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Present

# 5 Room Dungeons

## Volume 07

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,  
Johnn Four and Strolen



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Errors, omissions, or feedback? Please e-mail [johnn@roleplayingtips.com](mailto:johnn@roleplayingtips.com)



# Of Pines and Roses

By valadaar

www.strolen.com

A tough climb for a source of wondrous healing...

This adventure is more suitable for parties lacking both heavy magic and healing. Magic such as flight would make this one too easy, and powerful magic healing makes the reward of this adventure less desirable..

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

### The Forest

Having found a manuscript indicating that some Crystal Roses can be found in the Grove of Marcharin, the PCs have mounted an expedition to harvest the nectar of these priceless flowers, a source of the magical liquid - [Tears of Ashaya](#) - a rare and wonderful source of magical healing. The Tree is located in a wood populated by large numbers of [The Green Ladies](#) which has led to it being shunned by most people.

The Green Ladies will do their best to slay any intruders into this area, using low cunning to set up ambushes, either with themselves or any pets lent them by their queen. In addition, they will have made natural traps (generally spiked pits) to further impede intruders. Finding the tree itself is not difficult - it is a immense pine tree which can be picked out for miles.

**Complication:** The [Queen of the Dark Wood](#) is aware of the special nature of this area and if the PCs are a strong threat will have sent some other [Pets](#) to aid her Ladies.

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

### Oaken Grove

The base of the tree is surrounded by a maze of [Broad Oaks](#) that contains lots of dead ends and the occasional dangerous plant. To add to the difficulty is that the tree was a [Trailbane Pine](#) before it was magically mutated to its current gargantuan size. The PCs will have a tough time navigating the relatively small maze, due to effects of the tree.

1. **Aura of uncertainty** Any divinations used within 300 feet of the tree will be wildly inaccurate due to an easily detectable aura of chaos.
2. **Confusion** The tree continually emits a cloud of fine pollen which serves as a minor neurosurpressent causing confusion and second-guessing making navigation and decision-making difficult.
3. **Attraction** Any within 300' of the tree will tend to come back to it. "Hey, haven't we seen this tree before." (groan). "Yep..."
4. **Magnetic Disruption** The tree will throw off compasses and will act as magnetic north. PCs could use this property to avoid the tree if they are aware of it.
5. **Discord** Each time the tree is encountered (due to the Attraction, for example), those encountering it will be subject to increasing levels of magically induced frustration which will fray their nerves. At some point it may explode into violence, especially if the social dynamics of the group were strained to start with.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

Climbing the tree is difficult - the massive branches are quite sparse - generally more than 10' apart. The PCs will either need some means to attach themselves to the tree, or use grappling hooks or similar tools to work their way from branch to branch. The 5th property of the Trailbane, Discord, will likely also impede the PCs.

The tree is about 300' high at the top, where the flowers are located, requiring about 30 branch to branch transitions per PC, so dexterity, teamwork and climbing skills are essential. As for magical aids, the aura of chaos about the tree might lead to some undesirable side-effects.

**Complication:** The tree is occupied by [Selvaks](#) who will contest the climb.

**Complication:** The tree itself is occasionally dropping basket-sized pine-cones which might knock someone off the tree if struck.

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

### The Guardian Owl

Mutated through the combined effects of the chaotic Trailbane Pine, and the divine nature of the Crystal Roses, an owl which had roosted here has been transformed into a powerful guardian who will not take kindly to being disturbed. It is only indirectly guarding the Crystal Rose, as it is unaware of its existence. It does, however, have a nest full of hatchlings which makes it highly territorial.

The owl, being able to fly, will engage in hit-and-run tactics. Its touch is electrified, causing significant extra damage and increasing the likelihood of a fall due to convulsion. Though not of the scale of a lightning bolt, the increased chance of a fall from this height is deadly.

The owl itself is now nearly 300lbs and has a huge 15' wingspan. Its claws are razor sharp and have a crystalline appearance.

**Complication:** Inclement weather could start, making holding on to the tree and conducting combat that much more difficult. The Owl will be reckless due to the perceived threat to its brood.

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

### The Rose

The Tears of Ashala can be derived from the [holly-like plant](#) found at the top. If the PC's have slain the owl, they may also take the owlets as prizes as well, for they fully share their parent's mutation and will fetch a pretty penny.

**Complication:** The guardian Owl's mate, an even larger and now even more angry mutant owl can return - ideally at an awkward moment...

**Complication:** The Rose is not currently in bloom, but appears to be just about ready. The PC's might have to camp out at the top of this very high tree for some time waiting for them to bloom.

**Complication:** [Crystal Hornets](#) are just a perfect natural hazard to add here, if desired.



# The Tomb of Agellar

By Dragonlordmax

<http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4297>

This is the tomb of an ancient knight, later made politician. He fought in countless battles, and his fabled armour is said to have been buried with him.

## Background

Long ago, during the reign of Emperor Haius the Magnificently Obese, the name Agellar was spoken throughout the land. Some spoke of him reverently, others as if he were a sick joke played upon them by the emperor. But all agreed that he was one of their ruler's favorites. And perhaps even more so, they spoke of the Coat of Diamonds, an impenetrable suit of armour granted him as a gift from the emperor.

When he died, he was buried in a small tomb in the Plains of Aganderis, where he could watch over his wandering kin for eternity.

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

### The Shrine

The main portion of the tomb is a shrine built to honor Agellar. A small monument sits at the far end of a wide hall, depicting a rearing horse with a richly-clad rider. On the monument's bottom is a small inscription:

"To he who carried our army to more victories than any other, I, Emperor Haius III, offer a salute. Rest peacefully, my old friend."

The inscription is in the language of said long-dead empire, but it is not unreasonable that a PC may know it.

Long troughs of water line both of the hall's edges, and an observant character notices that water cycles through them, apparently refilling from some sort of natural spring.

Although the floor is quite dusty, a small, ever-present breeze wafts the dust slowly out the open exterior door.

The only obvious exits are the open door leaving the tomb, and a small door on the right hand wall, which leads to Room 2. However, the head of the horse on the monument twists slightly, opening a secret passage deeper into the tomb (Room 3).

Note that, as the door is always open, any sorts of wild animals could be used as guardians in this room. Perhaps hyenas or lions would work.

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

### The Caretaker's Office

The small door from the shrine leads into this medium-sized office, which is considerably more dusty than the larger room, and which benefits from no breeze.

Although the room holds quite a bit of furniture - enough for two or three people to live comfortably - it's all old and rotting. Everything which would interest adventurers is gone from the room, including all valuables. Indeed, the PC's would be unlikely to benefit from entering this room but for a small twist of fate.

When a PC looks out through the door into the Shrine, he sees that what he previously thought was a breeze is, in fact, a ghost, sweeping the dust slowly out the door.

Once a PC has seen the ghost, he will not become unable to see it unless he deliberately stops looking at the spectre. Other PCs, however, will be unable to see the entity at all until they see it through the door from the office.

### **The Ghost**

The spectre is the ghost of a man known in life as Markian. One of Markian's ancestors swore an oath to the emperor that he and all his descendents would maintain the tomb of Agellar. For centuries, they did so, until one third-born son - Markian - left the tomb, to seek a life outside. This would have been acceptable, for his brothers could have maintained the gravesite, were it not for a band of tomb-robbers.

The plunderers murdered the two caretakers, and their wives and children, for refusing to reveal the entrance into the tomb. Markian never learned of the slaughter, nor did he have any children, and so when he died, his spirit was trapped in the material world by his ancestor's oath, and would be forever, for he had no offspring to pass the duty onto.

Once Markian is seen, he can be easily conversed with, and he is quite willing to do so, for he has had little human contact over the centuries. Indeed, he has grown tired of his duties, and seeks to end them, caring little for the sanctity of the grave.

He will tell the PCs how to open the secret door into Room Three in exchange for their help sweeping. He wants the entire room clean, and only for this is he willing to reveal his knowledge. If the PCs are particularly helpful - say, they summon something to help him clean forevermore - he may even tell them how to bypass the traps ahead.

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

### **The Hall of Death**

The secret door opens to a long, narrow, and dark staircase leading down. At the bottom lies a hallway, with a T-intersection. The stairs end at one of the two top-pieces, and a large iron door adorned with carvings and images of runes for curses and plagues and other such unpleasantness sits at the end of the other. Down the intersecting hallway is a lever, which, if pulled, opens the iron door.

Unfortunately, the hallway leading to the lever is full of traps - tripwires, pressure plates, etc. Unless the PCs are careful, they'll probably meet a messy end, or at least take a lot of damage. Indeed, the way is sufficiently dangerous that even the trip back isn't riskfree, as there are more dangers than one could hope to set off on one trip.

Fortunately, there exists a way to disarm the traps all in one go. One of the stones on the wall beside the trapped hall can be pushed in slightly. This sets the mechanisms ajar, and the traps won't go off when the PCs descend the hall. The traps can be reset by pushing in a stone on the opposite side of the trapped hall. This realigns the mechanisms, arming the traps and pulling the other stone slowly back to its original position. Note that it doesn't matter which one is pushed first - each stone can set and disarm the traps.

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

### **The Betrayal**

Once the lever has been pulled, and the door opened, Markian turns on the PCs. With the one obstacle he feared now removed (he worried that there might be a curse on the door), he believes that it is time to put into action a plan he devised long ago. Markian thinks that, should he destroy the corpse of Agellar, he will be free of his ancestor's oath. Uncertain whether the PCs would be willing to overlook tomb-desecration, he intends that they never find out.

Once the PCs pull the lever, Markian reactivates the traps, hoping to confront them in a flurry of dart volleys and fire traps. Markian needs to become semi-corporeal to push the stone, and will thus be visible to the PCs. After activating the traps, he rushes down the hall to attack them, hoping to force them to move hastily. As Markian is not fully corporeal, he cannot set off the traps, although some of them can probably affect him.

Because of the Oath, Markian cannot actually be killed, and will eventually rematerialize in the Shrine, assuming the PCs don't decide to destroy Agellar's corpse.

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

### **A Cruel Surprise**

When the adventurers pass through the once-sealed door, they find themselves in the burial chamber. The room contains a fair number of coins, and perhaps some jewels and jewelry. More noticeably, an enormous sarcophagus sits in the room's center, and the PCs will likely be disappointed upon opening it.

The first thing they will likely realize is that Agellar is a horse. True to legend, he has been buried in his armour - a diamond studded suit of leather barding. Although certainly worth a large sum, and just as protective as is claimed, this is probably not what the PCs were looking for when they decided to sack the tomb.



## **Deserted Island**

**By Nik Palmer**

The players find themselves on a deserted island and must survive until they are rescued or can escape.

### **Room One: Entrance and Guardian**

#### *The Giant Boar*

A Giant Boar has two sows and four piglets. It is protecting its territory, which has the only freshwater stream on the island.

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

The tallest stand of trees on the island is home to a giant poisonous spider. It is also the source of the freshwater stream on the island.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

The crazy old shipwrecked pirate! Who holds a clue, item, or secret to the group escaping the island or finding their destiny?

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

*Giant Wasp Nest*

A nest of giant wasps or bees is stirred up! These arm long bugs are angry and stinging!

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

*Giant Eagles*

On a high point with medium trees, rests a pair of giant golden eagles. They are raising a clutch of three chicks. The Eagles can provide advice on where land is at, where ships travel, what can be found on the island.



## Henge of Ascension

By Nik Palmer

When the players must meet a divine being, deity, or sage. Flavor the tone and type of conflicts to suit the sought entity.

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

**Earth Wall:** Becomes a physical challenge the player must climb/overcome physically. The earth wall ring saps the strength and vigor from anyone who attempts to cross it.

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

**Ditch Moat:** A gully that draws out the players most painful moment or weakness. Players must have the will to proceed.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

**Stone Circle:** Unless you touch the correct stone first, you can not enter (Riddle, puzzle, Question, debate).

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

**Eye of the Storm:** Floating balls of blue light send out shocks of electric blasts. A Storm's Eye for each player confronts them in the stone circle.

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

**The celestial guardian:** After defeating the Celestial Guardian will appear and answer 1 question, offer 1 miracle, or discuss one topic of philosophy, history, or religion.



# Taking Sides

By Uri Lifshitz

## Room One: Entrance and Guardian

### The sheriff at the town

The sheriff is waiting for the party at the entrance to the shit hole of a city where they were planning to negotiate for a new job. The sheriff doesn't like there kind around here and will appreciate it if they'll leave. This encounter will determine the tone of the whole adventure – it could be blunt and bloody or subtle or sneaky.

## Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

### Offers

The local crime lord of the town while posing (but not too well) as a wealthy innocent merchant wants to hire the party to get rid of the opposing gang of criminals. Two streets later the leader of the opposite gang (posing as a leader of the poor people of the city) try to hire the party to save the city from the crime lord saying he is the real problem.

Since both meetings are in crowded location the result should be a role-playing game of wits where the party could maximize the offer or set the two groups against each other. Try to make it so that the party will not be able to kill both of the groups together.

## Room Three: Trick or Setback

### Reinforcement

The sheriff requested help from a nearby larger city; a group of skilled lawmen arrives to town and threat the party to stop making troubles in the city. This make both of the crime group very annoyed and worry and they start to threaten the party into action by the next day or both of them (separately) will kill them.

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

### Battle

The party is forced into battle, they could either fight one of the crime groups or the other, or the lawman or to be creative (pit one group against the other or start an uprising of the citizens or rob all sides and skip town).

## Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

### Outcome

The outcome depends very much on the actions of the party but no matter what – they will have between one and three new mortal enemies. If they defeated any of the group they should get their cache of hidden valuables. Note that if any two groups is defeated then the third one takes over the town, making the party either heroes of the group or wanted outlaws.

Note: Some elements were taken from the general storyline of “Yujimbo”.

# 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.

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