

Strolen.com and RoleplayingTips.com
Present

5 Room Dungeons

Volume 08

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,
John Four and Strolen



Thanks to the following sponsors who supplied prizes for the 5 Room Dungeon contest held September 2007:



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



To Sell a Gem

By David Hickman

This is a five room encounter, where the rooms are actually towns and or cities. This can be for any size party of any level. With a few changes it can also be used in any genre of RPG.

Story Line:

Seaton Cheetock is a conman/thief extraordinaire, who often assumes various disguises. He is, for the most part, non-violent, and uses his charisma and talent of talk to avoid conflict. Often he will abandon the prize to avoid a fight or being captured.

Two days ago Seaton was in the City of Longview, and attended a showing of gems and jewelry. While there, he noted a very well cut and valuable gem which he made plans to steal that very night.

Seaton would never have stolen the gem had he been aware that most merchants and dealers have seen the gem and know who its rightful owner is. It wasn't until Seaton tried to sell the gem to Potsworth Addison, a secrete dealer of stolen gems and jewelry that he found he could not sell the gem at any price. Potsworth explained that Seaton would do well to leave town quickly.

Seaton left right away. He made it as far as Hollow Brook, a small town about five days travel from Longview. Here his funds ran out and he was desperate to be rid of the gem. He also noted that the authorities seemed to know where to look for the gem but not who possessed it. It was at this time that his cohort in this saga began to complain that he wanted his cut and would tell the authorities if Seaton wasn't forthcoming soon. Seaton disposed of him with a very rare, powerful, yet slow acting poison.

At this point Seaton devises a plan to find a suitable "mark" to pawn the gem to. His plan is simple, pass the gem off for a fraction of the value and make his way back to Longview where he could blend in with the crowds.

Enter the Party.

Primary Characters:

1. **Seaton Cheetock**, a thief (con artist) wanted in several locations for a very long list of crimes. Not many months ago he took the name and title of Lord Roland Farthington. To give his new disguise credibility, he used the name of the real Lord Farthington because that particular Lord disdains visiting such drab locales.

Statistical data: Seaton should be 5 levels above average party level. His skills revolve more around stealth, slight of hand, and disguise. He will not fight unless no other option is available, trusting to his gift of talk and disguise. He will have two more disguises which he readily uses. Success rate for disguises is 90%.

2. **Magistrate Carlos Pemberton**: Government Official who will preside over the trial and pass judgment if the party fails in their defense. He has no special abilities, however, the GM should role play him as a no nonsense individual who takes his job very seriously. He will be fair and impartial.

3. **Captain Thomas Berman**: The High Sheriff of the surrounding county. His stats should be at least 5 levels above the highest level warrior/fighter PC. He commands a dozen deputies. They will fight if necessary and moral will be high. It would be wise for the party to get/be on Berman's good side, as he has sway with Magistrate Pemberton. If the party is honest and doesn't try anything silly, he should be an easy mark for help.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Hollow Brook

Hollow brook is where the PCs will encounter "Lord Farthington" the first time. The town is more village than actual town. Some 100 residents. Town watch consists of 10 common citizens with clubs or similar devises.

Unless the PCs do something to bring attention to themselves they should have no conflict with local law enforcement. Lord Farthington will approach the party at some time in the early morning, expressing the desire and problems of selling a very valuable gem. He states he is pressed for time and his footman has recently passed away from some unknown disease. He also states that he is unfamiliar with the sale of such drab trinkets. He offers a deal to the party that consists of them selling the gem for a given amount (3/4 of actual worth), all he asks is for 1/2 of the price up front as a good faith gesture, the remainder to be delivered to him in the town of New Hope in five days, however he states that he may be able to wait one additional day before going to the authorities. He also states that any price acquired over and above his asking price the party may keep as their own. He states that he will await the party at the town of New Hope farther to the south. If asked he will say that he has acquired transportation that leaves in a few hours leaving him no time to dispose of the gem. He will seem to the party to be distraught with events at the moment.

Once the party agrees Farthington will depart and the PCs may try to sell the gem in Hollow Brook. This will be their first encounter with economics. The merchant should express a great desire to purchase the gem, but alas, there isn't enough gold/money in all of Hollow Brook to pay for such. He will state that given a week or more he could arrange for such funds to be available but it would be impossible today.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Windham

Not much more than Hollow Brook but with only one merchant and a tinker will be there as well, neither of which can produce the required amount of gold. Windham is approximately one days travel from Hollow Brook.

Here the merchant will express a desire to purchase the gem but alas it will take about 5 days to acquire the necessary amount of gold. The tinker will shy away from the gem as if it had some kind of curse upon it and will not speak of it further.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Hook Latch

Hook Latch is about one days travel from Windham and has 3 merchants but isn't much bigger. All three merchants express a desire for the gem but have the same problem it will take about 5 days to gather the funds.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Lands End

Lands End is a small city, not as large as Longview but still in the city category (approx. 1000 inhabitants). Here the Party will find a merchant that tells them:

Merchant: "Aye lads, I can be gettin the coin you require. If you can come back in one hour, I'll be havin the price for ye."

Once the Party leaves he will close shop and hustle away to the High Sheriff Captain Thomas Berman, having recognized the gem for what it really was, and knowing it carried a hefty reward.

When the Party returns in one hour the merchant will be all smiles up until the Sheriff springs his trap and captures the party. (Note: The sheriff intends to capture the party while they have the gem. He will introduce himself and state that he is the High Sheriff and that they should give up their weapons and come with him. If the party fights the sheriff will not listen to anything they have to say later. If they cooperate the sheriff will listen with an open mind.)

Once captured the party is brought before the City Magistrate Carlos Pemberton. He will read the charge(s) against them and ask if they have anything to say on their behalf. This is a serious person, he will not abide obvious lies or half truths. If the party is honest, the Magistrate will allow all but the one who actually had the gem in his/her possession to bring Seaton to justice. The High Sheriff, Thomas Berman, will vouch for the party if they didn't fight him earlier. He will also offer to accompany the party in the hunt for Seaton.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

New Hope

If the party hurries they can actually make it to New Hope in time to meet Seaton as described. If they are late, Seaton will have changed disguises but will be within viewing distance of the meeting place in hopes of the PCs arriving although late.

(GM NOTE: From this point you may play it out as you see fit, Berman knows Seaton by sight from various descriptions and actually having almost caught him once. Remember Seaton will not fight to the death but will either try to runaway or surrender as the situation merits).

Flesh it out as needed but this can be inserted into any campaign map at any time. (Side quest anyone?).



Place of the Embalmers

By Wulphere www.strolen.com

Before the honored dead are placed in their sarcophagi of alabaster, they are brought to the villa of the embalmers.

Prologue: Outside the Halls of the Dead

As the night winds gusted and howled, the iron-shod portal of the Minari family's villa rattled ominously. Hidden in the shadows of the doorway, a group of men furtively labored, hoping the weather's vagaries would conceal their stealthy entrance. Their dark cloaks billowed and whipped in the wind as they readied themselves for the grisly task ahead of them.

With a metallic click, the lock opened and the intruders stalked into the dark courtyard beyond. The frantic screams of the place's inhabitants could barely be made out over the mournful cry of the wind.

Within the lands of the Free Cities, few groups are more reviled than those who do the unpleasant labor of embalming the dead. Considered pariahs, defiled by their contact with the deceased, their unclean company is feared by the superstitious commoners and avoided by the fastidious nobles. Cast out from society, the

embalmers dwell apart from the folk of the city, dwelling in the shunned hamlet known as the Place of the Outcasts.

Despite the disgust and superstitious fear that surrounds these folk, no one evades the embalmers' company forever. Only the truly destitute are buried without any preparation whatsoever, and the burghers and gentry all eventually come to the dreaded halls of the embalmers. Despite the stigma of their trade, some embalmers become quite prosperous: Catering to the city's nobility, the Minaris are such a family.

Opening: "Bad Men are Killing Everyone!"

The player characters are returning to town, delayed long past nightfall by unusually foul weather or similar troubles, when a small child suddenly darts out of the darkness. The frightened lad, filthy and clad in torn nightrobes, desperately pleads for their aid: His family has been attacked by "bad men"!

Those questioning the frantic boy may learn that "bad men" broke into his family's villa and began "killing everyone!" None of the bad men saw him, so he climbed over the wall and got away. He will beg the player characters to come and save his family. If the characters are willing to help, the child runs toward the villa, worry for his family lending speed to his steps.

Those calming the child somehow may learn more: He is named Davyth Minari, the youngest child of the Minari family of embalmers. They have a villa in the Place of the Outcasts, where their home and workshops are.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The Minari Villa

The Minari family's villa is surrounded by a stout wall, with a good lock on the door and shards of pottery on top to discourage intruders. Within the walls, a large structure houses their business, with their family housed above. Although the villa is rather large, years of weather and decay have cracked and damaged its wood and pried at its stonework: The Minari are successful embalmers, but they are not wealthy.

Approaching the villa, the player characters are likely to notice that the villa's outer gate is ajar: The lock was damaged when the intruders broke in. Within the courtyard, a group of the Roekill Bandits wait in ambush, tasked to ensure that no one interrupts the brigands in their murderous raid. Armed with a motley assortment of cast-off gear and weapons looted from previous victims, no two of these men match.

The Roekill Bandits are ruthless highwaymen known to prey on travelers near the city, each one a vicious killer. They generally avoid coming so close to town, however: Only a truly remarkable prize could tempt them to risk capture that way.

If brought down alive, these brigands may be intimidated into revealing their group's true goal: A wealthy (and secretive) patron hired them to seize a corpse from the embalmer's workshop. The remains in question are those of Lord Lockeburn, a favored counselor to the Crown. After they are embalmed, his remains will be interred in the great cathedral on [Regency Boulevard](#), far beyond the reach of mere bandits. While Lockeburn's corpse is being embalmed, however, it is vulnerable.

It is possible to get the upper hand over the bandits by asking Davyth about where he climbed the wall: The cracked stonework there makes it an easy climb, and the pottery shards warding the top broke off long years ago. Characters using this route to secretly enter the villa may sneak past the Roekill sentries. Alternatively,

the bandits are more easily spotted from the inside of the courtyard, so the player characters may wish to mount an ambush of their own.

Unfortunately, Davyth is likely to flee into the darkness while the player characters duel with the brigands. He will not be found again if this occurs.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The Chamber of Preparation

After entering the workshop of the embalmers, the characters will find a cool workroom, filled with tables. Within, several small braziers burn aromatic woods, filling the chamber with a pungent odor and flickering reddish illumination. The wood's scent is vaguely irritating, like burning cedar chips, but the nauseating stench of death proves even more potent.

Many of the bloodstained tables hold bodies, each shrouded to keep insects off. Undeterred by the braziers' pungent smoke, hundreds of flies buzz back and forth, making concentration almost impossible for anyone in the room. They are especially drawn to large vessels that stand by each table. These sealed containers hold entrails and other tissues removed from the corpses as part of the embalming process. These containers are emptied regularly, the material within treated as wastes, but several filled jars await removal.

This chamber of death holds more than remains. One of the Minari family members, a girl named Evena, hid from the vicious bandits and concealed herself among the corpses here. If the player characters discover her hiding place beneath a shroud, they will need to quickly convince the outcast girl that they aren't with the highwaymen, or the terrified maiden may tear into them with a gore-encrusted knife.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The Ablution of the Departed

Several large ceramic tanks dominate this room, each approximately the size of a bathtub or sarcophagus. Each contains a mixture of preservative oils, herbs, and alcohol used in the embalming process, and a few hold partially prepared corpses. Large storage jars and barrels hold various herbs and unguents used to anoint the dead.

One of the bandits has ransacked this room. A hideously-scarred rogue named Evrard One-Ear, he was told that precious spices and golden amulets lay hidden here, treasures meant for the burial of Lord Lockeburn. In his search, the brigand has dumped out jars of distilled alcohol, torn through stacks of linen shrouds, and shattered barrels of fragrant oils, leaving the chamber a jumbled mess. Spilled liquids, shredded cloth, tumbled corpses, upended furniture and shattered crockery make the footing treacherous and movement difficult.

Unfortunately for the foolish One-Ear (along with anyone nearby), he is likely to drop the torch he's holding and reach for his sword the moment that someone confronts him. The fool's reflexes are far faster than his ability to reason, for flammable liquids cover much of the floor and have even run into adjacent hallways. In seconds, the area will become a raging conflagration: One-Ear is likely to be the first victim of his unwitting booby-trap. Aggressive characters who rush in to offer battle may share One-Ear's doom, sliding and tripping on the slippery floors and trapping themselves in a chamber of raging flame.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Only a Fool Fights in a Burning House

The remaining Roekill Brigands had taken the other family members hostage and were torturing them to extort the locations of any additional valuables that are hidden in the embalmers' home and work areas. The stubborn family of embalmers refused to yield, even as they broke Master Embalmer Gralden Minari's legs and beat his wife Doela unconscious. Even Master Minari's loyal apprentice has been savagely beaten, but refused to talk.

The bandits' cruelty was cut short when they discovered the building was on fire. Grabbing the treasures that they had already found, they abandon their hostages and began searching for an escape. Unfortunately, they are likely to encounter the player characters first. Throwing down their loot, they draw their weapons and furiously attack those who interfered with their plans.

These men are not haphazardly armed minions, like the bandits in the courtyard. Instead, they are well-equipped leaders among their bloodthirsty gang. Their leader, Thulhok, is a vicious half-breed, a short, ferret-like barbarian raised in the lowest gutters in the land. He boldly risks attacks from his enemies' front line in attempts to get behind them and tear into their leaders with his jagged-edged falchion.

Thulhok's followers are little better. To a man, they are hateful predators without honor or compassion. Their word means nothing to them, and they would gladly surrender if it gave them a chance to slip a hidden blade into their enemy's back.

(Of course, this encounter will be very different if the player characters flee the site immediately when the fire breaks out, or if they avoid letting the fire catch in the first place. Characters who stop the fire entirely may surprise the bandits while they are still tormenting their victims, while those who flee are likely to miss the bandits altogether.)

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

"Save My Family!"

The Minari family is tied up upstairs, battered and broken. They will plaintively call for help, coughing and choking as waves of heat and billowing smoke slowly fill their chambers. Only heroes of true mettle will dare face the spreading fire to save them. Master Minari is too injured to walk, while his wife is unconscious from her beating. Their apprentice embalmer, Berent, is feeble, but can help player characters trying to haul his master and mistress from the smoke-filled villa.

(If abandoned by the player characters, the Minaris will certainly perish as the inferno spreads to engulf the entire villa.)

As they try to escape, his voice filled with pain, Master Minari will beg his rescuers to save his son, Davyth. If they try to assure him that his son escaped, he will argue that they are wrong, his son is in a hidden strong-room in the villa, where they keep their valuables. He is quite adamant about this, and will beg his rescuers to at least look. The secret room is off of the villa's solar, below the family's chambers, in the only part of the villa not yet engulfed by the flames. The hidden door is part of a wooden wall painted with images of various saints; it can be opened by pushing hard at the top of the wall.

The Secret Room

Those that dare reenter the burning structure should easily find the secret room, where Davyth is hidden, along with the family's valuables. Those expecting the boy that summoned them to save his family may be in for a shock, however: Davyth is dead, and has been for years. After he fell from the villa's wall, his remains were preserved with all of the embalmer's skill and lovingly placed in a tiny coffin, kept in the family's strongroom. A small coffin sits in the hidden chamber, Davyth's image painted on its lid.

When the invaders stormed the villa, the boy's spirit arose and climbed over the wall to get help: What the characters encountered was merely Davyth's ghost.

The remains of Lord Lockeburn have also been hidden here, secured against would-be thieves. Those rescuing his corpse from an unwanted cremation will earn the gratitude of his powerful noble family.

The leader of the bandits, the vile Thulhok, has correspondence incriminating his patron, Sir Kareth Sherewin, the "gentleman" that instigated the bandits' raid. Long suspected of associating with necromancers and heretics, the notes are grim evidence that Sir Kareth planned to use necromantic arts to draw the deepest secrets of the realm from the dead lips of Lord Lockeburn. Thulhok was expected to destroy these letters, but he kept them against betrayal by his "noble" patron. If Thulhok somehow survives the scenario, he is likely to face an unpleasant fate, for a wise man doesn't betray those who dabble in the dark arts.

If the player characters were enterprising enough to grab other valuables from the strongroom, Master Minari will reward them handsomely. Despite the loss of his family's livelihood, he knows what is truly important, and will richly reward those who rescued his family from the flames.

Embalming in Ancient Times

While many people are familiar with the ancient Egyptian practices of mummification, later funerary practice is largely ignored. In reality, most cultures practice some sort of preservation of the dead, even if it's only intended to keep the remains presentable through the funeral rites and burial (or cremation).

In the Middle Ages, embalmers were not ordinarily vilified as this presented, but in some other parts of the world, they have always been seen with revulsion. The average European was not embalmed, being placed in the churchyard to decay: After a few years, their bones were sometimes exhumed to make room for new bodies. This practice led to the construction of massive ossuaries and catacombs, such as the ones beneath Paris, France.

Prior to the use of preservative chemical injections (in the late 1700s) in Europe, bodies were preserved by removal of some of the internal organs (evisceration), after which they were bathed in alcohol or oils and the tissues were packed with moisture-absorbing herbs. The bodies were then wrapped in tarred or waxed shrouds, which sealed them against corruption. Those remains that were undisturbed by tomb robbers or other vandals have often been found well preserved centuries later. (This means of preservation is what was represented by the details of the Minari family's business.)

Of course, other cultures had even more sophisticated means of preserving their dead. The Chinese, for example, have produced preserved bodies that remain intact and pliable over 2,000 years after they were first interred.



The Nobleman's Daughter

By Dragon Lord <http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4317>

When a young noblewoman goes missing the real cause may not at first be apparent.

Background

Almost six weeks ago Lady Calindy, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Lord Cazalet, disappeared while out on a shopping expedition. She has not been heard from since.

Lord Cazalet is beside himself with worry. In the six weeks since Calindy's disappearance he has had communication from her or from her abductors (and he is increasing convinced that she has been abducted).

No note. No ransom demand. Nothing.

This is all the more worrying because Calindy should be able to make contact herself. She is, after all, studying the magical arts and, although only a trainee mage, she is quite capable of casting a simple message spell.

His Lordship feels that this can mean only one thing: whoever has his daughter is powerful enough to block magical communications, or else rich enough to hire somebody who can.

The fact that such powerful villains seem not to be motivated by greed (if they were they would have demanded a ransom by now) does little to calm his fears.

Where the PCs come in

Lord Cazalet's people have done the best they can, and to fair to them they have discovered some of the pertinent facts. However they have been unable to learn who is holding Lady Calindy or why she is being held.

Even if they could find the kidnappers hideout, confronting villains powerful enough to block magical communications is well beyond their abilities.

They have however learned that Lady Calindy was seen boarding the ferry to the [Dragon Isles](#) along with a young man by the name of Sycol Namara (whom His Lordship believes to be the criminal responsible) not more than one week after her disappearance.

What Lord Cazalet needs are people who are experienced in tracking down elusive hiding places and able to confront powerful villains when they get there. In other words, he needs professional adventurers.

He is prepared to offer a substantial reward for his daughter's safe return as well as covering any reasonable expenses (and in this case he is prepared to be quite flexible on that). He also would not be at all upset if Sycol Namara were to end up dead but he will not actually mention this since he is not a killer (and besides to ask it would be illegal).

If the PCs agree to help he will provide them with a formal letter, complete with his personal seal, stating that they search for the Lady Calindy, that they mean her no harm, and that are acting on his behalf.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Reaching the Dragon Isles is simple enough; all the PCs need do is board the ferry. Alternately, if the PCs

seamanship skills they could hire a boats. The real problem is finding out which of the thirty or so islands the villains taken Calindy to.

Even the most cursory investigation at Fisherman's Cove will establish that neither Namara nor Calindy is there, nor indeed has anybody by these names been there in living memory. However more detailed questioning will reveal that a couple matching their description was in the village about a month ago but that they stayed for only few days. The villagers got the impression that they were a rich couple on their honeymoon. (Note that if the PCs make the connection this is their first clue that the situation may not be exactly as described to them by Lord Cazalet.)

Eventually it will become apparent that they PCs must systematically search every island in the chain, for which purpose they will need to hire a boat (if they have not done so already) and probably a pilot as well, especially if they lack seamanship skills.

Alternatively clever PCs might realize that that if the villains are hiding on one of the uninhabited islands they will need regular supplies brought in from outside. If, and only if, the PCs realize this allow them to locate a local fisherman who does the supply run. They could then bribe, or force, him to reveal the correct island, or maybe even to take them there.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Sycol Namara and Lady Calindy are on Maxon's Island, located some five miles of Dragon Home. Since the only safe landed place is the cove this is where the PCs go, after which the only viable option is to investigate the cave. *{Note to GM: Feel free to have a little fun with Maxon's ghost here if you wish.}*

Exploring the cave will reveal an old, but perfectly safe, tunnel cut into the rear wall. About fifty yards down the tunnel is a recently installed and very sturdy looking, door. Solid oak, iron bound and barred on the inside, there is no way (short of several hours hard labor with heavy cutting tools) to open the door from the outside.

There is neither latch nor handle on the outside, nor is there any evidence of a locking mechanism. This is a door clearly designed to keep people out rather than to keep them in, which seems a curious choice for a prison door (another clue that all is not quite as described).

A thin brass chain hangs from ceiling just outside the door. If this is pulled a bell will ring, followed closely by an irate voice bemoaning the inconsideration of visitors (along with a little inventive cursing for good measure) and a six-inch square panel will slide to one side.

Behind the panel is a [servitor imp](#) in a particularly grumpy mood (aren't they always), who will take one look at the PCs and announce, in his best surly doorman voice, "*You ain't da mistress and you ain't 'er man, so show me ya invite or bugger off*". (Another subtle clue that the PCs may have been misled. Only a wizard can bind a servitor imp and this one clearly refers to his master in the feminine. Although be no means conclusive this does suggest Lady Calindy. Strange that she would bind an imp to imprison herself.)

The imp is of course the doorkeeper and the PCs must convince him to open the door for them. This is by no means an easy task since, like all of his kind he is rude, surly and generally augmentative.

Alternately they could try to trick him. The imp demanded to see an invitation but the PCs do not have one. What they do have is the Lord Cazalet's letter, complete with his personal seal, and the imp (not being partic-

ularly bright) cannot read so it just might be possible to convince the imp that it is in fact an invitation. This, along with a little fast-talking, just might be enough to convince him to open the door.

Of course they could simple kill the imp and bash the door down but that, considering that the imp (like all of his kind) is very tough and the door is very strong, would be going it the hard way (or would it?).

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Beyond the door the tunnel continues for another thirty yards or so before ending in three separate staircases, each of which leads up in a different direction. This is the beginning of a complex labyrinth that leads, after countless junctions, dead ends, switchbacks and loop passages in all three dimensions, to the top of the cliffs.

The PCs are in no real danger here (unless of course the GM wants to have a little fun with them) and they should reach the top safely enough, albeit after a long and tiring climb.

On the cliff tops the will encounter another party similar to themselves (professional adventurers hired by a respectable person for a perfectly legal job). This group is professional, well equipped and clearly the equal of the PCs. *{Note to GM: This is important. It should be apparent from the outset that a fight could easily go either way and would, in any event, likely result in casualties on both sides.}*

Coincidentally (or possibly not) this group is here on similar business to the PCs: they were hired be Gerrard Namara, a wealthy and well respected merchant, to rescue his son Sycol from the clutches of the Lady Calindy, whom Gerrard Namara believes to be an evil sorceress.

The adventurers will initially be very wary of the PCs, thinking them to be minions of Calindy. They do not want a fight if it can be avoided but they are both willing and able to defend themselves if attacked.

What happens next is largely dependant on how the PCs respond. If they elect to talk both groups will, by comparing stories, learn enough to guess the truth. If instead they choose to attack there will be an extremely bloody battle.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

At the top of the cliffs the PCs will find, somewhat incongruously, a neat little stone-built cottage, complete with a slate roof and wooden shutters on the windows. Here Sycol Namara and Lady Calindy have chosen to live in quite self-imposed exile with only a couple of servitor imps to tend to their needs.

The couple well aware of the PCs' presence (Calindy is quite capable of setting up a few alarms and detection spells) but there is not really anything they can do about it. If given the option they are perfectly happy to talk to the PCs (after all, there really isnt much else they can do).

The truth is that they are lovers who eloped together because their respect parents disapproved of their relationship. They had the village priest a Fisherman's Cove married them as soon as they arrived on the island and they have the marriage certificate to prove it (the priests' discretion, and therefore their own privacy, was secured with a sizable donation to the church restoration fund).

They absolutely refuse to return unless and until both of their fathers accept the match. Furthermore, they threaten to kill themselves, should the PCs attempt to force them to do so (and they mean it to).

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The PCs now have the problem of getting paid, and this is by no means as easy as it sounds.

According to their contract with Lord Cazalet they must return Calindy to him safely in order to collect the reward. The key word here is safely; if the girl kills herself before they get back the PCs will get nothing. Therefore they must some way of reconciling Calindy with her father.

Their counterparts (if they were not all killed in scene 3) have a similar deal with Gerrard Namara in respect of Sycol and therefore face much the same dilemma.

Actually the young lovers have already suggested a possible solution. If both fathers will accept their relationship they will gladly return home.

Looks like the PCs may have play arbitrator.



The Great Gate By Davide Quatrini

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

PCs are searching a portal for the far Demiplane of Barimol. The portal (called the Gray Gate) was built millenniums ago by an alien race, and it can be found in a ruined tower in the large Forest of Barim. Nobody knows the exact position of the tower, and PCs must explore the forest extensively before finding it (or they can use magical means). After finding it they must also defeat the guardians: three mechanical chimeras (white, black and blue respectively).

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The iron door of the tower can be opened only pronouncing the correct alphanumeric sequence in front of it. PCs can discover it if they carefully analyze the inscriptions engraved on the door itself. In fact the following incomplete sequence can be found among the inscriptions:

A55 C46 E37 ... (the missing part is, obviously, G28).

Brute force/magical attempts will cause the explosion of the door. If PCs survive, they'll find another door, identical to the first, exactly in the same place (if they cause the explosion of it, then they'll found a third door, and so on).

Room Three: Trick or Setback

In the tower there is a square room that contains a large oval arc made of wood and silver: the Gray Gate. PCs can discover how to activate it reading the ancient runes that cover the room's walls: they must start a fire in front of the portal, using wood taken from the Forest of Barim. The problem is the trap that defends the Gate. In fact the floor is unstable, and it will take fire rapidly (possibly destroying the Gate) if PCs start their fire directly on it. They can avoid the trap using a brazier, for example.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

After activating the portal PCs must defeat its last guardian: the Gate itself! In fact, after the activation, it will polymorph into a wooden golem that uses two huge silver swords as weapons. Defeating it is simple: PCs must only survive for half an hour without hurting the golem (if they destroy it they'll must find another portal for Barimol ^_^). After that time it will return to its original form (activated portal).

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Just before entering the portal a powerful but gentle incorporeal voice will ask the PCs the following question: "Do you want to become members of the Old Race?". If PCs agree they will be transformed into elvish beings made of solid light and will be teleported in the Demiplane of Barimol for training. Otherwise they'll use the portal for their personal purposes, and the voice will also cast a special blessing on them.



Heart of the Dwarves

By Paul Darcy

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Deep within Mt. Burundushar lie the Ancient Mithril Mines of Gabilgathol. Abandoned by the Dwarves in an age long past, it is rumored that the fabled Heart of the Dwarves still remains hidden there. Dismissed by the locals as legend, strange occurrences have caused some of the old-timers to insist that the Heart is indeed the culprit. Perhaps the odd events are strange lights in the sky surrounding the tall, snow-covered mountain or bizarre weather such as a snow storm in mid-summer or dark happenings in the surrounding towns (hauntings, deaths, etc). Regardless, there is only one sure way to find out: start up an expedition and hire adventurers for the task.

The mountain is very tall and snow-covered year-round. The entrance to Gabilgathol is a door hidden deep within a permanently open crevice in a glacier. The door is difficult to locate and the path extremely treacherous. If the physical barriers to the entrance are overcome, there is also the ice elemental guardian to contend with. The elemental may be bargained with for safe passage into the large, columned entrance room and the tunnel beyond. Otherwise, it will attack any who attempt to pass.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The main living area, accessed from the large tunnel off the entrance chamber, is a huge room with a dozen or more tunnels from which living quarters are reached. Only one of these tunnels also leads to the next area of the city. All but that single tunnel are trapped: some with concealed pits, others may use simple trip wires to activate rock slides, and most have multiple traps along their length. The Goblins from the next level make regular forays into this area to check the traps (perhaps another way to find that correct tunnel).

There is an intelligent earth elemental on this level who knows the correct tunnel and also the path to the secret door on the following level that leads into the catacombs. Once again, this elemental may be bargained with, but at a definite cost. There may be a certain earthen treasure, perhaps a sack of ancient, mithril coins or another object hidden down one of the trapped tunnels that the elemental requests in exchange for the information. Or, the creature may want revenge against one of the other denizens of the ancient mining city.

The elemental won't attack first, but will defend itself ferociously if attacked by the party. And, if destroyed, the party will have to do its best to figure out the right path.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The next level is an enormous cavern that twists its way eventually to the very summit of the mountain. On this huge level are several Goblin factions. The Goblins war amongst themselves, fighting primarily over scarce resources needed to survive. Located within the treasure chamber of one of the factions is a secret door that leads to the catacombs--the easiest path once the party figures out which Goblin tribe is the correct one. Otherwise, there are dozens of tunnels on this level, many leading into the mines, but not the correct tunnel to find the Heart. The party could get lost in the mines for a very long time.

It is possible that the PC's could ally themselves with one of the Goblin tribes and assist it to reach the secret door. Such a deal with Goblins, however, should come at a price--possibly all of the treasure in said treasure room in exchange for safe passage.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The catacombs are the resting place of king and commoner alike. There is a large statue on the tomb of the last great Dwarven King. The epitaph may provide a clue as to what awaits and the fate of those unworthy of the Heart. There is a secret door behind the statue which leads into a long, deep mining tunnel with no other entrance. The tunnel opens into a large chamber with a glowing pedestal in its center.

The demon within this mine chamber is a hideous creature. It should be powerful and difficult to defeat. It will not bargain or speak with the PC's and will attack immediately. If defeated, it explodes in a great flash of light.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The Heart of the Dwarves sits upon the pedestal in the center of the demon chamber. It is a huge gem, roughly the size and shape of a Dwarven heart which glows brightly, pulsing like a beating heart, and radiates a great aura of good when picked up. The possessor is immediately restored to perfect health, including the restoration of any lost limbs, organs, etc. The Heart may have other abilities, but its one great power is to grant the possessor one (or more) major miracle/wish(es).

While the Heart was intended be used for great good, it also inspires great envy and greed among others. The demon guardian of the Heart was the last person consumed by lust for it, forever bound (until released by unnatural death) to guard that which it could not in the end possess. There should be a clue to this, perhaps a note or journal left behind by the unfortunate creature chronicling its fate. Indeed, if the possessor attempts to use it for an act deemed unworthy (GM Discretion) then the possessor may begin transforming into its next guardian. After a predetermined time period or its miracle/wish power has been used up, the Heart of the Dwarves should vanish and reappear on its pedestal to be guarded by one or more of those corrupted by lust for it.

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.