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Present

# 5 Room Dungeons

## Volume 03

Thank you for downloading the 5 Room Dungeons PDF, which contains short adventure seeds you can drop into your campaigns or flesh out into larger adventures. All dungeons in this PDF are submissions from the 5 Room Dungeon contest co-hosted by Roleplayingtips.com and Strolen's Citadel. Dungeon entries had to follow the 5 Room Dungeon template, which is provided at the end of this file (it's a great recipe for crafting your own quick dungeons too). Thanks to everyone who entered the contest. Your great entries are now inspiring and helping game masters around the world. Thanks also to the volunteers at Strolen's Citadel for their hours of editing.

You can download this file, and all other parts in the series as they are released, at [www.strolen.com](http://www.strolen.com) or [www.roleplayingtips.com](http://www.roleplayingtips.com).

Special thanks to manfred/Peter Sidor for editing.

Cheers,  
John Four and Strolen



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# The Haunting

By Matthew Darcy (with a little help from Dad - Paul Darcy)

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The city you currently find yourself in has a problem. News and rumor abound concerning the disappearance of six children over the last several weeks. Some say they were eaten by wandering monsters. Others say they simply ran away. But, the majority of people believe they were kidnapped and taken to “The House”.

“The House” is said to be haunted. It is a large, two-story home, long abandoned, that some swear they hear screams from in the middle of the night. The ornate front doors are locked and all the windows boarded up. Some of the older people in the neighborhood remember a family once living there and a number of parties going on at the time, but they were never invited. In fact, the family generally kept to themselves around their neighbors. One dark night, a particularly loud event took place with wild screaming. The morning after, the house was found to be boarded up and the family apparently moved out.

Whether out of a desire to be heroes, to collect the reward money, or simple curiosity, you now find yourselves on the frontsteps of “The House”. Contrary to all the stories you’ve heard, the front door is unlocked! Inside is what must once have been a grand entryway, a wide stairway leads up to the second floor. Two doors, one on your left and the other on your right, are closed. As soon as you are all inside, the front door slams shut and locks tight. The door will not open—as if someone or something does not want you to leave. To make matters worse, the door to the left creaks open and two zombies/skeletons/wraiths move forward to attack the party (DM should adjust the undead creatures, depending on party level and composition, to give the adventurers a good warm-up).

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Once the undead are defeated, the party members barely catch their breath (and hopefully do a little healing) before they hear a noise upstairs. If they investigate by going upstairs, they find themselves in a hallway with three doors to the left and three down the hall to the right. Suddenly, from behind the door at the end of the hall to the right, screams pierce the stillness. The door is locked, but may easily be broken in.

Inside the room is a large bed, the blankets old and dusty. There is also a nightstand next to the bed with a small painting on it, a dresser with a mirror, and another door. The small portrait on the nightstand shows two children standing with several adults, all garbed in black robes, in front of a doorway next to a fireplace that could be in “The House”. The only window in here is boarded up and, standing next to it, appears to be a girl covering her face. If the party attempts to speak with her, she continues sobbing and demands they leave her alone. Persisting, they may be able to coax from her this information: she lives here and was killed by the Demon of Darkness below. If they approach, her true nature will become apparent: a very unfriendly spirit! Her face distorts and she lets out a horrible scream that will cause the party to have to pause to cover their ears for one round. During that time, the spirit will attack the strongest member of the party.

If the ghost is defeated or driven off and the room examined, they will find that the other door in the room leads to a large, walk-in closet. The children’s clothes in here are old and moth-eaten. There are several sets of black robes hanging prominently in front of the other clothes.

### **Room Three: Trick or Setback**

The other rooms upstairs are all empty (at DM discretion, perhaps some minor undead or demonic creatures could be populated in a few of the other rooms to keep things interesting). They all appear to have been bedrooms. There is nothing of value in them.

On the Ground Floor Downstairs, the room that the undead came from is a parlor filled with rotting furniture and nothing apparently of value. The other door off the Main Entry leads into a large living room with a fireplace and a large, life-sized portrait on the wall next to the fireplace. The painting is similar to the one on the nightstand upstairs except that the people all wear typical clothing and not black robes. A dining room is next to that and a doorway there leads into the kitchen at the back of the house. Besides a locked and boarded up door leading outside from the kitchen, there is another door which leads into the parlor and one for a large, empty, walk-in pantry.

The large painting next to the fireplace conceals a hidden door with dark stairs leading down to a secret basement. Hopefully, the PC's will have paid attention to the description of the painting on the nightstand and be able to make the connection. The DM may need to provide additional clues.

### **Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict**

The stairway down into the basement is very dark and filled with cobwebs. Torchlight, lanterns, even infravision do not seem to penetrate far into the inky black. The bottom of the stairway opens into a small room with an iron door opposite. When the party approaches the door, it creaks open loudly. The air becomes very cold as an expanding darkness begins creeping into the room. Occasionally, shapes can be seen writhing within the darkness, as if it were actually a fluid rather than an absence of light: long claws, a flash of glowing red eyes, the gleam of fangs, wisps of smoke and flame.

The darkness begins to move rapidly. If the party retreats, two smoking, black tentacles dart out from the dark near the floor to try to snare PC legs. If hits are successful, the PC's are pulled to the floor and dragged into the darkness to be attacked by the demonic creature within. The DM should use discretion and make sure the Demon of Darkness is both terrifying and difficult for the PC's to defeat—a monstrous evil that may well devour them all if they are not very, very careful.

### **Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist**

If the Demon of Darkness is defeated, the party will discover a large, circular chamber behind the iron door with six children manacled to the walls. There is a very thick tome on a table at the center of the room. Within this Book of Black Magic are various summoning spells, including the one that brought the Demon of Darkness. The creature was too powerful to control and killed several of those present at the time, including the girl whose ghost was encountered in her former bedroom.

The children are very weak as their lifeforce was slowly being drained away by the creature just defeated. However, they will recover and the community leaders, in their gratitude, should offer a handsome reward. Of course, before they pay up, there's also the little problem they've been having with a haunted bakery down the street...



# The Quest for the Rod of Spellius

By Davide Quatrini

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

PCs are searching an ancient artifact: The Rod of Spellius, the powerful creation of a legendary wizard hero. They know that the object is hidden in an underground complex built by an unknown race millenniums ago. The entrance of the complex is a small natural cave located in an arid hill near a grassy plain. The guardian is a big velociraptor (a fast carnivorous dinosaur), that made the cave its personal nest. If PCs defeat it they can found the door for the next room.

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The second room is an old library full of books and scrolls. PCs can realize that this was one of Spellius' secret libraries and then they can read the books (some of them are minor magical scrolls). The books contain a subtle psychological challenge: most of them say that the Rod can be found in the far Demiplane of Metal, not in the complex in which PCs are. This is one of the Spellius' tests for the PCs: if they believe the books they will leave the place; otherwise, if they are stubborn (just like Spellius!), they can find the secret door that leads to the following room.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

It's the time for Spellius' second test. This room is completely empty, made with smooth gray stone and with two identical exit doors made of shining strange metal (no inscriptions or signs can be found in this room). The door on the left is the real door for Room Four; the door on the right is protected by a trap, that activates if the door itself is touched in any way (the trap is magical and it polymorphs PCs' belts into poisonous snakes). In this room spellcasters can cast spells only if they say the word "Please!" before casting them.

## Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The fourth room is a large natural cave full of stalactites and stalagmites, with some fluorescent mushrooms and a muddy floor. When PCs enter here Spellius' last guardians, large zombies with black armors and slime-covered greatswords, erupt violently from the ground and attack. One of them can cast shadow/darkness spells, and another one can summon bats' swarms (these creatures have more-than-average intelligence). They'll defend the marble altar (see Room Five) at any cost.

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

If PCs destroy the zombies they can reach the bottom of the cave, the place in which the Rod rests from the Old Age. It is positioned on a white altar made of precious marble, and it radiates a soft gray light. It can be removed from the altar only through magic, and only by a character that studied Spellius' books for at least 8 hours. The rod has several different powers, most of them based on necromantic effects.



# The Plague Devil

By Nik Palmer

Divination and dream visions have revealed that an entombed devil is gaining power and trying to break free of its ancient tomb. A range of mountains is known as the ancient kingdom of the plague demon, exploration points towards a valley, home of the cursed howling wolf as the likely site of the tomb. The Valley has shriveled and twisted trees, barely clinging to life.

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

### Wolf Fiend Den

Centuries of living in this hollow have chanced and twisted the Cerberus type beast.

The guardian is an ancient magical wolf with three heads. It can speak a growly howly voice, but has a limited capacity of conversation... Eat, Sleep, and keep others off its territory. (It does not care about birds in the trees). For weaker players, make the guardian old, diseased and weak enough to beat. For powerful players, make the guardian ancient and powerful with a breath weapon of disease and flame.

Secret door: The back of the cave den a 10x10 entryway has obviously been sealed with giant stones a long long time past. Not so secret, but definitely blocked. A warm foetid smell seeps out of a few of the holes. (place traps in/on the stones for additional challenge).

### Notes on Rooms Two – Five:

**Common Elements:** All the rooms are very basic square cut, stone floors and pillars to support the ceiling. Simple, basic, but well crafted. There are runes made of some metal that form a script around the ceiling of each of the rooms. Successful deciphering reveals the quote for each room.

**Three side rooms:** Off the Main Chamber are three side rooms: Left Room, Opposite Entrance Room, and Right Room. Each side room has a portion of the demon (mind, body, essence) all three must be united to ultimately free or banish the pestilence devil from the area.

**Twist:** When the demon is re-summoned, inlaid precious metal runes and script come to life, become a razor wall to shred the demon and dissect its parts. But each time the demon dies, pestilence escapes. The players must stop the cycle.

#### **Some Possible Remedies:**

- \* Allowing the demon to escape (it will vow to never return in exchange for a some of a character's most vital statistic).
- \* Stop the Razor Golem and allow the devil to pull out its three parts and reform..... only to return much later as an enemy.
- \* Restore the protections of all three essences.
- \* Destroy the three parts of the Demon.
- \* Connect the three parts of the Demon.... When the second piece of the body is brought into the room, the Razor Rune Vortex will form and slay anything moving, if it is stopped, it will magically reform and attack again the when the third part is brought into the room. If defeated again, it will reform to challenge the corporeal devil if it is reformed.

Ultimately, it can only reform after being destroyed a total of two times. (reduce its effectiveness by half each "new life" for weaker players).

The demon is getting more powerful and able to manifest and reform just a bit further each time. The waves of pestilence are manifesting more commonly. Each time the demon manifests and is stopped, the players must save against disease or contract some debilitating illness.

## **Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge**

*Main Chamber, Altar in center of room on dais, metallic runes and script set into the ceiling radiate obvious magic and seem to glisten with a fresh wetness.*

**Rune Quote:** “Here the three essence shall not be reformed.”

As the player(s) finally enter the chamber, they witness the plague demon forming from the aether into a physical body, immediately the rune script along the ceiling detaches from the wall and beings to spin in a vortex, forming a cylinder of razor metal, that shreds the form of the demon. The metallic runes then return to their original position.

Anyone who witnesses this must save versus disease or suffer a debilitating penalty.

Priests and paranormally sensitive characters will feel the wave of pestilence emerge from the tomb....

The process repeats nearly every hour. Sometimes the plague demon gets farther than other times, but it does not escape the main chamber of the tomb. Sometimes it is able to get to the left room and move it's skull a few inches (Below)

There are three side rooms.

## **Room Three: Trick or Setback**

### **Left Room**

**Rune Quote:** Demons mind sealed in gold sitting upon stone.

The head of the Demon rests in this room, but it is no longer on its pedestal, over the millenia, the pedestal cracked and crumbled, ultimately, the golden demon skull tumbled to the floor. Free of it's protected pedestal, the devil has been able to re-form its ethereal body in the main chamber, The runes are able to affect ghosts, spirits, and the astral plane, so they continue to shred the demon. It can not physically reform until all of its 3 parts are laid together on the altar. Sometimes the demon is able to drag its skull a few inches closer to the main room and altar.

## **Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict**

### **Opposite Room**

**Rune Quote:** Buried body seals pestilence within

This room has a large stone sarcophagus covered in runes. To open the body sarcophagus, a puzzle must be solved (a riddle, brain teaser, or more active (tic tac toe, etc) challenge).

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

### Right Room

**Rune Quote:** Soul closed in crystal, heart locked away.

The essence of the demon is in this room. It's heart, still beating, rests in a crystal urn, covered in dust.

Actually the entire room is full of dust... the still beating heart is pumping out dust of decay, which has eaten a crack in the crystal urn and allowed the dust of pestilence to begin to pile and fill the room. With each slow heartbeat, another puff of deadly dust puffs out of the urn.



## Villainous Cellar Pub

By Aki Halme

The party has tracked a major villain to a pub and is out to capture. Their target is the playboy son of the leader of a crime family, perhaps, or a specialist criminal such as a hard-to-catch cat burglar. The person needs to be held for ransom, or interrogation, or prosecution; outright killing would therefore be counter-productive. As the good news, there are no reports of the target having been violent, or having significant combat capacity.

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

### Bouncer and Cloak Room

As the inn has a rough crowd in it, there is an appropriately powerful guardian at the door - a monster that is hard though not impossible for the party to defeat. As the party does not consist of regulars at the inn, they are viewed with suspicion, and that only through a tiny eye slit at the door. Breaking the door is difficult as the entrance is in a narrow blind alley which does not leave room for effective use of battering rams, or even combat tactics, and the door itself is barred and reinforced. Windows on the ground floor also have bars in them, and since the pub is underground other entries are not obvious. Should the party attempt to fight its way in, they will discover that the alley is a killing ground for the pub's defenders; since the clients are a rough crowd the establishment has prepared against forcing an entry. Sneaking in by less obvious ways, making another entrance from above, camouflage, and bribes might succeed where brute force might fail.

The cloak room is next to the entrance, and holds many of the heavier, more obvious weapons of the clients within. Should the party opt to fight, an alarm will sound and what happens depends on whether the party makes it to the cloak room before the weapons are distributed amongst those willing to fight against invaders; the pub rewards those who fight to defend the pub, and those inside are of the kind with few places where they can feel welcome and at ease, so they would be inclined to defend the pub as long as the odds are heavily stacked in their favour. Without their heavier weapons they would be more inclined to wait and see than fight it out.

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

### The Pub Main Room

The main room of the pub is relatively crowded, and badly lit, except for the entertainment - a small stage with a few performers on it, a long bar with a nice supply of beverages, gambling, games of skill. Most

tables are in various stages of twilight, and those near the walls are darker still, some blocked from sight by curtains. The entrance is well lit, however, so the party members, unless they take precautions, are well visible to everyone - including their target and his (her?) henchmen. The target will try to avoid contact, and tries to either destroy the party or at least get the PCs some new enemies. To this end, the henchmen / bodyguards / friends of the target will try to separate PCs from each other than get individual PCs in a brawl. Fighting in the shadows would involve opportunities to frame the party of breaking the pub's rules, of getting them to fight some of the heavier locals, or have an apparently bystander get an opportunity to backstab a PC or render him or her helpless by drugs, traps, force, magic, or a sap. Capturing a PC in process of capturing the target would be a major success for the bad guys, far better than killing anyone.

The challenges for PCs is to keep together, find the real threats, spot their mark or at least a henchman, and make it closer to their prey.

### **Room Three: Trick or Setback**

#### **Burning Pub**

If the PCs manage to avoid tricks and temptations, the next plot is fire. A fair share of the furnishings are flammable, as are the beverages. The room will rapidly fill with flickering flames and thick smoke if a fire starts. The pub itself is largely stone, but tables, chairs, curtains, the bar, and the drinks can provide the makings of an impressive display of fireworks.. if the target or a henchman has access to magics, illusions and actual fire or smoke magic could be used - if not, they can have supplies, either prepared or improvised, to accomplish the same. Either way, once the fire starts, the PCs will get a clue about where the fire was started from, and thus, where their prey is. Getting to him in a semi-lit, burning room full of panicking villains could be harder.

### **Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict**

#### **Escape Route**

The prey won't stay put in a burning room, but will try to escape through a back room; first behind the bar, then to the kitchens, and then upwards through a trap door, and finally out there an apartment to an adjoining street. The bar has plenty of flammable liquids and narrow confines; the kitchen has knives, a cook, an oven, storages of edible goods, appliances, open fire, hot grease, a service elevator, and, once the chaos has starts, surfaces that are difficult to stand on or see through such as peas on the floor, flour in the air or on the floor, spilled sauce etc. The trap door opens to a closet in an apartment, making the last part of the escape take place amongst sleeping civilians who won't be pleased if they wake up to find armed invaders fighting in their home. Naturally, the home is furnished, and since the inhabitants are asleep, dark. Henchmen won't escape this way, but make their stand in the kitchen; the prey that the party chases will try to flee instead for as long as possible.

### **Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist**

#### **Capture**

Capturing the villain will be hard as he or she has preparations in place for a escape, and tries to flee rather than escape. Capturing an associate of the target also works as a consolation prize, and eventually a new attempt. Holding the target captive also leads to another story where the villain's associates attempt a rescue, or to neutralise the captive villain, or to capture someone close to the PCs to coerce co-operation.



# Ye Classic Wizard's House

By Gillian Wiseman

The PCs are seeking a mcguffin of some sort, which they believe was last owned by a wizard who lived in the small square “tower” they are now standing before. The wizard died about 50 years ago, while traveling away from home. His heir attempted to enter the tower, but was slain by something in the tower, and his tower was sealed at that time. No one has entered it since. Rumors that the tower is filled with treasure and traps abound.

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The PCs should have little problem opening the doors to the tower; they are locked and magically held in the ordinary fashion (arcane lock). However, the antechamber (2 stories high and quite beautifully decorated) is guarded by a chain golem (or any suitably tough construct with reach) who is initially located on a balcony overlooking the antechamber. This fight should be a tough one (chain golem is CR 5) but not overwhelming (suitable for a L3 or 4 party).

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The PCs are now free to move into the second area of the tower – the kitchen, dining room, pantries and stair hall. This cluster of rooms can be treated as one area, as there is only one encounter – the wizard used a dozen or more unseen-servantlike creatures as servants. These things still work to keep the area clean and ready for dwelling in. The creatures are not able to communicate with the PCs, but will bustle about, barely visible, trying to relieve the PCs of cloaks, backpacks, muddy boots, etc... The PCs will be offered warm slippers, hot drinks (long since spoiled, of course and stinking or just empty cups), chairs to rest in, and more. This can be as lively and humorous as the DM desires. Once offered and given hospitality, the PCs are free to gather their things and ascend the stairs. PCs who refuse their hospitality will find the creatures dogging them during their further explorations, taking loose items away, trying to polish their boots in the middle of combat, and so on.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

Upon reaching the stair landing, the PCs are overlooking the antechamber and are ready to enter the only door. Opening this door reveals a bare blank room. It has been stripped at some time of every possible valuable. This is an illusion. Interacting with the chamber in any way such as searching it, trying to remove the large stone-topped work tables, or moving other items into the room, should soon reveal the illusion for what it is. The room is actually furnished with a full working wizard's lab. All the reagents and chemicals are pretty much spoiled, but the glassware, the equipment and the remaining materials are worth a sizeable amount to a young wizard. Unfortunately, they are quite bulky and would require several wagons to carry off. Note that there is one exit to this room – a door on the far side – and crossing the room to open this door without further actions in the room will not dispel the illusion.

## Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

This door leads to the Wizard's bedchamber, a small but comfortably furnished room. It is now filthy and filled with the scent of damp and mildew. On the floor is the ancient and now skeletonized corpse of the wizard's heir, left here when his “loyal” servants fled after he died. This room is fully furnished with a bed,

bedside table, a couple of chairs, a small washstand, a wardrobe and whatever else seems suitable. A couple doors lead out, one to a garderobe or bathing chamber, the other to the final room – the wizard’s study. The ceiling of this chamber shows some water stains, especially near the study door. Guarding this room are a suitably challenging number of animated objects. They are the furnishings of the room. There should be perhaps three large and a few small objects, and some may be partly damaged from beating off the previous “invaders”. This battle should be stiffer than the one to enter the tower, but not overwhelming.

### **Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist**

The final room – the wizard’s study. Here the PCs find their reward for the job. If they were seeking a mcguffin, it may be here, securely locked in a chest or cabinet. It might be trapped at the DM’s decision. The rest of the treasure is in plain sight, but unfortunately damaged. The last 50 years have not been kind to the tower’s roof. It has leaked, allowing a great deal of moisture into the room. The wizard’s spellbooks, his notes on building animated objects, scrolls, and other interesting or valuable materials may be here, or may be ruined by the damp, as the DM determines is suitable for his campaign. A couple of potions, minor items or even a single more valuable item could also be found here – or notes that indicate what the wizard was doing before he left and was killed...

# Why Like 5 Room Dungeons?

By John Four

This format, or creation method, has a number of advantages:

- Any location. Though I call them 5 Room Dungeons, they actually apply to any location with five or so areas. They don't have to be fantasy or dungeons. They could take the form of a small space craft, a floor in a business tower, a wing of a mansion, a camp site, a neighbourhood.
- Short. Many players dislike long dungeon crawls, and ADD GMs like to switch environments up often. In addition, some players dislike dungeons all together, but will go along with the play if they know it's just a short romp. This helps ease conflicts between play styles and desires.
- Quick to plan. With just five rooms to configure, design is manageable and fast. Next time you are killing time, whip out your notepad and write down ideas for themes, locations, and rooms. Knock off as many designs as you can and choose the best to flesh out when you have more time and to GM next session.
- Easier to polish. Large designs often take so long to complete that game night arrives before you can return to the beginning and do one or more rounds of tweaking and polishing. The design speed of 5 Room Dungeons leaves room most of the time to iterate.
- Easy to move. 5 Room Dungeons can squeeze into many places larger locations and designs can't. If your dungeon goes unused or if you want to pick it up and drop it on a new path the PCs take, it's often easier to do than when wielding a larger crawl.
- Flexible size. They are called 5 Room Dungeons, but this is just a guideline. Feel free to make 3-area locations or 10-cave complexes. The idea works for any small, self-contained area.
- Easy to integrate. A two to four hour dungeon romp quickens flagging campaign and session pacing, and can be squeezed into almost any story thread. It also grants a quick success (or failure) to keep the players engaged. The format is also easy to drop into most settings with minimal consistency issues.

## Room One: Entrance And Guardian

There needs to be a reason why your dungeon hasn't been plundered before or why the PCs are the heroes for the job. A guardian or challenge at the entrance is a good justification why the location remains intact. Also, a guardian sets up early action to capture player interest and energize a session.

### ***Room One challenge ideas:***

- The entrance is trapped.
- The entrance is cleverly hidden.
- The entrance requires a special key, such as a ceremony, command word, or physical object.
- The guardian was deliberately placed to keep intruders out. Examples: a golem, robot, or electric fence.
- The guardian is not indigenous to the dungeon and is a tough creature or force who's made its lair in room one.
- The entrance is hazardous and requires special skills and equipment to bypass. For example: radiation leaks, security clearance, wall of fire.
- Room One is also your opportunity to establish mood and theme to your dungeon, so dress it up with care.

## Room Two: Puzzle Or Roleplaying Challenge

The PCs are victorious over the challenge of the first room and are now presented with a trial that cannot be solved with steel. This keeps problem solvers in your group happy and breaks the action up for good pacing. Make Room Two a puzzle, skill-based, or roleplaying encounter, if possible. Room Two should shine the lime-light on different PCs than Room One, change gameplay up, and offer variety between the challenge at the entrance and the challenge at the end.

Note, if Room One was this type of encounter, then feel free to make Room Two combat-oriented. Room Two should allow for multiple solutions to prevent the game from stalling.

### **Room Two ideas:**

- Magic puzzle, such as a chessboard tile floor with special squares.
- An AI blocks access to the rest of the complex and must be befriended, not fought.
- A buzzer panel for all the apartments, but the person the PCs are looking for has listed themselves under a different name, which can be figured out through previous clues you've dropped.
- A concierge at the front desk must be bluffed or coerced without him raising the alarm.
- A dirt floor crawls with poisonous snakes that will slither out of the way to avoid open flame. (A few might follow at a distance and strike later on.)
- The PCs must convince a bouncer to let them in without confiscating their weapons.

Once you've figured out what Room Two is, try to plant one or more clues in Room One about potential solutions. This ties the adventure together a little tighter, will delight the problem solvers, and can be a back-up for you if the players get stuck.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

The purpose of this room is to build tension. Do this using a trick, trap, or setback. For example, after defeating a tough monster, and players think they've finally found the treasure and achieved their goal, they learn they've been tricked and the room is a false crypt.

Depending on your game system, use this room to cater to any player or character types not yet served by the first two areas. Alternatively, give your group a double-dose of gameplay that they enjoy the most, such as more combat or roleplaying.

### **Room Three ideas:**

- The PCs rescue a number of prisoners or hostages. However, the victims might be enemies in disguise, are booby-trapped, or create a dilemma as they plead to be escorted back to safety immediately.
- A collapsed structure blocks part of the area. The debris is dangerous and blocks nothing of importance, another trap, or a new threat.
- Contains a one-way exit (the PCs must return and deal with Rooms One and Two again). i.e. Teleport trap, one-way door, 2000 foot water slide trap.
- The PCs finally find the artifact required to defeat the villain, but the artifact is broken, cursed, or has parts missing, and clues reveal a solution lies ahead.
- Believing the object of the quest now lays within easy reach, an NPC companion turns traitor and betrays the PCs.

Another potential payoff for Room Three is to weaken the PCs as build-up to a dramatic struggle in Room Four. It might contain a tough combat encounter, take down a key defense, exhaust an important resource, or make the party susceptible to a certain type of attack.

For example, if Room Four contains a mummy whose secret weakness is fire, then make Room Three a troll lair (or another creature susceptible to fire) so the PCs might be tempted to burn off a lot of their fire magic, oil, and other flammable resources. This would turn a plain old troll battle into a gotcha once the PCs hit Room Four and realize they are out of fire resources.

Don't forget to dress Room Three up with your theme elements.

## Room Four: Climax, Big Battle or Conflict

This room is The Big Show. It's the final combat or conflict encounter of the dungeon. Use all the tactics you can summon to make this encounter memorable and entertaining.

- As always, generate interesting terrain that will impact the battle.
- Start or end with roleplay. Maybe the bad guy needs to stall for time to let PC buffs wear out, to wait for help to arrive, or to stir himself into a rage. Perhaps the combat ends with the bad guy bleeding to death and a few short words can be exchanged, or there are helpless minions or prisoners to roleplay with once the threat is dealt with.
- Give the bad guy unexpected powers, abilities, or equipment.
- Previous rooms might contain warning signals or an alarm, so the bad guy has had time to prepare.
- The bad guy tries to settle things in an unusual way, such as through a wager or a duel.
- The lair is trapped. The bad guy knows what or where to avoid, or has the ability to set off the traps at opportune moments.
- The bad guy reveals The Big Reward and threatens to break it or put it out of the PCs' so reach so they'll never collect it.
- The bad guy has a secret weakness that the PCs figure out how to exploit.
- A variety of PC skills and talents are required to successfully complete the encounter.

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Here's your opportunity to change the players' bragging to "we came, we saw, we slipped on a banana peel." Room Five doesn't always represent a complication or point of failure for the PCs, but it can. Room Five doesn't always need to be a physical location either - it can be a twist revealed in Room Four.

Room Five is where your creativity can shine and is often what will make the dungeon different and memorable from the other crawls in your campaigns.

In addition, if you haven't supplied the reward yet for conquering the dungeon, here is a good place to put the object of the quest, chests of loot, or the valuable information the PCs need to save the kingdom.

As accounting tasks take over from recent, thrilling, combat tasks, this would also be a good time to make a campaign or world revelation, or a plot twist. Perhaps the location of the next 5 Room Dungeon is uncovered, along with sufficient motivation to accept the quest. Maybe the true identity of the bad guy is revealed. New clues and information pertaining to a major plot arc might be embedded in the treasure, perhaps sewn into a valuable carpet, drawn in painting, or written on a slip of paper stuffed into a scroll tube or encoded on a data chip.

## ***Room Five ideas:***

- Another guardian awaits in the treasure container.
- A trap that resurrects or renews the challenge from Room Four.
- Bonus treasure is discovered that leads to another adventure, such as a piece of a magic item or a map fragment.
- A rival enters and tries to steal the reward while the PCs are weakened after the big challenge of Room Four.
- The object of the quest/final reward isn't what it seems or has a complication. i.e. The kidnapped king doesn't want to return.
- The quest was a trick. By killing the dungeon's bad guy the PCs have actually helped the campaign villain or a rival. Perhaps the bad guy was actually a good guy under a curse, transformed, or placed into difficult circumstances.
- The bad guy turns out to be a PC's father.
- The true, gruesome meaning behind a national holiday is discovered.
- The source of an alien race's hostility towards others is uncovered, transforming them from villains to sympathetic characters in the story.
- The true meaning of the prophecy or poem that lead the PCs to the dungeon is finally understood, and it's not what the PCs thought.