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Present

5 Room Dungeons

Volume 06

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 or www.roleplayingtips.com.

Special thanks to manfred/Peter Sidor for editing.

Cheers,
Johnn Four and Strolen

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Errors, omissions, or feedback? Please e-mail johnn@roleplayingtips.com

Diamonds and the Deluge

By valadaar www.strolen.com

A fantastic fortune in the remains of a drowned realm. This adventure is made for classic treasure hunters with few stiff fights. The rewards are high, and the traps lethal.

Background

The Kingdom of Melethad was quite small, and nestled in a remote mountain valley. It boasted little natural resources apart from very rich diamond deposits. Its wealth and formidable natural defenses kept it aloof and safe from its enemies.

However, its location was also it's doom. A vast glacial lake had been building up for centuries, and in one final catastrophic release, flooded the valley, washing away all virtually all of their works and drowning the people.

Not everything was lost, however, for beneath Castle Melethad was a strongly built dungeon, home to a massive vault used to contain the realm's treasures, including a massive store of diamonds.

Freed by the break, a river filled the valley, further hiding what once was a thriving kingdom.

Now, several generations have passed. Some still speak of the diamonds of Melethad, but many dismiss them as folk tales.

The river has diminished greatly in size, and some treasure hunters have come to the valley, seeking the vast treasure somewhere under the sludge.

The PC's have come into the employ of an Astrologer who claims to have enough information to pinpoint the ruins. He needs muscle and skills at dungeoncraft, for the vault was well protected.

The Astrologer in turn has been hired and is sponsored by a petty noble whose lands are somewhat downstream of the Drowned Realm. As a result this expedition will be reasonably well funded.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The Drowned Realm

The Astrologer has been carefully sighting the nearby mountains and has walked very deliberately into the middle of the muddy plain. He stops and reaches down into the muck. "Worked Stone! I've found it!"

A bit premature - he found part of the ruin, but it may take some time for the PC's to find the stone portal leading into the lost castle's dungeon. As much time as desired by the GM may be taken to find and excavate the entrance below.

The dungeon below the castle is large, but not a maze. The Astrologer knows the layout well enough to bring the PCs to the First Door easily enough.

***Complication*:** Rival treasure hunters may seek to claim jump the PC's. The threat should be serious, but not overwhelming.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The First Door
Meant to require many hands to open and thus rule out sneak-thieves and the like, the door weighs many tons and must be lifted. Several large metal eyelets for inserting beams are worked into the massive door.

No automatic mechanism exists - enough strength must be brought to bear to dead lift 5 tons. Back in the day, when the door was opened, pulleys were fitted into sockets in the ceiling (the sockets can be found upon searching, but the pulleys are absent) allowing fewer men to be used to open the door. The door does not lock in place, and so must be held up while other crawl underneath. 10000lbs will crush anyone unfortunate to be caught underneath should it be dropped.

Complication: The dungeon is still flooded in places. As a result, 2' of water covers the floor, making it even more difficult to lift, as the eyelets are underwater.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The Gauntlet
A 40' hallway, 5' wide with 7' ceiling. Every 10', the ceiling lowers down 1' requiring stooping and crouching.

The hallway was once heavily trapped, but the length immersion has ruined many of them. The floor is littered with pressure plates that will click when stepped upon, but little will happen. The first and last pressure plates are 4' long and the width of the floor, and form the only trap still working. If the last pressure plate is activated while no pressure exists on the first, a stone slab 4' long and as wide as the passageway will drop into the hallway. It is 6' thick and blocks the passageway completely when it falls. It weighs roughly 10 tons and does not automatically reset - it needs to be lifted back up into the ceiling manually.

Complication: Like the door, 1-2' of water covers the floor, making detection of the pressure plates difficult at best.
Complication: Other traps just might be still viable.

The PC's are not there yet! The last obstacle is a massive bronze door with 6 large keyholes. All must be picked or magically opened separately in order for the door to be opened. Even unlocked, the massive portal requires significant effort to open. What lies beyond?

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The Vault
The vault was not 100% watertight, and many of the valuables within the room have rotted away. All of the chests have been rendered useless, their traps defeated by time and water. A trove of diamonds and precious metals remain. But, they are not undefended. Bronze automations of various sizes and types have survived the immersion and will rise up and attack the pc's, for non save the long dead and drowned king can enter unmolested. The fight should be dire...

Complication: Again, this room could be partially flooded, putting most of the treasure below the murky waters, along with the guardians.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Betrayal!
And it does not end with the mechanical foes.

The Petty Noble who sponsored the expedition is not interesting in sharing the booty. It was his ancestor who engineered the flood that devastated the kingdom. They did not anticipate that the region would be under water for an extended period, so the plan bore no immediate fruit for its instigator.

He has followed the PCs to the location with a large force and will wait until the PC's emerge laden with treasure to attack. If the battle with the constructs was taxing, fighting the nobles troops should be even more so.

Complication: The spirits of the village have not rested. With the coming of the Petty Nobel to the valley, they have their chance at revenge. They will release a second flood into the valley while the fight is ongoing. The PCs might get some warning of this, either subtly - a rumbling, or explicitly from the spirits ("Run Mortals!", whispered unseen into their ears).
Complication: A third force of claim jumpers of any desired makeup turns the fight into a 3-way combat.

The desired end result is that the PCs barely survive and managed to obtain at least a reasonable amount of treasure before being forced to flee by a second flood. Now that the portal was open, the waters will destroy even the dungeon, and the remaining treasure scattered down the river. Panning for gold and diamonds will become a popular pastime down this river.

Bedizen's Traveling Dungeon

By Scrasamax www.strolen.com

A traveling dungeon of canvas and props...

Canvas Town
Canvas town is mostly known for its springtime festival. While the village is quite small most of the year, it swells to a huge tent city in the spring. There are three roads that meet the main road in the center of the village, with six inns clustered around the resultant intersection and common green.

During the spring, merchants clog the roads, meeting at Canvas Town, turning the normally sleepy village into one of the largest free markets outside of the great port cities. This economic boom only lasts at most a month as merchants come and go, but the business attracts more than just merchants. Entertainers come to show of their skill and fatten their purses, as do mercenary companies looking for work, and the locals come from leagues in all directions. Few overlook this seasonal explosion of commerce and mirth. The Carnival of Forgotten Souls is no different than any other troop that rolls up onto the edge of the market green.

Like any other traveling Carnival, the Forgotten Souls have acrobats, beast wranglers, and a side show of freaks. A more recent addition comes in the form of the *Bedizen's Traveling Dungeon.*

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

A female mercenary is rare, a ravishing beauty as a mercenary is even rarer. Piwowar stands at the front of Bedizen's Traveling Dungeon, her blonde locks falling over brightly polished chain mail armor. Her voice is

clear and strong as she challenges men and boys passing by to test their mettle in the depths of the traveling dungeon. Most of the younger boys are starry eyed at the notion of swinging a sword and clearing out a pit of evil like the heroes from the epics. The older boys and young men often take a notion to impress the steel clad warrior-woman who calls them to glory and battle.

The front room of the sprawling canvas tent is the armory, a place full of wooden racks stocked with stout wooden shields of all sizes, some small enough for a five year old, all the way to strapping tower shields large enough to stop a ballista bolt. Other racks hold wooden swords, some no larger than daggers, others as large as true greatswords. Braziers smolder and fill the room with a heady aroma of burning herbs and charcoal. Those patrons old enough to do so are often encouraged to down a mug of liquid courage, *as it might be the last thing to cross their tongues before death.*

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The Knight and the Knave
Two suits of enchanted armor stand sentinel at the end of a canvas corridor, their visors are up and when they speak, their voices echo hollowly through their metal bodies.

> Behold, courageous travelers
> _____**Before you stand two warriors**
> One Knight, one Knave
> _____**One speaks only Truth**
> One speaks only lies
> _____**One question you may ask**

The Knight one the left hand side is the Knave, unable to speak the truth, the one to the right is the true Knight, only able to speak truth. Logic puzzle aside, both are suits of armor that were given the ability to speak by means of a common *Speaking Stone* charm. Each has a stone, marked with either Knight or Knave dropped into it's foot. One stone lies, one tells the truth and if a visor is closed said stone is muffled.

If the left-hand Knight is chosen, proceed to Room 3, if the right hand Knight is chosen, proceed to Room 4.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The Shambling Beast
The next room of the canvas dungeon is dark, only a single small brazier by the entrance flap offering a glimmer of light. The smell of rotting meat is strong, though this is really an herb added to the brazier. A beast bellows, it strides forth into the weak light of the brazier...a giant troll with savage teeth and bulging muscles. His legs and abdomen clad in steel plating, the beast growls a challenge at the would be heroes.

Bedizen, the Half-Troll - The owner and proprietor of the traveling dungeon, Bedizen joined the traveling carnival not too long ago and worked in the freak show until his act was ready to be put together. How a half human, half troll came into being is a question of some interest in the camp, one that Bedizen waves away with a calloused hand. When facing young children, he is hardly as scary as he could be, and it is rare that a child under the age of 9 doesn't 'slay' the mighty troll. Those who are older, or have a mind to actually hurt someone with their wooden swords are quick to find that there is truth to his trollish appearance and he doesn't take kindly to folks interested in causing pain. He will break swords and send such braggarts running in fear, much to the delight of children and the girlfriends of said braggarts.

Bedizen would not be a proper monster if he didn't have a proper treasure to be guarding. Older boys win a kiss from Piwowar when they leave, while the children generally snatch a piece of amber bright candy for their great deed.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

After passing down a canvas corridor, the travelers are assailed by the stink of brimstone, burning in a pair of braziers sitting in front of a heavy and macabre looking gate. The braziers sit a bit higher than the others and the smell of brimstone is much less noticeable closer to the ground. No need in sending the little ones running with burning eyes and sick stomachs. The gate is painted black and looks like it is slick with blood, distant moans and wails can be heard as the would be heroes push the heavy doors open and enter the largest of the divided sections of the Traveling Dungeon.

There is a great bellow as the patrons pass between the doors, really slat board painted cunningly and weighted with bricks or sandbags to make them heavy. There is a frightening figure standing in the middle of the chamber, a demon from myth and legend. Surrounding him are six braziers filled with blazing charcoal, making the fourth chamber smoky and hot. There is a vent in the ceiling, but dark colored netting and baffles prevent outside light from penetrating the darkened room. The demon shouts in the ancient language of the damned, it's actually just some gibberish borrowed from an old book, and beckons for the patrons to try their skill.

Fighting the demon only takes heart and courage as with Bedizen, it is a man in costume. Wearing a suit of painted leather armor with a demon helm, *Sal Giantson* earns his modest living with the carnival. Named Giantson for standing nearly seven feet tall, he enjoys wearing the costume and getting the frightened shrieks from the children, and just as often is 'slain' by the valiant heroes.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Into the Light
After slaying the demon, the patrons see a new passage, one that doesn't reek of brimstone and sweat, it is the way out. The last area of the tent is half open where the patrons return their shields and wooden swords and claim their prizes for what victories they accomplished. Younger children get pieces of hard candy and especially brave children are given their wooden swords to keep, often being knighted by Piwowar for service to the Crown and King. Older boys who play the game get to keep their swords and win a kiss on the cheek from the beautiful dungeon mistress.

Opposite from the end of *Bedizen's Traveling Dungeon* is generally a stand or a cart where a merchant associated with the carnival sells mugs of lukewarm ale. After the stifling heat of the canvas tent, even lukewarm is often good enough for a parched throat.

Plot Hooks
Half Troll Seeks Experienced Troop - Bedizen has unexpectedly been called back to see his ailing mother on her deathbed. Obviously upset, the half-troll is looking for several trustworthy PCs to operate his attraction while he is away. Instead of monsters, the PCs get to be the monsters, and get whacked by five year olds with swords and by testosterone overdosing 14 year olds looking to show off. The real fun comes when they get to decide what their routine will be since none of them can really pull of being an ogre.

Missing, 4 year old and pet - A child has gone missing and no one can find where the little rapscallion has gotten off to. Unbeknownst to the operators of the Traveling Dungeon or the Carnival of Forgotten Souls, one of their numbers is a Cultist of Arrkrash. The protrayal of his demonic master] as a thing to be bludgeoned by children has deeply offended the cultist. To avenge the ghost of Arrkrash, the cultist has enchanted one of the braziers in the canvas dungeon to teleport hapless victims at random, depositing them far from the carnival.

It's Carnival Time!
Bedizen's Traveling Dungeon is much like a haunted house ride in a traveling carnival, it's not really that scary and once a rider passes the age of 10 or 12 it just gets to be a bit silly since the wires on the skeletons are a bit obvious, as is the pressboard under the faux brick paint job. Young children can be frightened, while older boys can either go for the kiss, or to impress their teenage sweethearts with their mock courage. It's all just a game to be played for a little while and then back to reality.

Hazards
The biggest hazard associated with the Traveling Dungeon, and indeed with almost any part of the carnival is that of fire. Many of the canvas tents are illuminated with braziers of wood or charcoal and if a stray bit of fabric catches fire, it only takes seconds for the rest of the heat dried material to catch flame. Aware of this risk, the braziers are carefully watched, and the canvas is inspected daily for frays and tears and spots where it gets too hot.

Another hazard comes in the form of people who don't play by the rules. Most of the performers who work in the tent are tougher individuals, and have on a degree of armor and padding. With wooden swords and the carnival outside, some take it upon themselves to really beat the crap out of a performer with their wooden sword. Rarely this is a problem since the performers are well trained, and Piwowar is an actual mercenary and no stranger to drawing real steel. Such individuals are escorted from the carnival and told not to return.

The Final hazard is children getting scared and lost. It is easy for a child to slip under a canvas wall and get lost into another room, or into a backstage area where the performers rest between runs. No harm has yet fallen on anyone as the performers almost as a rule like children, no matter how small and grubby they may be.

Thieves' Guild

By Aki Halme

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Invitation
To break into the thieves guild, the PCs need to get an invitation. Contact can be made by entrapment, bribery, or tracking low-level thieves into safehouses. Regardless of the method, the challenge at this stage is the TG internal security.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

New members of the thieves' guild are not cleared for sensitive information - big crimes, major meetings, more important safehouses, crucial contacts, etc. Advancement is kept slow as a safeguard against infiltration; by the time a member advances to positions of access and responsibility the TG leadership will have accumulated a considerable file of information on him, and the new member has been implicated in enough heinous crimes that there is no easy turning back. Here the challenge is to defeat the catch-22, getting access without getting stuck in the TG web.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Digging deeper the PCs will get hints that not all is as they expected, not in the TG, the town, or their mission. Are the thieves truly a wicked force, or a heroic resistance to oppression from the ruling class, helping the weak with some portion of their funds? Are they the true patriots of the town, and the corrupt leadership under the influence of a foreign power? Are the ones who sent the PCs also on the employ of the thieves' guild, and the mission a part of a power struggle?

Maybe the PCs will get followers - adoring youngsters or a romantic interest, who sees a PC as an awesome robin hood style figure. In a situation like that it will be hard to betray the guild and invite a sweeper team to torture and maim or execute everybody. Intrigue, doubt, betrayal, and mixed motivations make it hard for the PCs to continue effectively.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The mission will involve a battle with a highly skilled thief, possibly an assassin, possibly with other capabilities and maybe a killer team of his (her?) own. This may be a security chief, another highly skilled thief - perhaps even the crime boss himself or family member thereof.

To get this far the team must have made the battle necessary - perhaps by shaming the boss into a duel that he needs to restore his grip on the guild, or perhaps this is a vengeance.

In any case, the battle ground and/or the time may be chosen to enhance the strengths of the NPCs and make them shine, giving the PCs a serious fight even if they in a fair fight would outgun their opposition. Shadows and traps and secret passages could well be a part of this. Further, the strengths of the PCs may be largely known to the enemy, whereas the enemy may have kept something (or everything) hidden from the PCs.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The PCs may have contributed to making the town a better place, and their patron may reward them for it. Or they may find themselves drawn into TG power struggles that tend to involve severed horse heads in the bed, garrote attacks, poisoned food and mysterious accidents. If there is little monetary reward they will at least learn more about the place they live or work in.

'Ringed'

By fadeaway1978

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

A kender rogue finds a ring, and offers to sell it to a group of adventurers sitting at a table at an inn. He sells it to another rogue, who tries to read the inscription on the inside of the ring.

The inscription on the inside of the ring, In elvish, says "Free Entrance!" When the rogue reads it aloud, everyone at the table and within 5 feet suddenly are transported into a room in a dungeon. There is 1 exit to the room, with a locked door. When one of them opens it, they are attacked by zombies.

The exit is actually a long ell-shaped hallway. When one unwise adventurer says he will check it out, without waiting to see if it's trapped or anything, steps on a pressure plate, which opens a door around the turn in the hallway, allowing the next set of monsters in, several dire rats. Once the adventurer steps off the pressure plate, the door closes. If he steps back on it, the door opens again. Once they all kill the dire rats, they have to figure out how to keep the door open. The door itself slided up and down in a slot and has no keyhole or knob, and is extremely heavy.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

This room has 3 sections actually...one section has a pool in it, deep and murky, which seems to have a current in it. A dire rat jumps in and dives under, doesn't reappear. There are various rotting items in the room, barrels, rusty bits and pieces of armor, etc. There are 2 doors, one is locked. Near the left-hand door, which will NOT open, is a boobytrapped and hidden trapdoor that falls into a pit. The right-hand door is open leading to a bloody altar and a cell, blood stains litter the floor and altar. In the shadows lurks a black pudding, which attacks them. Anything metal that touches it dissolves. (My group fed the pudding thing junk instead of fighting it, coaxed it over to the cell door and got it to melt the bars of the cell so they could go inside.)

Room Three: Trick or Setback

In the locked cell they find a hidden journal that has a diary in it from one of the prisoners, saying this was the dungeon of an evil necromancer who turned all his captives into zombies. The journal was clasped with a jewelled clasp. They find a key ring on the floor of the cell. One of the keys on the ring fit the left-hand door, which opened to a treasure of loot, and had a stairway going down.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Once down the stairs, the adventurers found a room with a pool of acid, with some small islands of stone, lots of junk around like barrels, benches, tables, chairs. In a far corner was a large statue of some creature. There is a door in the upper left of the room, but there's no keyhole or knob again. It also seems to slide up into the ceiling. The statue isn't actually a statue, but is a basilisk, which wakes and starts fighting with the group.

There are trap doors in the islands inside the acid pool. Some lead to loot, some to booby traps, one to a room with only a lever...and a slow leak of acid in the wall of the pit. When the level is pulled, the door in the room above unlocks and raises.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Room five is the wizards library, with many rotting books, but a few books survive, including a spellbook or two, and the necromancer's journal. There is a chest of gold and gems, including some pearls and other possibly magical stones and artifacts, and a cursed ring of possession. Also in the room are some mundane items like weapons, and armor. In an alcove in the darkest corner is a portal...that drops all the adventurers back at their starting point...at the inn, only they arrive 10 feet above the floor instead of at their table.

The monsters can be adjusted per character levels. My group was low levels, so the basilisk was an elderly half blind one with spikes on it's tail it could throw, like porcupine quills, but it was half blind so it's aim was off slightly. It still did some major damage (and killed off a player who'd quit) and was hard to defeat for my lower level players.

Tomb of a Cleric

By Uri Lifshitz

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The beast barring the entrance

The location is a secluded mountain in a vast and empty country side, the mountain is reputed to be the burial place of a long dead high priest of the evil dragon god <insert_name_of_dragon_god> supposedly buried with his treasures but whose traps kept the loot intact for many years.

Indeed the underground passage is well hidden and barred by great metallic doors that leads to a series of very small and narrow passages barely wide enough for a person to walk through. A dreadful monster that can clone herself guards this place, she attacks the characters at every time simultaneously from both direction (front and back) and escape, continuing this hit and run tactics. Always attacking only two characters and making it hard for the character to attack her, the beast is murmuring, “one may enter, no one may leave” maybe hinting that her role is protecting something.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The gnome village

Past the end of the labyrinth there is a small gnome village that maintain the great tome of the dead priest. The party must find someway to get to the inner hall of the tomb. In actuality the gnomes are very happy people who take delight in their daily work of tending the tomb, they have no religious feelings toward the inner hall. They are there to keep the dead quite and dignified inside the temple. They can be overcome by various ways: sneaking, magic or simple negotiation.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The undead priest

Upon entering the inner hall of the tomb the party see a big sacrileges placed at an angel toward a big stone statue of a dragon and seven stone statues of smaller dragons. The sarcophagus is very richly decorated with the promise of great treasure inside. However once opened the priest inside the sarcophagus comes to life (of

rather to unlife) and tell the party he was cursed to turn into an undead and that he is wiling to give them all the treasures in his sarcophaguses without a fight if they'll only leave him his phylactery which is a hidden diamond amulet behind the back of the big dragon statue. (Why is that a trick? Read on)

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

After that - No matter what the undead will provoke a fight and lose, prompting the party to destroy or take the diamond necklace to prevent the lich from hunting them, the trick here is that the body is just a regular body. The real priest was a dracolich that is entombed inside the big stone statue and the diamond necklace is the key to releasing him – he cant affect live people so he cast a spell on the priest dead body in the sarcophagus and trick the party into releasing him. The party will celebrate their easy victory but when they move the diamond necklace the dracolich will leave his tomb and be free.

The dracolich will mock the party for their arrogance, remind them that as a dracolich they can't kill him and he will regenerate and attack them.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

If this is a short adventure with no follow up – give the party their reward as the treasure and a nice scroll that tell of the brave good cleric who once defeated and entombed the evil dracolich in a stone tomb.
If you plan a continuation – that scroll could have a curse affixed on however release the dracolich until he is really destroyed. Or the dracolich could regenerate and hunt the party, forcing them to search and destroy his phylactery.

Why Like 5 Room Dungeons?

By Johnn 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 limelight 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 the 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 bay guys 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.