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# 2CGazette

A Dungeon Master's Periodical

5e Compatible

Authored by Steven Gordon  
Produced by 2CGaming



Nolan '15

# Crazy Couatl

The 2CGazette—June, 2017

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# Crazy Couatl

## Encounter Level 5 (Scales 3 to 9)

### Summary

Couatls are lawful good creatures, meaning most Dungeon Masters won't ever get a chance to use them. That's a shame, as they have some very cool and challenging abilities to throw at a party, and this encounter gives you an excuse to do precisely that. While unlikely to kill your party, this encounter will present them with a mystery and a challenge which, if overcome, may give them a powerful ally.

### Encounter Statistics

**Terrain Tags:** Dungeon, interior

**Favors:** Rogues, bards, warlocks

**Foils:** Fighters, barbarians

**Encounter Weight:** Moderate

**Creatures:**

1x Couatl

**XP:** 8,000 experience points (1,100 from creatures, 5,700 from traps, 1,200 ad hoc)

### Encounter Weight

This encounter won't pose a significant threat to the party, but it will drain some of their resources. It's fine to use it after a few encounters, or, if this is their first challenge of the day, to follow it up with a few more battles.

### The Ancient Couatl's Nest

The story begins well before the players actually find the ancient couatl's nest. The couatl uses its *dream* spell to contact one of the players, appearing as a dear friend in need and begging them to come to a secluded cave. The entire dream is distorted and surreal, culminating in a feeling of overwhelming despair. This requires the

character to make a Wisdom saving throw, as with *dream*, against a DC of 14. If they fail, they don't gain the benefit of that long rest and suffer 10 (3d6) psychic damage. An successful DC 15 Insight check reveals that the dream's sender isn't their old friend, but is also not trying to hurt them—it just desperately needs their help. If the players ignore this sending, it continues every night for two weeks, then ends with the couatl's death.

The source of the *dream* spell is a couatl nearing the end of its life. It has mated with another of its kind to produce an egg, but it knows it will die before the egg hatches. Through the connection of a distant ancestor, the couatl has knowledge of one or more members of the party, and reaches out to them for help. Unfortunately, it has grown nearly mad with despair, causing the dreams to become monstrous nightmares. It has barricaded itself in its lair and filled it with traps, and projects a field of psychic energy that will make approaching the creature a true challenge. When the couatl is taken down, it will gain a measure of clarity and beg the party to take its egg and raise its descendant to pursue a worthy cause.

### Terrain

This dungeon is filled with traps. There are three main trap rooms, with the couatl lurking in the back chamber. Every round on initiative count 20 the monster triggers a massive phantasmal force effect as a result of its growing madness. Every other creature in the dungeon must attempt an Intelligence saving throw against DC 14. On a failure, the creature sees a manifestation of one of its fears appear before it, attacking it in some way and dealing 3 (1d6) psychic damage. The illusion fades as soon as it deals this damage, but will reappear if the creature fails another such saving throw. Ask players to describe their character's fears the first time they fail a saving throw against this effect.

Despite the couatl's madness, it is still a good creature at heart. It has scattered a few provisions around the dungeon to help the party take it down. These are

## Running a Trap-Filled Dungeon

It's very easy for a dungeon full of traps to devolve into the players rolling Perception checks every five feet and poking the entire area with a 10 ft. pole. That's very, very boring. There are two methods used in this dungeon to avoid this problem. First, many of the traps present here are active and visible. The party can discuss as a team how they want to handle the gauntlet of whirling blades, then execute a plan that involves everyone at the table. Second, there is an active antagonist (the couatl) hounding the players through the dungeon with its magic. Every turn they spend poking around is another turn for the couatl to harass them. This should keep the party moving. If the players are still stalling and searching for traps, push them harder. Tell them the couatl's powers are intensifying and all saving throws they make against them are now made with disadvantage.

The traps themselves are built using the *Trap Compendium* (available at [www.2cgame.com](http://www.2cgame.com)) but you don't need that book to make use of them. A trap's Perception DC tells you how difficult it is to find, but because all of these traps are continuously active, the party can see them without needing to make Perception checks. The Disarm DC is how difficult the trap is to disable with Thieves' Tools, which requires an action from the character attempting to disarm them. If the players want to attack the trap, each trap has only 15 hit points and attacks against them automatically hit. Each trap's description details how the trap works, what attacks it makes or what saving throws it requires, and how much damage it deals. Because these traps are continuous and cover a large area, they make one attack against a character for every 5 ft. that character moves through the trap's area. This means if a character runs across the Whirling Scythe trap's 15 ft. area they will be attacked three times.

marked on the map. The first stash contains three *minor oils of sharpness* and the second has two *vials of enhanced alchemist's fire* and a sling.

### Tactics

The couatl ignores the effects of the traps in its lair, and relies on using its constrict ability to grapple characters, then move them into a trap's area. While grappling a character, the couatl's speed is halved, with a base fly speed of 90 ft., it still has more than enough to get around its lair. If it still has a creature grappled while in a trap's area, on its next turn it uses its bite attack to try to poison them and knock them unconscious, dropping them and looking for another victim. It rarely uses its spells, but will cast *lesser restoration* on itself if afflicted with a condition that spell can remove, such as poison or blindness. The couatl fights until defeated, but don't forget what happens when it is reduced to 0 hit points as noted in the "Ancient Couatl's Nest" section.

### Treasure

A couatl egg is a rare and precious thing, resembling a oval emerald about six inches in diameter. If your players

#### Trap: Whirling Scythe

**TIER**—3 **COST**—19 **XP**—1,900

**MITIGATION** Perception DC 15 Disarm DC 15

**TRIGGER** Physical Trigger (Cost 0)

**TARGETS** Fixed Targeting (Cost 0)

Upgrades: Bigger Area (+3 cost)

**COMPONENTS** Slashing Damage Tier 1 (Cost 1)

Universal Upgrades: Continuous (+15 Cost)

**Description.** A set of spinning scythe blades attached to a central wooden pole. Each whirls around, carving through the air as easily as it does trespassers. This trap is continuously active, and is already engaged when the players enter the dungeon. It covers a 15 ft. cube. For each 5 ft. a creature moves within that area, the trap makes one attack roll. It has a +4 attack bonus and deals 4 (1d8) slashing damage on a hit.

wish to sell it, they could easily get 10,000 gold pieces should they find a buyer. Making such a sale, however, will likely earn the enmity of couatls and other celestial beings alike—perhaps a bridge better left unburnt. Be sure that it comes back to bite them. On the other hand, if they keep the egg and hatch it, they’ll find themselves with a baby celestial to take care of. Raising a couatl is no mean feat, and the creature will long for a purpose to fulfill. It’s up to you to decide how rapidly the baby grows and what abilities it possesses at birth, but a good starting point is to give it shape changing and have it follow the party in a humanoid form to learn about the world. Alternately, if you’d rather not deal with the implications of this creature in your game, you can have it inherently know its purpose and leave the party soon after hatching to pursue it, perhaps appearing later as an ally when the players need it most.

In addition, any items the players didn’t use in fighting the couatl are theirs to keep.

### Plot Hooks

The main plot hook here is how the couatl knows the party. You can tie it into a character’s backstory if one of them is a good fit, or you can leave it ambiguous, a

#### Trap: Flailing for Help

**TIER**—3 **COST**—19 **XP**—1,900

**MITIGATION** Perception DC 15 Disarm DC 15

**TRIGGER** Physical Trigger (Cost 0)

**TARGETS** Fixed Targeting (Cost 0)

Upgrades: Bigger Area (+3 cost)

**COMPONENTS** Bludgeoning Damage Tier 1 (Cost 1)

Universal Upgrades: Continuous (+15 Cost)

**Description.** A set of flails attached to whirling disks on the floor and ceiling, they bounce around unpredictably. This trap is continuously active, and is already engaged when the players enter the dungeon. It covers a 15 ft. cube. For each 5 ft. a creature moves within that area, the trap makes one attack roll. It has a +3 attack bonus and deals 5 (1d10) slashing damage on a hit.

## New Magic Items

### Minor Oil of Sharpness

*Wondrous Item, uncommon*

A creature can use an action to apply the *minor oil of sharpness* to a weapon or 10 pieces of ranged ammunition. For one minute, the affected weapon or ammunition becomes magical and gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

### Enhanced Alchemist’s Fire

*Wondrous Item, uncommon*

A more potent version of the standard flammable tar, *enhanced alchemist’s fire* can be thrown as an action up to 20 ft. (or up to 60 ft. with disadvantage) shattering on impact. A creature using this item targets a creature or object, treating this as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target takes 5 (2d4) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. An affected creature can end this by using its action to attempt a DC 12 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames. *Enhanced alchemist’s fire* can also be used as ammunition for a sling, or fitted to an arrow or bolt and fired out of a crossbow. A character proficient in those weapons can prepare it for use as a bonus action.

#### Trap: Spear Gauntlet

**TIER**—3 **COST**—19 **XP**—1,900

**MITIGATION** Perception DC 15 Disarm DC 15

**TRIGGER** Physical Trigger (Cost 0)

**TARGETS** Fixed Targeting (Cost 0)

Upgrades: Bigger Area (+3 cost)

**COMPONENTS** Piercing Damage Tier 1 (Cost 1)

Universal Upgrades: Continuous (+15 Cost)

**Description.** The hallway is filled with spears leaping in and out of the walls on either side, threatening to impale anyone who ventures too far. This trap is continuously active, and is already engaged when the players enter the dungeon. It covers a 15 ft. cube. For each 5 ft. a creature moves within that area, the trap makes one attack roll. It has a +5 attack bonus and deals 3 (1d6) piercing damage on a hit.

## Couatl

Medium celestial, lawful good

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 97 (13d8 + 39)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Wis +7, Cha +6

**Damage Resistances** radiant

**Damage Immunities** psychic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks.

**Senses** truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** all, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

### Traits

**Innate Spellcasting.** The couatl's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components. Each spell is cast at its lowest possible level:

At will: *detect evil and good*, *detect magic*, *detect thoughts*

3/day each: *bless*, *create food and water*, *cure wounds*, *lesser restoration*, *protection from poison*, *sanctuary*, *shield*

1/day each: *dream*, *greater restoration*, *screaming*

**Magic Weapons.** The couatl's weapon attacks are magical.

**Shielded Mind.** The couatl is immune to screaming and to any effect that would sense its emotions, read its thoughts, or detect its location.

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. Until this poison ends, the target is unconscious. Another creature can use an action to shake the target awake.

**Constrict.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the couatl can't

## Couatl—Cont.

constrict another target.

**Change Shape.** The couatl magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating equal to or less than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the couatl's choice). In a new form, the couatl retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and other actions are replaced by those of the new form, and it gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new has but that it lacks. If the new form has a bite attack, the couatl can use its bite in that form.

mystery to be solved later. Perhaps the couatl met the party earlier while shifted into a humanoid form, and that's the one that appears in the dream. The couatl egg is likewise an excellent plot hook, offering you many places to take the story of this encounter. Most of these are discussed in the treasure section, but added to that is the potential for the couatl to be captured or stolen from the party either before or after it hatches. The players might also find themselves accused of stealing a couatl egg or of planning to sell it, which could lead to intervention from law enforcement, divine beings, or worse.

### Changing the Flavor

This encounter is very tightly packaged around the couatl, its spells, and its immunities. The easiest aspects to change are the method the players learn of this situation, the location of the lair, and the trap composition. While the *dream* spell is thematically appropriate and interesting, you can send the players a written invitation if that will be more compelling. You can also have them stumble upon this lair and have no prior connection to the couatl, making it more of an ambiguous situation. Finally, you can remove any mention of the egg and have the players find it, perhaps mistaking it for a massive gemstone.

## Scaling by Level

**EL 3 (-2,000 xp)** - Reduce the couatl's maximum hit points by 40, and change its nonmagical piercing, slashing, and bludgeoning damage immunity to resistance instead. At 3rd level the players are even less likely to have magical means of dealing damage, and with their reduced firepower, the couatl needs to be much less dangerous for them to have a chance of taking it down.

**EL 7 (+3,500 xp)** - Increase the damage of all traps to 2d6, increase the damage of the *phantasmal force* lair action to 2d6 and add a second couatl, the mate of the maddened one (the mate is equally mad, of course). 7th level characters are tough and powerful, adding another monster to the mix is an easy way to balance the scales.

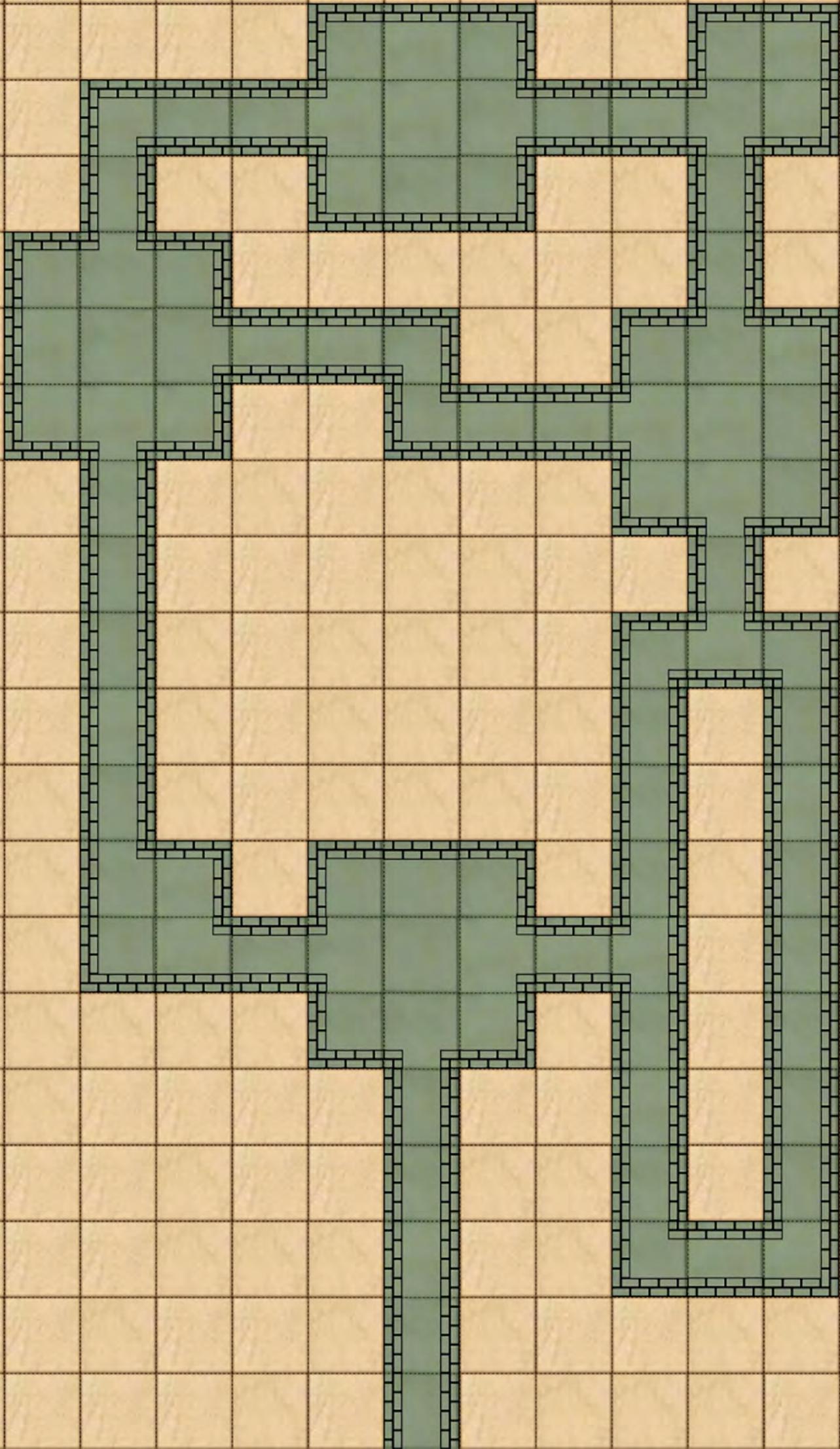
**EL 9 (+6,000 xp)** - Increase the damage of all traps to 3d6. Add a Deva to the encounter. This is the couatl's bound bodyguard, and will fight until the couatl is slain, at which point it will immediately lay down its arms. Similar to the EL 7 scaling, we're adding another monster to the mix, but instead of a second couatl, this is a powerful bruiser - the Deva. It'll add a lot of punch to the fight, and your players are going to understand why they shouldn't pick fights with celestials.

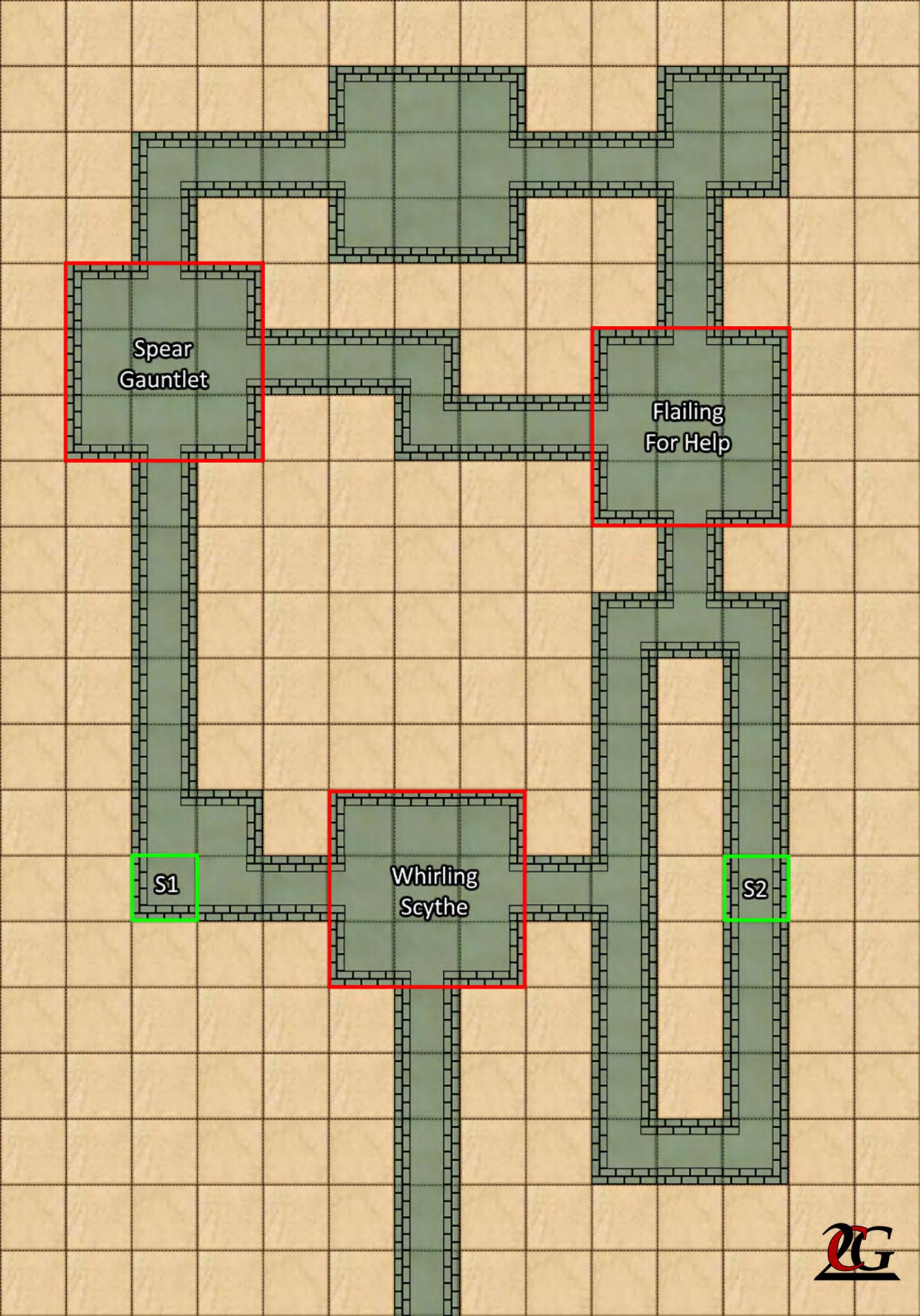
## Scaling by Tactics

**Easier** - To make this fight easier, don't have the couatl drag the players into the traps. It's a minor adjustment, but it makes things much less difficult for the heroes. If it needs to retreat, don't use Disengage, allowing them to make attacks of opportunity.

**Harder** - Making this fight more challenging is tricky. Have the couatl use more hit-and-run tactics, occasionally taking the Disengage action and retreating to cast *cure wounds* on itself and force the players to take more time getting to it, exposing them to more instances of *phantasmal force*.

**Lethal** - For a lethal challenge, the couatl begins the fight under the effects of *bleed*. It uses its constrict attack on the least armored target, then moves to pull them into a trap. Have it cast *shield* liberally, boosting its AC considerably during the first few rounds of combat. Regardless of how you change the tactics, you're not likely to kill someone here unless the players get unlucky or make some very poor choices.





Spear  
Gauntlet

Flailing  
For Help

S1

Whirling  
Scythe

S2