

# ON A BRIGHT AND TWISTED NIGHT

A D&D 5e Scenario



# STORY OVERVIEW

TW: Mild Gore, Distressing Imagery – Check with your players that this will be okay.

The party at the settlement are alerted to something happening in the sky. They see an Astral Ship crash land into the island to the North. The party go to explore the wreckage to find that it is an eldritch abomination, warped, twisted and damaged with things alien to anything they've heard of before. After traversing the horrific wreckage they come across a creature in stasis, a Gith elevated and surrounded by a beautiful eldritch light display. Upon recovering, the creature eventually wakes with no memory of how he got there.

## SPECIAL INFORMATION

### Sanity

Each player must generate a sanity score. This is calculated by adding the player's mental scores (Int, Wis, Cha) together and dividing it by three. This is their sanity score (modifier calculated in usual way based on score). If the player has proficiency in saving throws for any of their mental scores, they have proficiency with sanity saving throws and checks.

**Sanity Saving Throws.** If the players have a proficiency in any of their mental score saving throws they also have it for Sanity Saving throws. On a failed save, the player's sanity score is reduced by 1.

**Sanity Checks.** If the players have proficiency in any of their mental score saving throws, they are proficient in Sanity. Sanity checks are usually carried out to understand, decipher, or recall any information about the Far Realm/eldritch horrors. Examples include opening locked doors corrupted by eldritch energy, deciphering far realm words/clues, recalling history about a creature in the far realm.

This game will require sanity checks, and monsters inflict sanity damage rather than hp damage. Each successful hit by a monster will require a sanity saving throw; on a failed sanity check, the player's sanity score is reduced by one point (Max. 1 per attacking creature's turn). Sanity is restored upon a long rest, as long as the circumstances of the rest are such that the characters feel safe i.e. near a campfire, close to someone else, blackout drunk (whatever is required to make that character feel safe). On the completion of a long rest where the circumstances are met, each character regains sanity equal to their proficiency bonus.

Each time a player's sanity drops to 6, 5, 4, or 3 they gain a short-term madness. If the player drops to 2 or 1, they gain a long-term madness, if a player drops to 0 sanity, they gain an indefinite madness. The PCs can only have one type of each madness at a time (i.e. if the players sanity just reached 6, they get short-term madness, if it then drops to 5 while they are still under the effect of the previous short-term madness they do not gain it again. However, they could be under the effect of short term and long term at the same time).

### Alexander's Chases

Note, I do not take credit for this chase mechanic. I was shown it by 'xp to level 3' on youtube, I have just varied it slightly. This is a variant on the typical chase mechanics for D&D 5e. The players all need to make rolls separately, but for ease everyone rolls initiative, including all quarries or pursuers.

Start with the player party. Ask them each in turn how they want to 'run,' it is then the DMs decision as to what skill matches what the player wishes to do and what the DC is. The player then makes the roll and either succeeds or fails. A chase ends when an end goal is met that was decided by the DM. This could be that it ends automatically after 3 rounds, or when the player succeeds or fails 3 times, or some other end goal. When it comes back to that player again, they must choose a different way to help them carry out the chase, and thus a different ability check to before.

For example, Jes is a wizard. The DM asks him what he is doing this round to help with the chase. Jes says that he is going to cast a spell to try and slow down the other party. No spell attack roll or saving throw is required but he must mark off the spell slot. The DM looks at the available skills and decides that spell casting is an Arcana skill so asks Jes to roll arcana. When it next comes round to Jes he is asked what he would do this round, he can't do a spell again or any suggestion that would lead to him rolling arcana again so instead he says he will call out to the crowd to help him. The DM decides that he must make a Persuasion check. How these conclude is up to the DM, sometimes the chase has a set number of rounds and if you succeed a number of times the chase is a success, conversely it could be a loss if you fail the majority of the checks, or it runs until you get 3 successes or 3 failures, or any end goal the DM decides.

## MONSTER LIST

Encounters in this doc are placeholders, assuming 5 level 4 players. Just try to match the encounter difficulty (medium or hard). The following are the creatures that fit the narrative, but don't feel like these are your only choices.

- Core Spawn Crawler – CR 1 (Explorers Guide to Wildmount)
- Core Spawn Emissary – CR 6 (Explorers Guide to Wildmount)
- Star Spawn Grue – CR ¼ (Mordenkeinen's Tome of Foes)
- Star Spawn Mangler – CR 5 (Mordenkeinen's Tome of Foes)
- Githyanki Warrior – CR 3 (Monster Manual)

## PART 1 – THE BROKEN SKY.

When you start the game read the following aloud;

“The night comforts you with its silence, broken only by the distant sounds of the waves crashing at the shore. You all watch the dance of the night as the aurora pulses and shimmers, entranced by its alien song. Eventually, sleep starts to prod and poke at your mind and you feel that it is time to rest your head.

Sleep comes to you easily, it very quickly draws you in. Those of you who dream often are surprised at the dreamless sleep you are welcomed with. Hours pass and you rest well; at least until you hear an ear splitting scream, that threatens to crack open your head.

Your mind is assaulted with images, vast creatures ... no, vast things in the emptiness of the void, mangles of maleficent energy, glimpses of gaunt faces staring right back at you, worlds and buildings folding inwards on themselves endlessly. [Ask players to make a Sanity Saving Throw. On a fail they lose 1 sanity.]

You shoot awake, the cold sweat dripping down your neck, your heartbeat echoing in your mind. You feel the urge to look out of your tent or building and, as you do, you see a bright flash of light emanating from the north of the island. Emerging from this light is a ship plummeting towards the ground, wisps of flame and smoke trailing from it. You watch it as it falls, almost in slow motion, until with a large, fiery explosion, it makes impact with the ground. Whether or not your better judgment agrees, you feel that you should investigate it.”

It is up to the party how they wish to approach travelling to the ship. It is three days' travel from where the party starts, by foot, to the crash site. Each day they travel closer, more unease should be described. Examples of events that might cause unease can include;

- All the animals seem to be running in the opposite direction to the player's advance
- A fog gently creeps over the floor, seemingly forming tendrils that reach out to touch you and when they do, your skin ripples with goosebumps.
- The sound from everything around you has been dampened, footsteps echo loudly but there are no other sounds.
- The sky itself is dark, yet there is light similar to that of a clear sky, just suppressed slightly
- The trees shift and lean towards or away from the party or where the party are going
- Any water is so clear it seems that the night sky is reflected just below the surface
- Whispers
- Catching things in the corners of their eyes
- The sky turns a dark purple and the warmth and light from the sun rapidly fades away

On the first day, nothing is out of the ordinary, the random encounters from this day will be normal creatures (assuming you want to throw a random encounter at your players). The second day, things start to get weird. The random encounters on day two are rarer, a few subtle mysteries can be added for the creep factor. The third day is empty aside from odd mysteries seen.

## PART 2 - THE TWISTED WRECK

Read the following;

“After days of travel with things only getting weirder, your better instinct lets you know that you think whatever this wreck is is definitely having an effect on you and your surroundings. Looking up, you see the sky, but not a sky you recognise. You see stars that do not match any you’ve seen before, the aurora is no longer green and red but now blue, purple and white, crackling across the sky. It seems far closer to the surface here.

You stand on the edge of a large impact crater. What do you want to do?”

As soon as the party step into the crater, darkness envelops them. The sky is still clear with the alien sky but they can’t see where they came from. If they try to exit the crater, they walk through darkness, only to emerge facing the ship again. To those watching from the outside, it appears that the person starts walking up into the air until they vanish out of sight, as if the crater was a glass sphere. They cannot non-magically communicate through the barrier.

The entire ship is in magical darkness that seems to feed on light. If the players have no light they must make a **Sanity Saving Throw** (once per 20 minutes)

### Part 2.1 - Approaching the Wreck

Every so often, when the party are moving towards the ship, whispers will wrack their minds (the least sane character will probably be the focus of these events). When they are about halfway to the ship, the party should make a **Wisdom (Perception) check**. If they roll ‘well’, they will notice figures with their backs to the party, just standing there, non-moving, although looking similar to the other party members. If they investigate/touch the bodies, read the following;

“As you touch the creature, your fellow party member also feels the touch. The unseen face turns itself around, releasing a crack as its own spine breaks and the head rotates 180 degrees. The face now looking up at you is blank, slight indents where the eyes and mouth would be, but they are smoothed over. Its blank sockets stare through you, and before long, the skin melts away, as if ripped off. Below it, all you see are larvae the size of your fingers crawling over each other as the body disintegrates. You shake your hand instinctively to remove whatever those bugs were from your person. Make a **Sanity Saving Throw**.”

After the check, ask the party to make a **Wisdom (Perception) check** DC 12 (Players will be surprised on a failure), the party will see a few **Core Spawn Crawlers** start to move towards the party.

### Encounter

5x **Core Spawn Crawlers** (Hard)

### Part 2.2 - The First Floor and the Treasure Room

Eventually, the party will get close enough to the ruined ship. Read the following;

“You approach the ship, there are boxes scattered around the entrance where the hull has been peeled back like a fruit. The ship itself appears to have been twisted, both physically and metaphysically. The front half of the ship has been rotated 180 degrees from

the rear of the ship, as if it was made of playdough. Though the air is still, the crack in the ship's hull whistles as an invisible breeze pushes its way through the carcass."

When the party enter this area, they will see a wrecked cargo hold **A1.a** (See Maps in Appendix C) as well as a twisted internal structure. After a few minutes to take in the surroundings, they look back at the boxes to see that they have been very neatly stacked. There are 3 doors that the party will be able to see, one into the armoury, which is the only door on this level, a closed door (that leads to the stairs to the next layer of the ship) and another door at the far end of the ship, near the prow, which seems to be vibrating, as if being battered by air. To get to these latter two doors, it appears the players need to walk on the ceiling.

Interacting with the door that leads to area **Puzzle Map** (see Appendix B), the player who approaches to open it gets horrific flashes of alien worlds and entities of the Far Realm and they must make a **Sanity Check DC 12** to will the door to open. Upon entering, read;

"You step into a room that does not at all match the dimensions of the ship you were just in, the length and width have increased, you are certain and there don't appear to be any walls. Looking up you see the same vast alien sky as you saw outside. You are stood on a floating stone floor in the middle of nowhere. You see 10 mannequins scattered around the room, possibly used for storing armour or clothing. You can't help but notice their eyeless glare seems to follow you as you move through the room. On the far side of the room is a golden chest. The entire room is split into 5 square feet squares, each with an ever shifting script etched into them."

The players can choose to ignore this room if they wish. Standing on any of the red squares, as drawn on the Puzzle Map, causes the tile to collapse and the player to fall into the endless abyss below. The player must make **Dexterity Saving Throw DC 15** to see if they can catch onto the edge of the previous square. If they fail, they fall into the abyss and must make a **Sanity Saving Throw DC 17**. On a pass, nothing negative happens and they reappear on the first square. On a fail, reduce the player's sanity by 1 as they fall through, unable to keep the alien energy from probing their mind before they reappear on the first square.

The chest at the end of the room contains 120 gp per player, although it seemingly never empties of gold, but when they leave the room any excess vanishes. Once they loot the chest and turn around, they are back in the smaller room **A1.b** but all the mannequins are stood right next to the players. If a player says any variation of the words 'I take as much as I can carry' give them the flaw 'I can't resist the Eldritch Call' which will last until they leave the ship. Anyone with this flaw can choose to automatically succeed in opening any of the locked doors without rolling a **Sanity Check** at the cost of reducing their sanity by 1. Everyone will then start to hear a loud horrific cacophony of whispers saying 'Greedy' in all different languages known to the world, as the mannequins start to change form into Star Spawn Grue.

## Encounter

10x **Star Spawn Grue** (Medium)

## Part 2.3 - The Breached Hull

In order to reach the other two doors, the players have to fight their internal sense of gravity and start walking along the twist of the ship. They will be able to walk on the floor as if it were the correct way round. Continuing to the prow of the ship, the party come across

another locked door, opened the same way as the door into area **A1.b**. If a player gained the flaw from the chest, they will have an impulse that says untold wealth is behind that door.

Upon opening the door the party are met by a fierce and cold wind. As they look around, say;

“Passing a table and some chairs, you open the door into what you can only assume is the brig. Manacled humans, elves, dwarves and all sorts of other races are all sat in this room, facing the starboard prow. The starboard prow has been sheared straight off, revealing an endless milky green and red void. Whatever these poor helpless souls saw out there was certainly the cause of their death. Dried blood has set coming out of the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth of all the prisoners in here.”

If players decide to do any sort of investigation around the room they will have to make a **Sanity Saving Throw** if they look into the void for too long. Also they will have to make a **Sanity Check** to try and understand what may have happened, and this will be delivered in flashes of imagery.

As the players leave, they will see that the chairs have been stacked on the table and sculpted into a large totem of a squid-like mass with tentacles that seem to move towards each of the players but you blink and you just see a small handhold placed in the direct centre of the table. You can allow the players to take this small trinket if you wish.

## Part 2.4 - The Shadowed Sleeping Quarters

The players can finally head up the stairs to the next floor of the ship. At the top of the stairs, there are two doors, one leads into the prow of the ship (**A2.a**) while the other has a locked door opening into area **A2.b** – the crew’s quarters. In area **A2.a** the party will find barrels of rations and provisions used in a raid (these rations can be taken for the players use, although as a DM you may want to add some twists to eating rations that have been corrupted by the far realm), some of the barrels are just floating unaided in the air slowly rotating.

To access **A2.b** the players must open the door as before with locked doors. In this room, there is a magical darkness that causes all light to only be able to travel 5ft immediately away from the source of the light. Any magical light created by a cantrip is extinguished as the dark snuffs out the magic. The players can find multiple hammocks but no people in it, until they reach the far side of the room where they are barely able to see two heavy breathing Gith warriors with their backs turned to the party. However, if the party aren’t stealthy, they become aware of and will attack the party. Once the party reveal themselves to the Gith, read the following;

“You see by the faint glow of your light a subtle reflection of silvered blades at the far side. As they become aware of your presence, they start to move towards the party, slowly at first, as you notice that their hands and feet are facing the opposite direction to their torso and chest. They let out a howl as they suddenly explode with speed moving towards you with their limbs flailing as if being puppeteered.”

### Encounter

2x **Githyanki Warriors** (Hard).

After the encounter, the party finds the door to the next floor (**A2.c**) has been unlocked and the darkness fades. The party can also see in this area that there are a large number of Gith

around however, their bodies have been warped and twisted and broken with the same apparent ease as the ship itself. They also have been bleeding out of every orifice.

## Part 2.5 - The Main Deck

As the party emerge on the deck of the ship (**A3.a**);

“The ominous silence once again reaches your ears, as you emerge on the twisted prow of the ship. Due to the nature of the twisted ship and gravity, when you look up, you see the crater floor you walked over to reach the ship. You walk your way round to right your sense of gravity. You stand now on the deck of the crashed ship and the sky still greets you with the alien void. **[Wisdom (Perception) Check]** to notice the moving cloud of tentacles moving closer.] You find your eyes drawn to the doors to the captain’s quarters as the door opens with a creak that shatters the silence. Whispers flood out of the room, or so you think, you hear them in your head “Who are you? Who am I? Will you help? I can free you from here!”

The party can look around the ship or even the quarter deck **A4** (Although there is very little there), but time is important here, as the eldritch mass in the sky is slowly moving towards the wrecked ship. As soon as they enter the captains quarters (**A3.b**) read;

“You cautiously move into the captain’s quarters and see, levitating off the ground surrounded by a light blue mist, a Gith. Their eyes are completely blank and are moving as if they are watching things pass by a window at high speed or are in deep REM sleep. In the players’ heads “Help me. Release me. Hurry, V’iolp’kra is coming” followed by a repeating string of a language very alien to most. “Hothal Mlela V’as Mh’apa.” [Anyone who speaks Deep Speech understands this to mean “Touch me to free me”]

On the captain’s table there is a map of the world with various locations marked with red Xs, as well as some notes written in Gith. When the party attacks or touches the protective blue mist, it will fade away, his eyes will clear and the Gith will fall to the ground and will utter “Thank... you... Take... me... edge... crater” (He will either pass out if there is a player that could carry him, or struggle but require help from someone else to get him out).

As the party emerges from the captain’s quarters they will now notice silvery black tentacles reaching down to the ship, starting the chase sequence. During the chase, the cloud will be saying some eldritch things, possibly forcing a person with the flaw provided earlier to have disadvantage on any of the checks. Also describe how the being starts talking with such unworldly force and power that everything reverberates.

For each failure someone has in the chase, the tendrils will touch them, instantly causing them to lose 2 from their sanity score. The party will escape after three rounds of checks, there is no downside to rolling a failure other than the loss of sanity (possibly driving the player mad). After the chase concludes read;

“You all manage to sprint your way out of the ship, not looking back until you are certain that you are away from whatever the hell that thing was. Finally taking a breather to look around, you see the ship being lifted into the air by these tentacles. As it begins to rip the ship apart, seemingly consuming whatever was left aboard that ship, like a vulture on a long dead kill. As you all reach the boundary, the weakened Gith reaches out and touches the dark shell. With a violent expulsion of energy, a similar blue mist to that which surrounded them on the ship causes the bubble to shatter. Suddenly, you hear bird song, animals moving through the underbrush, the rustling of leaves in the wind. You’re back to reality... at least you hope so. You turn around and where there was previously a crater, there is nothing unusual anymore. Just the simple plains of the Island.



You look to the sky; it's normal too, although you are unsure how much time has passed since you left."

The party takes 3 days to get home. Through this period, there can be some normal bestial random encounters if you wish, and the players can regain sanity as they rest, assuming the conditions are met (see special rules).

## APPENDIX A – OTHER ENCOUNTERS AND ENCOUNTER CHANGES

If you feel that there aren't enough encounters or that they aren't threatening enough, this section has a couple of variants you can add. As a general rule for building Eldritch Horror combats, choose an aberration type monster (as by definition they are alien to this world) and if you want to hammer home the Lovecraftian aspect, creatures with deep speech can also be considered to have a link to the Far Realm. The monster list at the start mentions creatures that will match the narrative well, but don't feel that you have to use them. You could always add the CR 5 or 6 monster listed at the top of the document as a mini boss, or add your own creature that fits your world.

If you feel that making it so that the attacks only do sanity damage is making your players feel too confident, one thing you can do is replace one of their regular attacks with a Sanity attack if they have a multi attack. For example, the Star Spawn Mangler has a multiattack: The mangler makes two claw attacks (+7 to hit, 1d8+4+2d6 (15) at max damage). Replace one of the two attacks with a sanity attack (+7 to hit, Sanity Saving Throw DC 15) meaning it would then possibly do one physical attack and one stat damage attack.

Sidebar: My players at a point during this adventure were being attacked and one of the wizards was doing a lot more damage and being a lot more confident because he didn't think he could take physical damage (A wizard's greatest weakness!). So I decided to flip the rules that the monsters were following and allowed them to do physical damage which surprised him and he very quickly started playing it safe again. Don't be afraid to remind your players that here anything can happen.

## APPENDIX B – PUZZLE

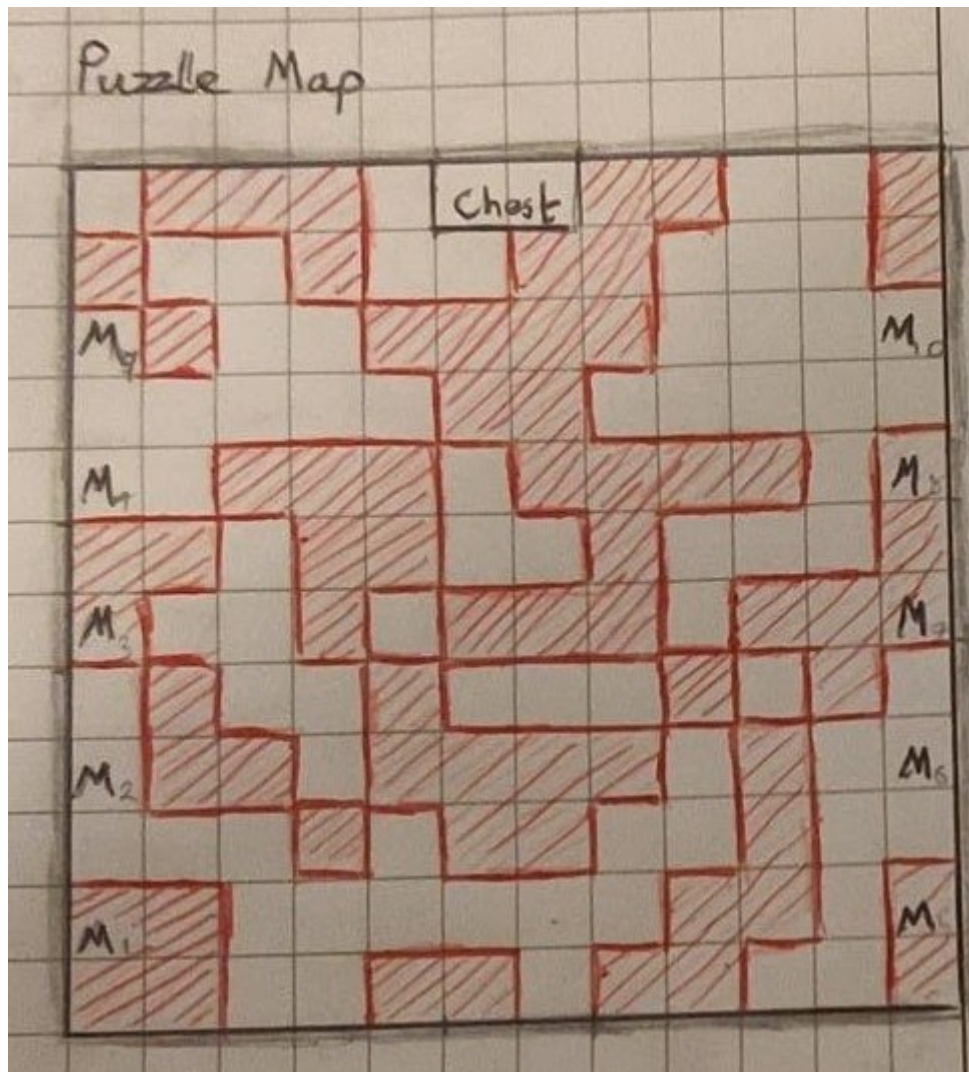


Figure 1: The Chest Puzzle, Red squares will fall away when players step on them. M indicate mannequins, which at this point are just for creepy factor.

The extra dimensional puzzle to get to the chest contains a bunch of dangerous squares that fall away when stepped on. There is no direct path to the end and the players may be expected to jump over tiles. There are a lot of small things you can do to change the puzzle to make it harder or more interesting. The following are some examples;

- Instead of making the tiles permanently fall away, make it so when the player recovers themselves the tile that they just fell through has reappeared. This means that the players now don't have a clear direction and will probably have to start drawing a map down.
- Maybe each of the tiles has some eldritch writing on it that the players could make a **Sanity check** to see if they can translate it. This writing could then tell the player if the tile is dangerous or safe.
- Each time the player recovers, the entire map rotates below their feet either discretely or not. This would mean that even if they are making a map, you can throw another wrench in their work.

Never underestimate a square puzzle, there are lots of fun ways to make it more interesting.

## APPENDIX C – MAPS

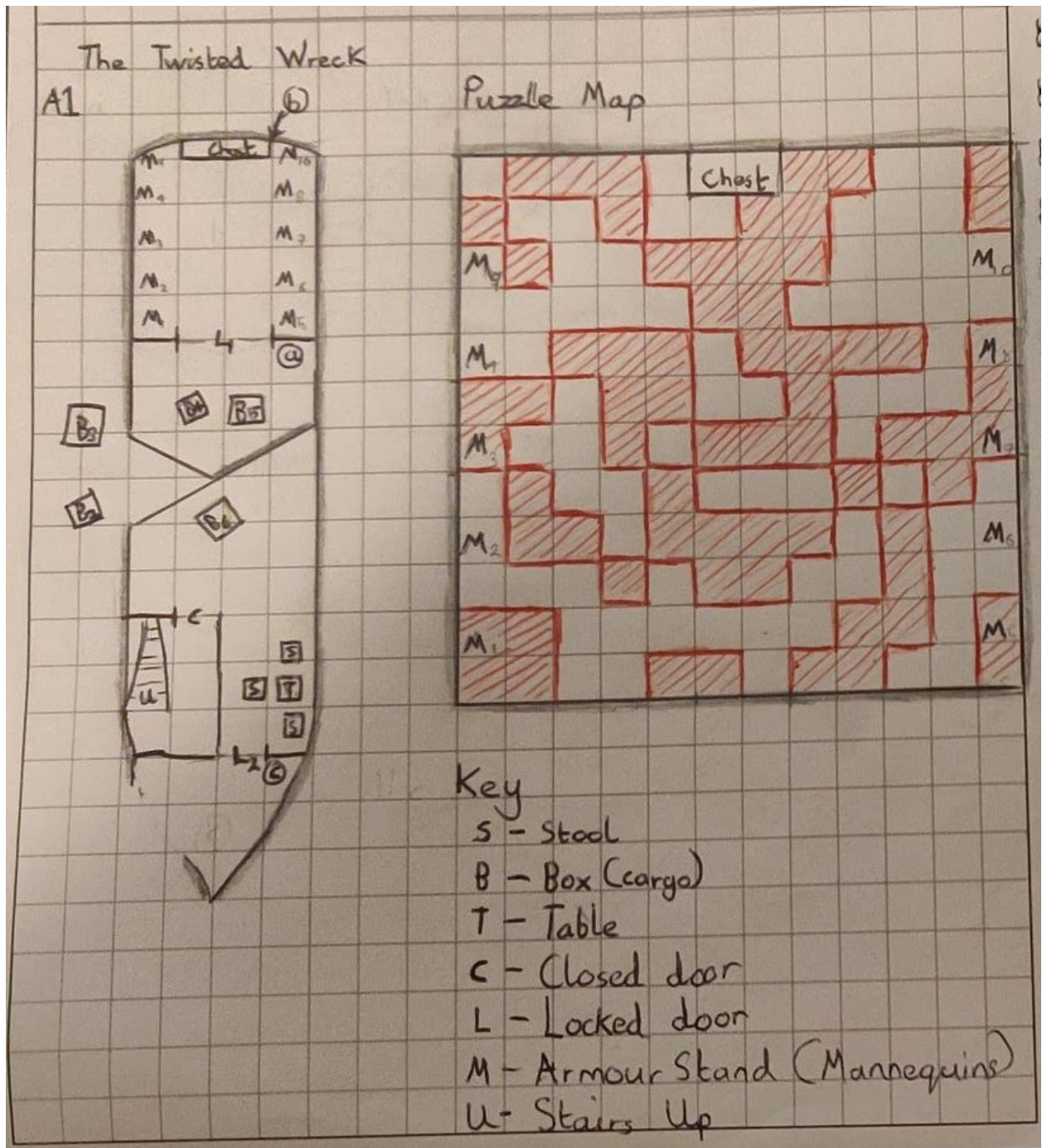


Figure 2: Map of the first floor of the twisted wreck. The line halfway indicates where the ship has been 'twisted'



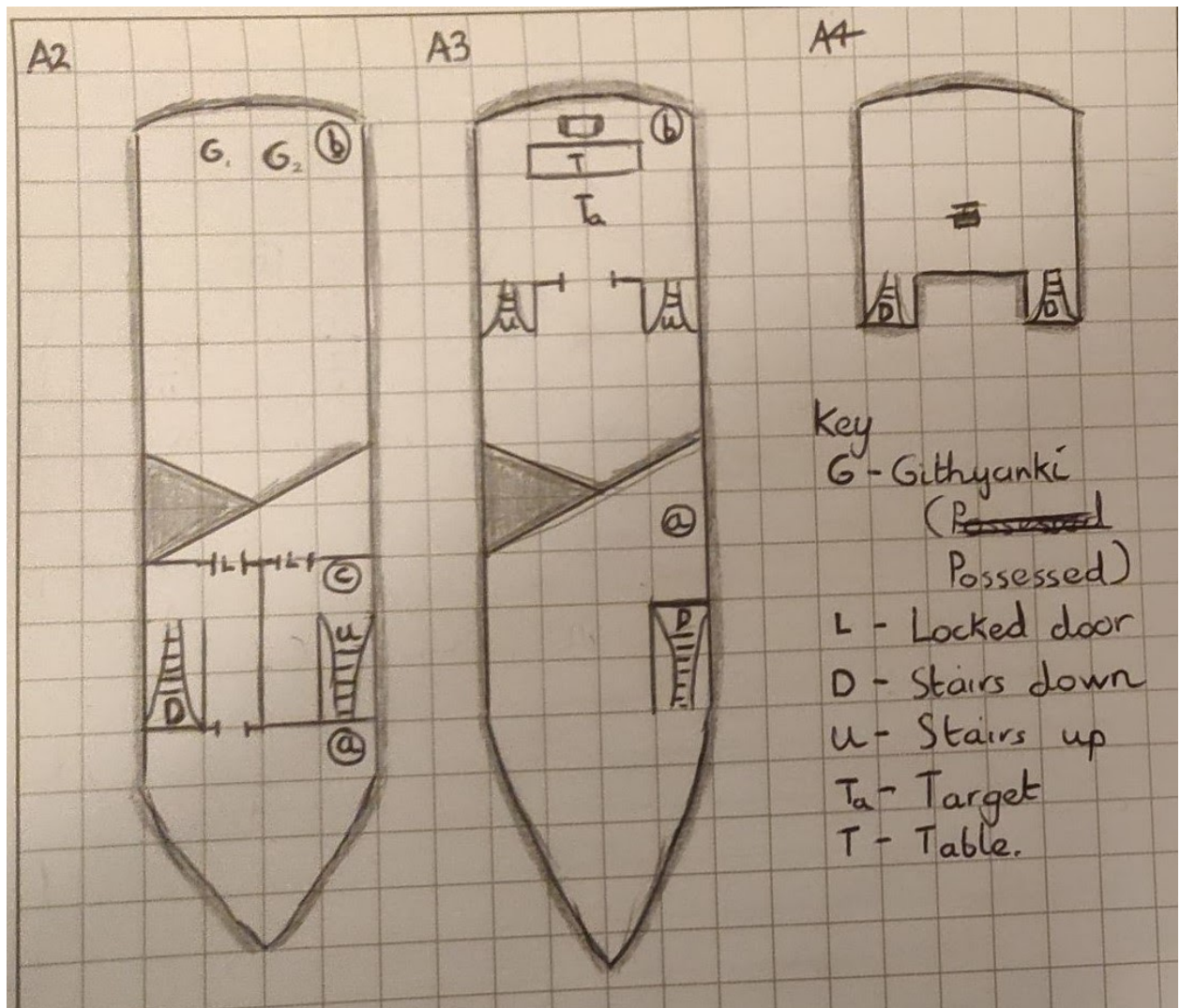


Figure 3: The upper levels of the twisted wreck. The diagonal line shows where the ship has been twisted.