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Present

5 Room Dungeons

Volume 09

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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Skanda Biologicals

By Siren no Orakio

<http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4316>

Skanda Biologicals is one of the world's premier producers of Awakened Biological Systems. Now, the party has been asked to penetrate their fortress, and destroy their research. But, can they find the force of will to do so?

This is a Shadowrun Setting Specific Plot / Dungeon, as originally intended to be run. As always, cyber-punk or magical elements may be removed or masqued at will for your own game.

The Setup

The runners are contacted by a fixer who has used their services relatively regularly - This fixer should have a solid rep with the runners, and vice versa. He has a meet with a new Johnson for them. That is, someone new wishes to buy their services. Should they take this meeting, they will be given the address and a time-slot at an upscale restaurant, an Italian steakhouse.

Upon arrival, the maitre'de of the steakhouse will, indeed, verify their reservation, but not before he takes the time to insult any elves that happen to be among the PCs. "Daisy-eaters" is among the most gentle of the epithets he is likely to use, though they will focus on the "traditional" elven dietary habits.

When seated, Mr. Johnson will appear roughly a minute after the party has had enough time to start to get nervous about the meet going sour. He is a tall, and imposing gentleman, of eastern European descent, sporting no obvious cyberware. He does, however, to those who are able to look, radiate magic, though it will be difficult in the extreme to determine the nature of it. He is well disciplined, and well masked. He is powerful, that much is obvious, but is uncertain exactly what he is. Not even his accent is much clue, for it will bear only the faintest traces. A particularly talented ear may determine the accent to be Magyar.

He will explain that Skanda Biologicals has begun to walk down a research path that he and his compatriots do not particularly care to have them complete, and that he would like the results of their research eliminated. For this, he will pay them the sum of 30,000 nuyen - A princely amount. He explains to them that Skanda will have buttressed their security with paranormals, but that he has full confidence in their ability to handle the job. Few real details will be forthcoming from him, however.

The Job

Skanda's primary R&D facility is set up in a relatively decent area of the city, and the surrounding area is mostly mixed commercial and residential area, of varying individual security. Police can be expected to respond to a disturbance in the area within 6 minutes, and openly carrying firepower will probably count as a disturbance, if reported. The building itself is very large in footprint, and surrounded by a fence and over twenty meters of 'green space' between the fence and walls, a raw display of wealth in the tightly packed city. There is, however, a reason for this.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

"Challenge 1 - The Guardians"

On-site security begins at the fence. The yard is rigged with a variety of motion sensors and infrared cameras, the eyes and ears of the security rigger, and wired as he is, he is able to see and hear through these far more effectively and attentively than any joe at a simple bank of security cameras. Should he take note of late night intruders on the grounds, they will be ordered to display their security pass, or face the consequences. Should they not be able to display these passes, refuse to display them, or not match the ids on file, he will unleash the first

line of defense: The hounds. Specifically, seven hell hounds. Well engineered, trained, and appropriately drugged, the hell hounds are a hundred kilos of pure, lupine muscle and pack instincts, with a six meter jet of raw flame to add to their punch. They're hungry, and the drugs in their system prevent them from feeling pain or fear. Runners attempting to cross the green space will find it an interesting time. The roof, meanwhile, is covered by the simple expedient of heavy machine gun turrets mounted atop the HVAC equipment.

Similar, retractable, turrets also cover both the front lobby and the loading docks, and the rigger is capable of aiming and firing all of them simultaneously, with the assistance of the building automatic systems. Throughout the building, he is also capable of deploying a handful of well armed and armored drone units. Finally, on site magical security is provided by a free spirit, who has a personal stake in several of the company's research projects. A creature of quicksilver and shadow, with the ability to duck into the astral and return at will, he will be difficult to pin down and defeat, though he is unlikely to show himself in the first stages of the run.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

"Challenge 2 - The Vaults"

In order to complete their mission, the runners will need to first enter the company vaults, in order to destroy the hard copy of the data, as well as to obtain the required equipment to pass the third challenge - clean room suits. Entering the proprietary knowledge vaults, however, will take one of a few things; The PCs may use central security to generate the necessary RFID card for the maglock system, and add one of the PCs to the list of permitted retinal patterns, they may attempt to hack the system open at the door, which is extremely difficult, they may attempt social engineering before the run in order to obtain the RFID card and even ocular pattern of a person with proper access, or if all else fails, shaped charges will turn the trick... and qualify as a police disturbance, if they haven't already been summoned as backup by the rigger after the death or evasion of the hell hounds.

A general smash and burn of the offline data storage area will do the trick. The runners may attempt to decode the filing system and steal other media, or limit destruction to just the required media, but this will take time that they do not have. A side trip to the main server room may be required.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

"Challenge 3 - Entering the Clean Room"

Entering the clean room is a simple matter, if the runners have had the foresight to grab chem suits from storage. One runner must remain outside to operate the airlock, while the others enter into the 'lock, with the suits on. There is a two minute timer on the doors of the airlock, where each door may only be opened in sequence two minutes after the close of the opposite door, during which the airlock is filled with first a variety of noxious chemicals designed to kill biologicals, then secondly, a 'rinse' cycle of acetone, followed by a quick, heated blow dry. While this is no particular problem for a properly suited individual, an unsuited individual will probably be severely chemical burned, and possibly blinded by the procedure. Furthermore, any caseless ammunition exposed to the process - spare clips, revolvers - will be ruined by the process, and will not fire, and jam the weapon until such time as the goop is cleaned from the gun.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

"Challenge 4 - The Warrior"

Having entered the main laboratory space, the runners will be confronted with a broad array of dead chimeras and other engineered creatures, however, one is alive, and will be able to slip his bonds and fight with the party. It is, or rather was, a human being. Now, he bears so many bio-implants that he has forgotten that humanity. He fights like a savage predator would, a flurry of powerful limbs and swift strikes, using the shadows and stealth to the best of his ability. He is also quite hungry, and is likely to take a chunk out of the runners if not dealt with quickly. Victorious, it will be a simple matter for the runners to enter the sample containment area.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

"Challenge 5 - "We're here to kill that?"

By now, all on site data has been summarily disposed of, all that's left is to destroy the experiment. Thanks to the Johnson, the runners should be prepared to destroy whatever's in a particular cage number. That cage is in the back of the chimera storage area, and rather than the pet-store like stacks that the others are stowed in, this is one of three glass-walled partitions that are, quite clearly, set up to be children's bedrooms and play rooms, and only one is occupied, by what seems to be a sleeping, five year old girl. Her only sin? That would seem to be slit eyes, and a few small patches of scales at a joint or two. If her room is entered, she will most likely awaken, and have a brief moment of panicked terror, before she looks at the runner team with wide, open eyes, and asks in a trembling voice, "Mama said someone would come to take me away from the bad men. Is it you?" Options exist.

The runners can execute her, as the contract calls for. This will result in the runner team hired to break the girl out the next night being reassigned for vengeance. They may attempt to kidnap her, and either provide succor, or sell her to the highest bidder - She is a half-dragon, and having her to exploit her power when she matures is worth a pretty penny. Any runners who keep her, however, will have to deal with the corporation who wants her back and their agents, in addition to the dragon who wants her dead. In any case, escaping the building is only the beginning of their problems...



The Spirit Never Dies

By Ria Hawk

<http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4322>

Parties have a habit of getting out of hand, especially when it's the young and wild generation. Sometimes, parties get a little more than out of hand, if the spirit moves the guests.

Plot Description

The Meyer family is looking to hire someone. Their nine year old son Czeslaw has gone missing. The last time he was seen was when he was going to a party an older cousin had invited him to, a haunted house party. He had gone to other parties with the same cousin before, and had sometimes stayed with his cousin's family for a few days to a week after, but something is different this time.

Not only Czeslaw, but his cousin, and several of his cousin's friends failed to return from their party. Details about the location of the party were sketchy, but there is only one house generally thought to be haunted, and was the likely location of the party. Servants were sent to check out the house, of course. But they didn't

come back, and when one of them was found later, dead, the Meyer family decided to send in someone tougher.

The haunted house isn't hard to find. It's an old mansion on the edge of town, which has been abandoned for years. The story is that it was the home of the wealthy Isaac family, who all perished in some unexplained disastrous manner. Information gathered from various sources indicates that the party guests were planning to hold a séance, which was the reason they decided to hold the party at this house.

The objective is to return Czeslaw Meyer to his very worried parents. The households of the other missing party guests are also adding to the reward offered. While they would like to know what happened, they're more worried about getting their friends and family back safely.

Upon reaching the house, it becomes obvious that someone is here: the house is full of lights.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The Entrance Hall

The easiest way to get in is the front door. If one knocks, it is opened by a surly butler who will rudely tell the party to leave, and then slam the door in their faces. If they decide to just open the door and go in, the butler will attack them. He's a clumsy fighter, but has a certain ferocity that makes him very dangerous. He will earnestly try to kill any intruders. (Indeed, he is the one who killed the previous people sent to investigate.) If the fight goes on for more than five or ten minutes or if he is overwhelmed, he will summon another crazed servant to assist him.

If the PCs break in elsewhere, there's a chance that the butler will be in the area when they do. If he isn't, he or the other servant will arrive within a couple of minutes to discipline the intruders. They cannot be reasoned with in this state.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The Sitting Room

Here the PCs will find a semi-well known medium, who was apparently performing the séance. However, something is wrong. She seems quite dazed and frightened, and thinks she is someone else. (If the PCs ever met her before in different circumstances, she does not recognize them.) She will introduce herself as Miria Isaac, and ask that they leave "her family" in peace. If threatened, she will flee upstairs.

Miria was the name of the lady of the house, when the Isaac family still lived there. However, the Isaacs have been dead for at least fifty years. Anyone with any knowledge of the occult or ghosts can guess that she's possessed by the ghost of the unfortunate woman.

Miria knows what's really going on and will admit as much if approached properly. She knows that she and the rest of her family are ghosts, and will tell the PCs that "Ennis" found a way to bring the family back. During the séance, each family member possessed a different party guest. While the medium was necessary to for this to happen, Miria (in the medium's body) either can't or won't undo what's been done. However, if convinced, she will agree to take them to Ennis.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Upstairs Bedroom

Miria will lead them upstairs to a small bedroom on the second floor. (If they go upstairs by themselves, they are likely to be attacked, either by the crazed servants if they weren't disabled earlier, or by other family members. If they are with Miria, they can go up unmolested.) She tells them that Ennis is inside, and that they will have to deal with him.

If the party researched the Isaacs before actually coming to the house, they would have found mention that Ennis Isaac was the name of the man who owned the house. However, the available records omit one very important fact.

The only person in the room is the boy Czeslaw Meyer, whom they were hired to rescue. He seems relatively unharmed, but the problem is that he's also possessed, by the ghost of Ennis Isaac, Jr. He is the one who arranged the whole mess, as an attempt to bring his family back to life, and he doesn't have any intention of relinquishing his second life. Of course, the difficulty is, the PCs can't kill him.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Upstairs Parlor

Ennis/Czeslaw is small and fast, and has no problem with fighting dirty. At the earliest opportunity, he will run out of the room, into a larger parlor nearby. (Easier to fight, more weapons at hand, and easier access to the rest of the family.)

If the PCs decide on a physical approach, they'll have to subdue him without killing him (preferably without injuring him). The other possessed party guests (all but Miria) will arrive to help Ennis out. (Depending on power levels, they might also have poltergeist-type powers as well.) However, once the boy is subdued, the other "Isaacs" will stop attacking. If he is knocked out, all of the others will either collapse or look very confused.

If the PCs decide to try to talk to Ennis, he'll essentially throw a tantrum, yelling, screaming, and possibly attacking. Eventually, however, assuming that they say the right things, Ennis will eventually just give up and start crying about how he just wanted things to go back to the way they were. When this happens, Miria will enter and say that something to the effect of "It's time to stop."

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Resolution

Either way, once Ennis has been subdued one way or another, ghostly images will emerge from each of the party guests and vanish. A few minutes after, the party guests will wake up, back in their right minds and with very little memory of the past few days for the most part. (If the PCs did not kill the servants who attacked them earlier, the same will happen with them.) If the PCs elected to handle the situation diplomatically, the guests will be found in various rooms in the house.

Czeslaw remembers most of what happened, and if asked, can tell the whole story. A few weeks before the party, he'd been exploring the haunted house, as young boys are wont to do. He'd tripped on the stairs and fallen, knocking himself out temporarily. The ghost of Ennis had leaped at the opportunity it presented, possessing Czeslaw. Then he'd set about arranging for it to be possible for the rest of his family to do the same.

He'd suggested the séance party to his cousin, and hinted that the house was the perfect place to have it. The older people had thought it a splendid idea, and one thing had led to another. During the séance, his plan had worked perfectly. The rest of the ghosts in the house managed to possess various people; when the servants were sent to investigate, two of them were possessed as well (either by family members who hadn't been fast enough to get one of the party guests, or by the ghosts of actual servants who also haunted the place, as the case may be).

Once everything is straightened out, all that is left is to ensure that all the befuddled guests get home and return Czeslaw Meyer to his grateful parents, and collecting their (undoubtedly substantial) reward. If the PCs ended up hurting the boy, the reward will be less, and if they killed him, they won't be given much, if any at all (and may actually find themselves wanted by the law).



Saving Plaque

By Strolen

<http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4326>

The players have a chance to cure the plague that has sprouted up upon their travels. Will they choose to do the right thing and help bring health back to the region?

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

They meet a small child upon the road near sunset. She is perhaps 9 years old wearing a burlap sack as clothes and her face is darkened in the growing shadows of the setting sun behind her. As they get close enough to make out features they see obvious signs of a rash and purple spots covering her exposed body. She is walking in a trance and doesn't acknowledge anybody.

If anybody tries to heal her, whether physical or spell, her eyes will dilate as she looks towards the now visible moon, her arms will swing parallel with the ground and a otherworldly wind will blow her hair and clothes in a dramatic way as she recites the following:

*Of the fifth the fourth the third
Alight the skies will the birds in flight*

*Follow it you may
Follow it you might
You must choose to go
You must choose to do right*

The child will then slump and pass away peacefully. About a minute after she dies a deep exhale will leave her body and a black mist will roll from her mouth and swirl towards the forest. It is quickly out of site in the darkness.

The players may do whatever to the body, it doesn't do anything else.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Once they continue on they will soon see a wagon off the road with two horses still hitched to it. When they investigate they will find two adults that have the same disease the child had. They are slumped in their seats

as if they both died simultaneously and just slumped over. Searching the wagon they will find little of use but they will discover some small articles that would belong to a small child.

As they are investigating a flock of birds will be disturbed not too far in the forest and fly directly overhead. As they look up to follow the trail of birds they will see a faint glow in the low clouds as if emanating from something deeper in the woods.

The light is coming out of the top of a mound. If they go to the top it is a circular rock that is throwing the light upwards. If any of this group touch it, it instantly goes out and a portion of the ground sinks in the shape of a square. They must dig to reveal the door.

On the door, once cleaned, will be eight runes. If anybody can read them they are:

anger death sadness hope life happiness love fate

From what was recited by the child they should choose life hope sadness and the door will open.

Possibilities:

1. There could be others at the site already. The glow may have attracted those within site of it. They may have to fight their way through them. Some may be diseased people looking for a sign. As they will see, actions against these people may have negative effects later on.
2. The person that attempted to heal the child must be the one to do all the tasks or magical traps would be set off.
3. The runes must be chosen in the correct order or magical traps could be set off.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

As they start exploring the series of rooms one of the players finds that they are getting a rash that really itches. As they continue it starts to bruise and perhaps bleed and is getting painful. No healing does anything to it.

The kind of cave system doesn't matter. Could be natural, man made, a labyrinth, whatever but it should just take enough time for the symptoms described to start taking good effect. If they try and go back out the way they came the exit is closed and impossible to open.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

They will begin to hear a lot of shuffling and groaning echoing down the passageway. They will see a light at the end of the current passageway and shadowy forms passing back and forth in front of it. None moving quick, a shuffling limping movement. The corridor opens into a huge open room with a ceiling that goes beyond the light. The light source seems to be coming from something at the other end.

The moving shadows are men, women, and children at the last stages of the illness that they watched the child die of and the same symptoms that the one player is developing rapidly. None of the people are carrying weapons, but as soon as the players enter the room the nearest plague victims pivot awkwardly and start

walking towards them with arms outstretched. The wounds are dripping and livid with puss dripping from them. It would seem any contact from them would get this liquid on them.

If they resist purposely hurting anybody as they move towards the glow they will find a goblet of liquid.

If they fight their way through or hurt anybody maliciously they will meet the black mist that saw come out of the girl's mouth. It will question them on their intentions and why they would hurt defenseless people. If they answer good enough or show regret at their actions, the shadow spirit will allow them to continue to the goblet. Else the spirit and the people in the room will disappear and they will have to return to the entrance that is now open. They will have to deal with the disease as the DM sees fit.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The goblet of liquid can be drunk by anybody. If drunk by the person with the growing disease then he can watch as the disease disappears and he returns to normal. They may offer the drink to those in the cave but they will also find that anybody who drinks from the goblet has a healing touch for the next 2 minutes. Anybody they touch retains the healing power for 1 minute. Once any of the diseased figures in there drinks or is touched, they touch the next one behind them and they spin into a golden mist and disappear into the darkness above. The room will be empty within moments with a sparkling display of golden, lighted mist flying into the darkness.

The dark shadow at some point will tell them that the goblet will work as long as the players seek no personal gain, heal for selfless reasons, and do not allow anybody know they have it unless they decide to turn it over to another person who will fall under the same rules. If at any point they are selfish, sell the healing power, or if somebody catches them using it the goblet will turn into a useless tin cup.

The goblet never empties (you can't just pour it out though, that will empty it and the poured liquid acts as normal water) and they are able to remove it from the tunnels. They will leave the same way they entered.

The plague can then be used as a tool of the DM as they wish.



Barrow of the Bored Berserker By DeeCee

This 5-room dungeon involves the player characters stumbling upon a barrow, or hill-crypt. Long ago a powerful berserker warrior was laid to rest there, and the world moved on. The grasslands the berserker had known well were transformed slowly over the centuries, and the hill overtaken with new foliage. His people moved on, and the barrow was forgotten, until now.

The PCs find the barrow accidentally, as it is in fact the lair of a local legendary man-eater bear. Either they come upon it unknowingly, or they are on the track of the beast in order to slay it and make the local area a bit safer.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Its lair is a raw gash in the side of an otherwise verdant hill. It dug into the hill because it smelled a charnel feast, and has been busy digging around for weeks.

The lair itself is a plain dirt sphere, like a bear's den only a magnitude larger. All of the walls are of packed earth, scarred with haphazard claw marks. The roof is mainly earth, but the bear was able to claw upward enough to hit the bottom of the "dungeon", which is comprised mostly of worked flagstone. Enough earthy material has been removed to show worked stones - the floor of the chamber above.

The challenge of this room lies not just in somehow defeating the terrible man-eater (which is naturally famished from working, and will see the PCs as a treat), but also in determining that the dungeon lies above, and finding a way to break through the floor to ascend into it.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

What would have been the true entrance of the barrow was in fact sealed off when the interment ceremony was complete. It is now small, plain chamber with flagstone floors and crude mortared stone and brick walls. Only one "door" in the room leads back to the other chambers, and it takes the form of a circular hole in the masonry wall, covered by a sturdy shield. It will take either strength or wits to move the shield, as it was fastened securely and not meant to ever be moved once the lord was laid to rest on the other side.

The only other objects in the room are huge fired clay jars full of powder. The contents have been disintegrating over the years, and if opened or broken, they will have an effect on the trespassers. There are three 4' high jars. The first contains what was a simple ointment for battle wounds, but which has degraded into a foul-smelling lump of grease that will nauseate anyone breathing the fumes. The second jar was, and still is, clean water. It had been sealed well against the ravages of time. The final jar was a powdered drug that has also remained effective, and its effect is to induce a berserk state in those prone to such things.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

This is a mid-sized room of worked stone, with an open doorway covered by a cloth divider, on the far wall. The room itself has a sunken floor, with a stone pillar erected in the middle. The floor is covered with dozens or hundreds of sets of humanoid and animal bones, but only a few of these stick out above the surface of an inky liquid pool.

The pool is just that – ink. The skeletons are many trophies from the lord's career, considered to be worthy to keep but not as important as what lies on the pillar. Therefore, the floor was filled up somewhat with a substance that at one time looked like fresh liquid blood. Unfortunately, that illusion has been ruined by the passage of time, and the "blood" has now turned to a dark almost black ink which only appears red if thinned out accordingly.

The pillar is a trophy showcase of sorts. It rises from the other trophies to a height of perhaps five feet, and holds only one item: the bleached skull of a humanoid, obviously far larger than a normal man. While it does not appear monstrous, it is at least twice the size of a human skull.

The challenge of this room is that PCs will probably assume that the ink is some terrible trap, or houses some beastie. Not to mention the strange allure of a possibly trapped trophy skull. In fact, nothing in this room is in any way harmful.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

This was once the burial site of the berserker lord. His body is propped upon a simple nomad-style chair, his weapons lovingly placed in his hands for all eternity.

Disturbing this chamber results in the spirit of the lord coming back to inhabit his body, to see what is happening. He's been living the good death in whatever afterlife awaits a berserker, but is curious as to what's happening in his crypt.

At first he'll address the PCs and ask them their business in his crypt, in as jovial a manner as possible. Eventually excitement will get the better of him though, and he'll want to do battle again for old times' sake. He'll rise to his bony feet, weapons ready, and demand that the PCs do battle for some reason or other. If they are reluctant, he'll call it a test to see if they're worthy to take his treasure. If they offer to leave without any further harm, he'll call them cowardly dogs. Either way, he intends to get some battling done before he returns to the afterlife.

The battle itself should hit upon a few things:

- 1) He's a berserker lord, from a historic warrior culture. He glories in battle, and seeks to prolong it as long as possible.
- 2) He moves about. A lot. He'll go from target to target, showing his prowess and keeping the battle moving through this and the previous room.
- 3) If battle extends into the trophy room, the bone-covered floor mixed with the slick concentrated ink makes for unsteady footing.
- 4) Being a corpse animated by his berserk spirit, he will not tire. In the stuffy crypt though, the PCs will slowly become more sweaty and exhausted. Oxygen is also likely going to become a factor.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The lord is not such a bad sort, but he IS a berserker, and he does revel in battle. He can be defeated though. When he is close to being downed, the characters should notice the phantom images of women slowly starting to appear from the corners of their eyes. These women are watchers who would choose the honoured dead in battle, but they are out of place in this world and this time.

Still, if the PCs are triumphant, they could very well be approached by these women. Fates, Valkyries, whatever they are, they've just witnessed a very battle hardened veteran be taken down, and they would have words with those who managed to do it.

This could lead to a viking-themed story later on, or simply be the "treasure" of the foray; having your battle skills acknowledged by the folks who really know these things is bound to bring some glory in this world. Alternately, the watcher spirits might reward the characters with gold rings, or some other tribute. This could also lead to further adventures down the line.



The Stone Labyrinth

By Daniel Burrage

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The entry to this temple is well hidden by simply being a narrow ditch at the bottom of a hillock, and the entry is a narrow rectangular stonework going downward about 25 feet. Not a difficult climb, but certainly nothing to attempt under attack. In side there is a large stone door inscribed with runes written in a long dead form of dwarven. There is a dim, yet ambient, light in the area, but little of this is noticed. Standing before the group is what resembles an eight headed hydra, but is crafted entirely out of stone and each face holds an expression of utter tranquility. The hydra has but three legs in a tripod formation and it will battle until it is little more than so much stone.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

In the next room is a great labyrinth of stone, enchanted stone which exists both on the material and ethereal planes. Just outside, quickly scampering just inside, is a half stone golem kobold. If negotiated with he will explain that the labyrinth is a perpetual maze, ever shifting and ever beguiling, and that he intuitively knows the way. If he is not negotiated with he will scamper inward due to the threat, and will only be spotted with a mix of extreme luck and scouting. There could be roaming creatures of stone, which also know the way, at the GM's discretion. The kobold hybrid, named Ithril, would more than gladly show the PCs the way for a small fee and promise for protection. However, he will not leave his beloved maze.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The next room, or rather hallway, is rather drab and holds the same ambient light as every other room in the temple. It's long, longer than they can see, and seems to sap their very energy. In truth it is a magical trap of the simplest variety, essentially a magical treadmill combined with an illusion. It also has an incorporation where it saps their energy giving them ranks of tiredness over a period of time based on their average level. The solution is simple, turn around, and then walk backwards. You will arrive at the end of the hall in about 40 steps.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The fourth room has a large altar, and the room emulates, or perhaps is, the night sky. There are epic depictions of the creation of the dwarven race by Moradin, the temptation of a few by an unnamed dark god, and the transformation to Duergar. In the middle of the room is a small undead, presumably dwarven, dressed in rich attire with a scepter or staff, and a crown of an obsidian material. He is either a Cleric with the Death, Construct, and Magi domains, or a specialist wizard who chose necromancy and has some sort of dark familiar. He is a lich, he is powerful, and they do have to battle him.

If they read the walls with a successful decipher script check they will read of Moradin's creation of dwarves, and how he told them to cherish the sun and live in its warmth. A god known only as Child of Night comes and promises the dwarves power and wealth beyond measure, if only they would renounce Moradin and follow her. A select few do, and as such a mixing of Moradin's curse and Child of Night's blessing, the Duergars were made. She erected this temple of emotionless creations, and had her creations spawn from there. This was one of the first Duergar's great- grandchildren, twenty and one thousand years old.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

In the final grand chamber lay many things. For one, a big ol' pile of loot of all sorts, and another thing is a large sarcophagus. An inscription on the lid explains rather explicitly that any of Moradin's chosen placed within alive and left for 24 hours would be reborn to serve the Night Children's purposes. On the bottom of the lid are trace amounts of that same black material of the crown. If they're lucky enough to tick the Lich off badly enough he will activate that crown and burn it to enhance a spell. This material basically aids Deurgars or evil dwarves in the casting of spells when burned.

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.