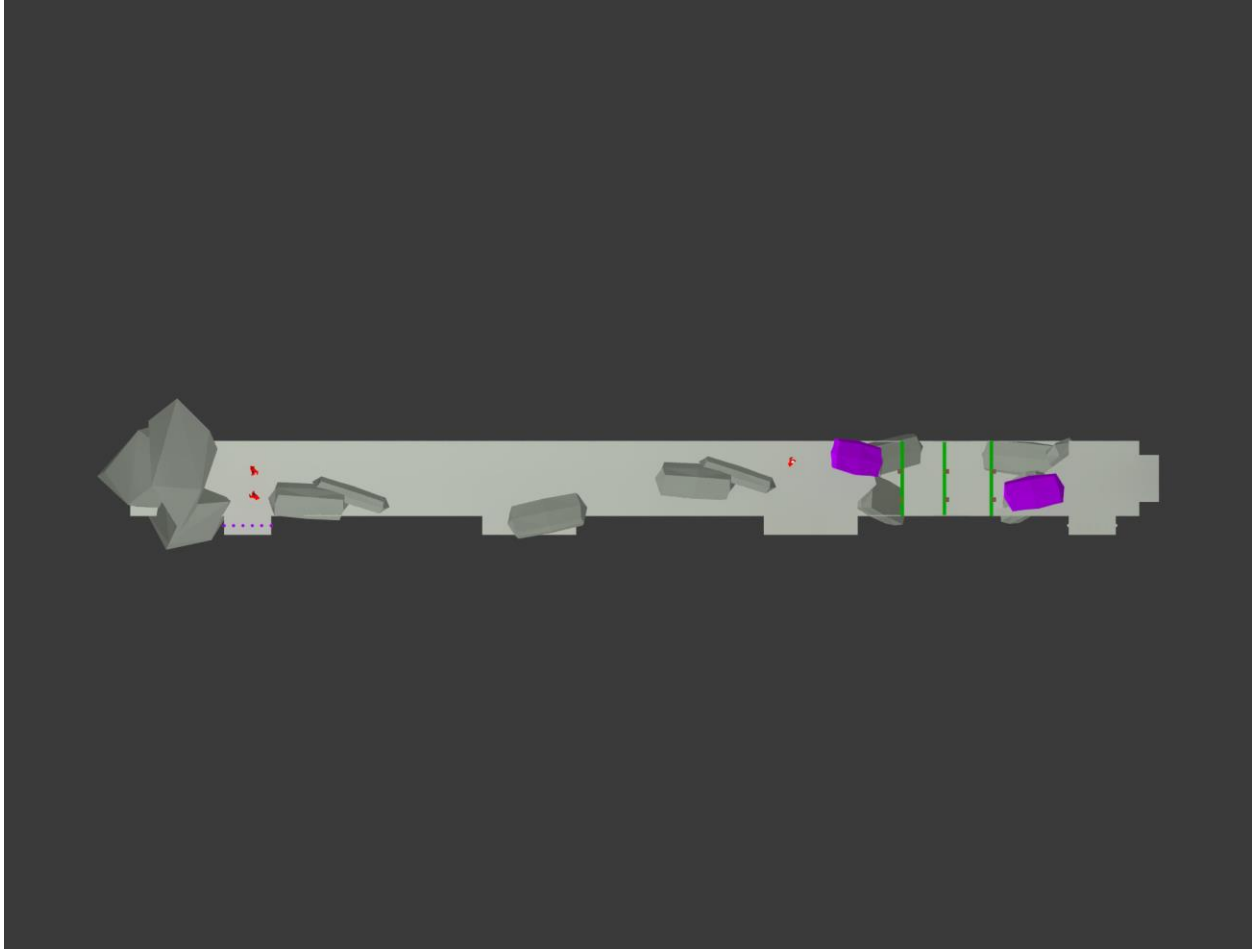
#### Crumblesome Corridor

Long and cluttered with large pieces of debris turns this elder crypt into a gunplay jungle gym. Many of the pieces of rubble are arranged to be climbed onto and jumped off of for maximum run-and-gun fun. To keep this area fast and fun, I kept Special Ops to a minimum and Intel Ops are nowhere to be found...until you turn the corner.

#### AREA 4: HALL OF SECRETS

This hallway was built to house cultist undermages in the service of the Nameless One. Like their warrior brothers in the Hall of Swords, the bodies here lie in wait for the return, if ever, of their master.





#### Area 4 Features:

- Mercenary Grunt (5)\*
- Mercenary Special Ops (2)
- Mercenary Intel Ops (1)

#### Collapsible Corridor

Upon entering Area 4, the player is greeted by a single Intel Ops who immediately calls Grunts to her aid. The Grunts spawn in the lower level of a collapsed walkway outfitted with scaffolding. The Grunts fire up at the player whenever he is in sight. The grapple hook is required to cross the gap.

Loose debris is placed (too) continually at the beginning and end of the gap. Any attempt to climb upon them results in the debris slipping into the floor below. Any Grunts positioned directly under falling debris are killed immediately. The grapple hook can be used to return to the upper level. A pair of Special Ops are located at the far end of the corridor.

#### AREA 4-1: MAIN BURIAL CHAMBER, P2





#### Area 5-2 Features:

- Mercenary Grunt (5)\*
- Mercenary Special Ops (3)
- Mercenary Intel Ops (2)

#### North Burial Chamber

The player reenters the Inverted Pyramid's main burial chamber where Mercenary Grunts await atop many tiered scaffolding platforms. Cover is provided via columns and crates. Gunpowder kegs on both sides of the field encourage strategic engagement on the part of the player. The kegs stored beneath the scaffolding causes a chain reaction of explosions that topple the enemies' platforms. Two Munitions Crates are located here; one in the far right alcove just before a gate, and another on a scaffolding platform near the statue's base.

The top of the platform contains four Mercenaries - two Special Ops in plain view, an intel Ops on the platform where the three sarcophagi are, and another hidden in the colonnade to the right. The Intel Ops amongst the columns remains hidden until found, or until the player reaches the top of the statue's sarcophagus platform. While hidden, she continually calls up on reinforcements.

The three sarcophagi belong to high priests of the Elder One they served. Naturally, the middle sarcophagus contains the phylactery our hero seeks.

## CINEMATIC

Ethan pries open the sarcophagus using his grappling hook. The lid slides off and breaks through the platform and tumbles into the basin below. Mid fall, Ethan grabs the grappling hook's rope that's still attached to the sarcophagus' rim. He pulls himself up to meet the corpse face-to-face. Sudden reluctance washes over his face and he reaches in to retrieve the amulet from around the corpse's neck. With the phylactery in hand, Ethan reaches behind him and produces a walkie-talkie.

ETHAN

Alright, I got it! Over.

FEMALE VOICE

That's not the code, Ethan.

Hero

Uh... Safe and Sound. Over.

FEMALE VOICE

Cool. You in position? My ETA is 3 minutes.

A bullet ricochets off of Ethan's grappling hook, narrowly missing his head.

ETHAN

Christ!

FEMALE VOICE

Trouble?

Another bullet blasts through the walkie-talkie, shattering it.

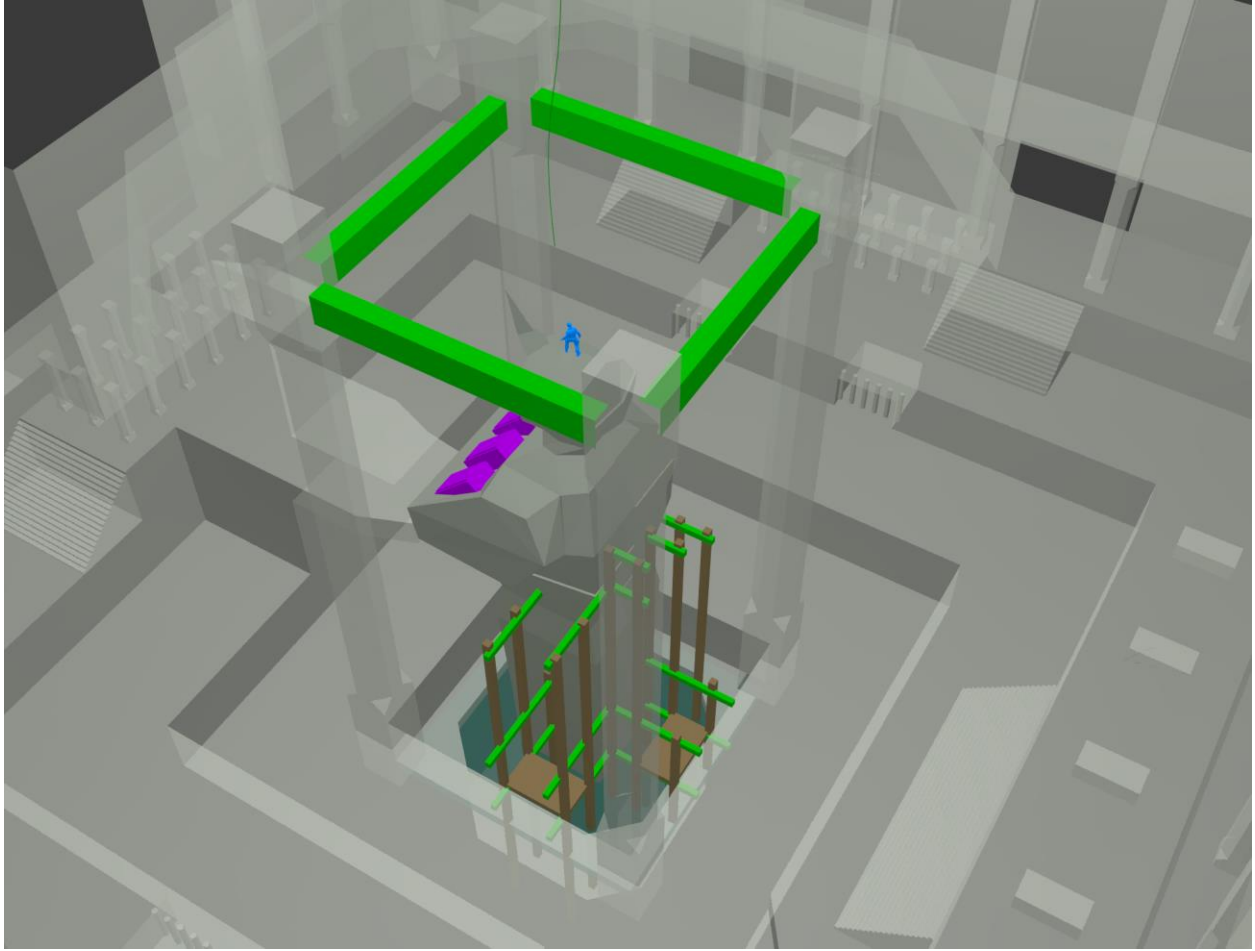
ETHAN (to himself)

Always.

Swarms of Mercenaries rush in from all corners of the chamber and open fire. Ethan tucks the phylactery into his satchel and looks up at the oculus above the statue.

CINEMATIC END

## FINALE: ESCAPING THE RUINS



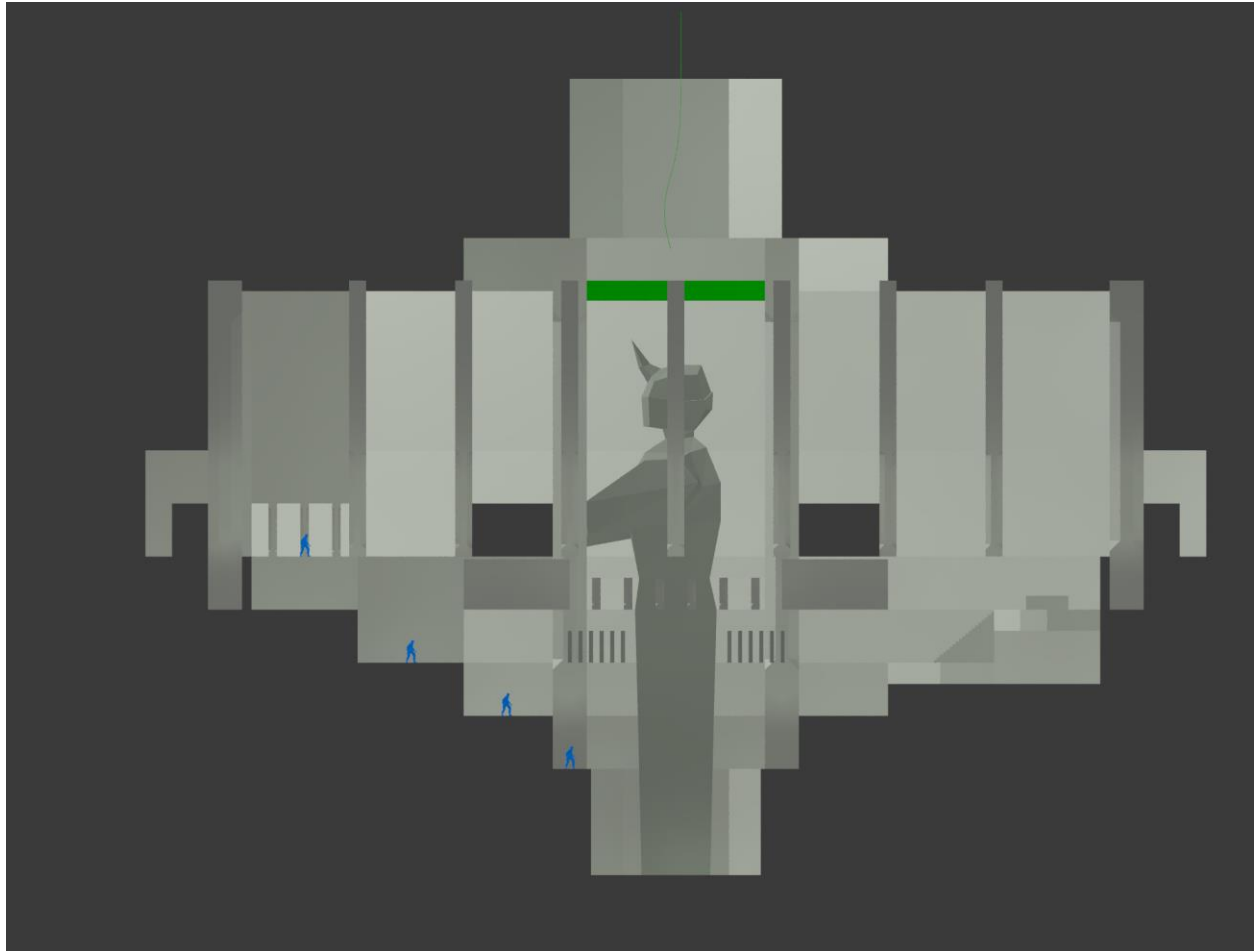
The player must ascend the statue by moving counterclockwise along the ledges around its head. Should the player lose grip, get hit, or miss a ledge, some high-rising crossbeams are made available. If all else fails, the player will fall to his death or be that much more difficult to escape now with numerous enemy spawns (bigger design conversation).

Eventually, the player reaches the top of the statue's head. This action triggers a rope to descend from Ethan's escape chopper outside. The player ascends to the crossbeams above, pulls himself up, and leaps to connect with the rope.

The player has escaped safely with the phylactery in tow.

## DESIGN NOTES

### ASCENDING AND DESCENDING THE INVERTED PYRAMID



While jumping or falling off of the pyramid steps results in fall damage, the player can climb into a hanging position and drop onto crates with no damage taken. Likewise, crates can be used to reach steps otherwise too high climb. Area 5-1 provides plenty of opportunities to explore this mechanic.