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Present

5 Room Dungeons

Volume 11

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.

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Special thanks to manfred/Peter Sidor for editing.

Cheers,
John Four and Strolen



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The Mercenary Shrine

By Ancient Gamer

<http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4380>

In the ramshackle town of Spear Malice only a single building still stands. It has defied the Great War and its spears of light; nuclear blasts that devastated the entire state, and ever since then it has defied the onslaught of time. Its halls have not yet been breached, and a wealth of technological treasure await, ripe for plunder! But there are others who crave this treasure; others that will do anything to claim it.

Mercenary Shrine

During the Great War the border town now known as Spear Malice was hit hard. Caught within the blast radius of a nuke, most buildings came toppling down. Of course, the century and a half since that time has not helped either, and today Malice is a truly ramshackle place where the Divine Spear Tribe holds sway, and their Warlock King, John One-Eye, is the undisputed master of the nearby wastes.

It is in this town, on the intersection between Wolf Path and the Path of the Ancients, that the Mercenary Shrine stands; a circular building, like a silo on four pillars, apparently unharmed by the blast that tore down the rest of the town.

There was something solemn about the only building that still stood unharmed, a certain virtue or innocence. A square logo with a dot inside was painted on both north and south side of the edifice. It seemed the tribals used it for throwing contests, for the southern side logo was dotted with splashes, dents and marks. For a moment it seemed like someone was moving on the top of the huge tower, but it must have been a trick of the eye, for no rungs or ladders were visible. Brushing the dust and sand from the beige flak jacket he had found in an abandoned military depot, Kendall Bruise-Bone ran crouched towards the rusted wreckage of trucks he spotted beneath the edifice. It would not do to be spotted by the natives, for they were hostile and their preferred meat was that of men.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The silo shaped edifice has been placed on four massive pillars of steel and concrete, so the entrance is actually in the open air below the building. Bricks from the collapsed neighboring buildings seem to have blasted into this region, and several ancient trucks that are parked here have fist sized holes in them, and are partially covered in earth and bricks. Gangs of tribal savages often walk the streets near this area, so PCs must either keep quiet, have considerable diplomatic skills or be ready to fight.

An elevator is visible inside one of the steel support pillars, and its doors are wide open. Inside they will find cracked mirrors on the walls and the ceiling. The control panel has been destroyed, the remains bent and broken on the floor, and now a wide array of wires emerge where it was once placed. The wires still carry an electric current, which will be clear from the jolts they will get if they touch two wires at once. Also there is a hatch in the ceiling, but it is locked. Marks suggest that someone has tried to break open the lock, but obviously they failed.

To get up the PCs must either use their electrical skill and send the elevator up, or they must pick the difficult lock and climb up to the floors above. Note that a certain code has to be entered to access the upper levels, and at the moment the PCs have neither the codes nor the interface required to enter the codes. Therefore the elevator doors will only open on the first room inside the facility (the second "room" of the dungeon).

Note:

- There are three digits on the panel: 0, 1 and 2.
- 0 would be the entrance, i.e. here. 1 is the control room and 2 is the Mercenary shrine.

Setting the mood for the remainder of the "dungeon":

- The nuclear power supply of the Mercenary Shrine is fully operational, and a hatch down to it can be found under one of the collapsed trucks, but the wires carrying the power to the building above was slightly damaged during the nuclear blast. This means that the power is almost stable, but on random intervals the power goes down, stopping the elevator and covering the rooms in a blanket of utter darkness. Only the implants of Luc - the cybernetic ghost, the space craft and the sentry drone will remain powered on during these short periods of no electricity.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The Control Room

Projections are shown on the walls of this rotund chamber. Several projections show the devastated areas of the surrounding town, while one shows some sort of armoured bipedal robot pacing back and forth in another rotund chamber, where red banners hang on black walls, a huge, oval table dominate the room and skeletons litter the floor. If the PCs change active cameras with the control panel (described below), more rooms can be seen:

- 1) A circular hangar with black walls and a brown military space craft (if they open the hangar roof while watching the camera feed from the room, they will notice tribals entering the hangar from above, prodding the space craft with their spears and screaming jubilant).
- 2) The entrance, now overrun by tribals pointing at the elevator and screaming.
- 3) The room the PCs currently occupy.

In a large chair, its leather black and comfortable in spite of the years, a skeleton is seated. Its spine has been reinforced with black metal alloys from the neck and up, and the unmistakable soft whirring of awaking machinery can be heard from within its skull. On a closer look the PCs realize that the skeleton had cybernetic implants in life and the left side of the skull is covered by the same black metallic alloys as the neck; light emitting diodes bathe the inside of the skull in nuances of green and red. The back of the skull, and the chair behind it, has been blown away, a shotgun still in the hands of the skeleton. The skeleton will move its neck and seem to follow the PCs, its vision enhancement implant pinpointed on the face of the closest PC. The rest of the skeleton is quite dead and unmoving. In front of the skeleton is a huge control panel, briefly described above, and the locks barring the elevator doors from opening at the upper levels can be opened with it (successful computer skill use).

Any PC with devices that can communicate via short wave radio, or has a wire with the RJ2001 jack needed to connect to the machinery, may converse with the deceased mercenary, or what remains of it. It seems the mercenary had invested in major optical enhancements, targeting systems as well as memory storage implants. This means the dead cyborg remembers who it was and what has happened. Unfortunately there is a small malfunction in the hardware, caused by the suicide, and this makes the cybernetic ghost (as beings such as this are called) quite difficult to communicate with. Any eloquent and diplomatic PC can persuade the cyborg to provide much info however:

- 1) The cyborg knows how to unlock the lock on the upper levels.
- 2) The cyborg knows that the sentry drone upstairs can be hacked, and that it is vulnerable in the rear of its neck.
- 3) The cybernetic ghost remembers how to power up the space craft on the uppermost level.
- 4) The ghost also remembers how to open the retractable roof panels, to make the space craft's take off a little more convenient.

The PCs can also choose to rob the skeleton of its implants. The skull can also be separated from the rest of the skeleton and, if so, it might turn out a reluctant and difficult, but valuable, ally. The cybernetic ghost still refers to itself as Luc, a 44 year old mercenary. (Its correct age would be 195 years, given the time it has been trapped here, but that is something it will not acknowledge).

Note:

- Luc committed suicide after he realized what had happened. Half of his skull has been blown away and the shotgun is still in his skeletal grip.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Mercenary Shrine

This room is the mercenary shrine, or the contract room, in which potential employers discussed with the leaders of the mercenary clan. The room is basically a meeting room, with a huge, black oval table at the center and many luxurious chairs surrounding it. At the far end of the chamber is an altar of sorts, the altar of contracts, in which agreements are kept. The rule is to honour the contract, religiously, or break the contract at your peril. Nowadays the PCs might find that the old, rotting contracts disintegrate at touch. A dog tag on a chain with two teeth lies discarded among the contracts. "Cole 'Durmenthir' Anderson" is the name printed on it.

Of note in this chamber are the number of skeletons strewn on the floor, the assault rifles hung on the walls or scattered amongst the fallen and the fully operational sentry bot that stands astride the meeting table, in battle position, waiting for the PCs to exit the elevator. The robot is well armoured and well powered. It has kept vigil for the last century and a half, never failing and never pausing. When the nuke hit, the electromagnetic pulse did not penetrate the solid walls of the shrine, but the sentry bot assumed an attack was underway and in the resulting chaos it started killing the potential employers that had attended a meeting. As the shocked and dazed mercenaries tried to stop the sentry bot, it categorized them as enemies too and ultimately killed the twenty people attending the meeting. This compelled Luc, the former mercenary with cybernetic implants, to shut down the elevator from the control room.

The exact details of the robot is left up to the GM in question, but Luc, the cybernetic ghost, will inform the PCs that its frontal armour is formidable, requiring heavy guns to breach, but some essential neck cables are vulnerable to attack. This information can also be gleaned by PCs using the surveillance cameras to their full advantage. Also, if possible, the sentry bot will not use projectiles (it has been programmed to keep the facility as intact as the situation allows).

The elevator stops on this level. A ladder leads up to a hatch in the ceiling, and the hangar above.

Note:

- Extremely skilled hacker PCs can connect wirelessly to the bot and hack it, preferably from behind shelter. Its firewalls and passwords are rather good, but not impossible.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Hangar

The hangar has walls and floor painted black, with a thick, yellow H painted on the floor, a circle surrounding the H. On this letter, H, a flat, broad spacecraft stands. Its hull has been painted military brown. Its gang-plank has been lowered and entrance is possible. For the space shuttle to take off, the roof doors should be opened, but it is possible to crash through them if they put the thrusters on full. (It is likely that this will damage the rudder and hull).

If the roof doors have been opened, the room will be occupied by eight tribals wielding spears and knives and crossbows. They will squat atop the space vessel, some even having gone inside to study this ancient piece of wonder. The tribals have no skill at electronics and computers, so they are limited to poking and punching random buttons. If the GM thinks a military space shuttle is too great a reward, he should have them push the wrong buttons and crash the shuttle half way through the wall. It will still contain much desired spare parts and can eventually be repaired by the stalwart PCs.

Additionally the tribals, already having found the tracks of the PCs, have realized the elevator is now functional and will be approaching from behind too. The PCs should find some choke points, and quick, for this battle is about to become hot.

Combat Set Up:

If the roof panel has been opened: The two sentinels atop the tower were quite surprised when the roof began to slide beneath their feet. To their wonder they discovered the hangar beneath and whistled to six fellow tribals on the ground, who promptly climbed the tower using the ropes that were dropped from above. These eight are exploring the hangar even as the PCs emerge from the hatch. They will remain in hiding, but the two ropes hanging from above should warn the PCs that they are not alone.

Regardless whether any tribals are in the hangar: The PCs did not ascend the elevator shaft unnoticed, regardless whether they ascended by using the elevator or by climbing. Several tribals followed their footsteps and, unless the PCs were cunning and sealed the elevator doors programmatically, they will assault the PCs from behind. Any assault rifles left in the Mercenary Shrine will be picked up. Though of little or no technical skill, there are tribals who know how to operate these. There seems to be no end to the savages, and the PCs must stem the flow themselves, either by sealing off the hatch, sealing the elevator or leaving (using the shuttle). If the shuttle is disabled it should prove quite a task to escape, but diplomacy, stealth or brute force might win the day.

If the PCs hacked the sentry bot: The sentry bot is online and will defend the PCs to the best of its abilities. It uses its hands to choke, punch and disable and, just to invoke fear, it sometimes rips throats and hearts out of the bodies of its opponents. It will employ firearms if the going gets too tough.

About the tribals:

The tribals attack like hunters would, using cover then throwing, or shooting, spears and bolts at the PCs. Some tribals have Molotov cocktails and will not hesitate to throw these. In melee they will use spears and knives.

John One-Eye, the Warlock King of Spear Malice:

A huge individual, one eye torn from its socket, will eventually come into view, pushing his minions forward. This is John One-Eye, the Warlock King. To these tribals, John's advanced tech is nothing short of magic and they fear and dread the veteran soldier, handing him their daughters and part of their loot. John is a tough nut to crack, wearing full body armour and wielding two Beretta 9mm handguns. John also has three hand grenades that he does not hesitate to use, even should one of the tribals be caught in the blast. At the end of the day he prefers watching from a distance, but if enough of his men are slain he will come, for he has sought the contents of the tower for a long time and is not about to let the PCs get away with it all. (John's status as Warlock King hails from his guns, his grenades, his body armour and the laptop in his backpack). Note that John has no skill with pick locks and electricity, but should he gain access to the control panel he will be able to open and close doors as he see fit.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Spacecraft

The space craft, or space shuttle, has room for ten passengers and their gear. Its cockpit has room for one pilot, but it can be flown fully automated. Its currently plotted course is to the earth orbit space station, Tellus 1, but that space station was blown up in the initial days of the Great War. The three other destinations also seem to be dead ends, though the PCs must travel there to discover this. In the end the shuttle is fast, has enough fuel to fly for two days, but is limited in matters of available space. If the PCs have other vehicles or animals, or a great deal of cargo, it will not be able to transport it.

For the GM that is not ready to just hand out a fully functional space craft, the tribals could disable it (as explained above), or it could be in a state of disrepair. In any case: It will fetch a decent price anywhere, and most potential buyers will not be able to cash out even a fraction of its worth, though the PCs will still prosper. The truly devious GM will let the space craft have a serious malfunction, but this will not be revealed until after take off, when the systems begin to report one critical malfunction after another. Centuries of no service and maintenance just can't be healthy...



The Cursed Keep of the Wastelands

By Captain Penguin

<http://www.strolen.com/content.php?node=4383>

The Great King long ago ceased attempting to police the wastelands of his Border Marches, and these debatable lands fell into the hands of petty counts, retired generals, and warlords, who constructed and then abandoned many keeps ripe for plunder.

Beyond the green hills lining the Vayoron River lies the desolate wasteland known as the Border Marches. These lands, subject to the Great King only in name, have long been un-policed and untaxed by any official Imperial force. Control of swathes of this dusty, chilly land thence fell into the hands of opportunistic counts, retired Imperial generals, warlords, and bandits. In some places in the craggy hills above the dustwallowing valleys of the Marches, the ancient black towers of sorcerers (once driven out by Imperial might) were seen once again lit with glowing windows.

But many of the tenants of this land, who taxed the land and patrolled it with their own hired men (with the Great King's tacit approval) found the wastelands, quite obviously, to be barren, poor, and difficult to make a sustenance of. Many landlords simply abandoned with their retinues the ancient, crumbling keeps into which they had tenanted, after struggling to establish any kind of power or wealth in a land of blowing dust, starving cattle, nomad herdsmen, and the curses of black-eyed wizards. Others were done in by the struggle, or slain by bandits and raiders, or by foul magic, leaving their holds wasted and empty, and stuffed full of unwatched treasure.

Most enticing to bold adventurers, the Border Marches are so thinly populated and so barren, and the reputation of some of the forts so fearsome, that many have never been plundered! Surely, the riches and wealth of this baron or that must remain in a keep in the wastelands.

One such keep is this place, a crumbling conical pile atop a windy scarp. The populace of the village below, who grow a pitiful plot of maize in the shadow of the hills, claim that the fort is haunted and that none ever return from its dark walls. It has been untenanted for over a hundred years; village legend states that it was the keep of the Count Jjun of Irgoz, a cruel and bloodthirsty individual.

It is said that Jjun of Irgoz offended the God of Gods by trapping and murdering a guest in his home, and for his misdeed, his entire household was struck down by a plague in a single night. His retinue mouldered away before his eyes, his advisers and friends thrashed screaming in the blood of their own sick lungs, and his great guard-hounds feasted on the bodies of his family. But Jjun of Irgoz did not die, the villagers say, but remains eternally pox-stricken and in terrible pain, alone in the dark with his sorrow. And that, conclude the warty village wives in their cord skirts and painted arms, is why one must please the Gods by honoring guests with a cup of water and safe passage (but as the heroes will find, not much more than that).

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The High Door And The Hounds

The heroes, drawn by promise of treasure, seek the door of the keep through a narrow, high stair hacked out of the craggy face of the cliff. This stair, not wide enough for two men to walk abreast, and steep enough that hand holds (some of which house nests of yellow-banded wasteland scorpions) were hacked into the rock at intervals, is buffeted by dangerous winds and random gusts. Further up the stair, a rusty chain has been bolted to the steps to aid as a handhold, and stretches up to a metal post by the doors. The post is loose and weathered by age, and if two many of the heroes throw their weight against the chain, they will unknowingly pull it loose, with disastrous consequences.

The doors are slotted deeply into the scarp walls down a slight defile carved out of the bare rock; windows in this rock were probably arrow slits for the defense of the keep, but looking into them now reveals only what appears to be a partially-collapsed chamber filled with rubble and broken wood.

The doors swing open with a rusty squeal. It has been quite some time since anybody entered here- a layer of wasteland dust, blown in over time, lies spread thickly across the pavement. The heroes stand in a tall central room. They can just make out the brick walls of the conical structure in which they stand in the gloom; a shaft of golden sunlight spears down through the center of the room through a window high above and behind their heads. As their eyes adjust to the dimness, they recognize the pale shapes of scattered bones spread in patches across the floor.

In this chamber, the heroes meet their first test. Out of the darkness, the heroes sense a presence, shuffling silently just beyond the edge of the visible. Lurking in this chamber are the gigantic guard-hounds Vvikush and Vvorlgu, who have become huge, immortal, and terribly ravenous from feeding on the cursed flesh of Jjun of Irgoz's stricken family. Their bristling, silvery fur is crusted with filthy brown and black from the seeping blood of numerous infected sores, and their enormous drooping-lipped jaws peel back in demonic snarls to reveal shattered and bleeding teeth and diseased gums. These creatures have lurked in this chamber for over a hundred years, gorging their cursed hunger on the foolish ones who trespass within the unholy fort, and a century of undying fear and rage has stripped them of any previous allegiance they might have held to mankind. These beast-dogs provide the heroes with a terrible battle.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The Mechanical Door And The Tragic Family

Having laid put the hounds Vvikush and Vvorlgu to rest, the heroes descend one of several small stairways that exits the dusty, bone-strewn entrance hall (there are four; three of them lead to deserted dusty servants' quarters, barracks, and kitchens with little loot to speak of besides rust-eaten pieces of iron and the scattered bones of the baron's stricken retinue and vassals). They find themselves in what appears to be a throne chamber. A moth-eaten rug and dusty tapestries hang from the walls, depicting the victories of the hero Nastra of the Lightning Hair. Behind the throne is heavy bronze door with an intricate mechanical lock on it.

In this room lie the gruesome remains of Jjun of Irgoz's tragic family, who died from the horrible disease inflicted by Jjun's curse and whose bodies were fed upon by the devilish hounds- three age-blackened and dog-savaged mummified bodies in the faded tatters of ancient gowns, their limbs and faces unnaturally twisted in disturbing ways by rigor mortis. The corpses of the cursed count's two daughters lie in each others' arms at the foot of the throne, their legs separated from their bodies and their stomachs ruptured by the corpse-eating hounds. Their shriveled eyes are small black pits and their teeth shine very whitely. Across the room, the body of the lady countess Tleyeson lies on her back, surrounded by a black coating of some flaky black sub-

stance, actually the rotten material that the countess wretched up before she died. Her body, too, was savaged and eaten of by the dogs, her face is twisted in a horrible shriek.

This sight, while tragic, seems irrelevant to the heroes. They must be more concerned with opening the mechanism which seals the door, a contraption obviously constructed by a sorcerer learned in mechanical arts. It is a combination lock, and in order to open the door, four ivory wheels (each marked with a number symbol) must be rotated to form the correct code. But what could the code be?

Clues lie on the door itself. It is a great, heavy, bronze relic, worked with symbols of the traditional birth-to-death cycle of the Sun Dog (from young pup, to angry warrior pierced by arrows, to one-eyed leader, to emaciated dying elder). If the heroes look closely, they can see indicated in the relief the phrases: "Let answers spring forth as lightning" and "A hair is the breadth between the open door and the closed", old proverbs. The words "lightning" and "hair" are juxtaposed. If the heroes are very good at inference, they will know that the numbers of the combination are hidden in sequence on the tapestries of Nastra of the Lightning Hair, worked into scenes therein.

There is a simpler solution, though it is likewise obscured by time and age. All three corpses of Jjun's family know the combination, if the heroes can convince them to divulge it. After a few minutes of inevitable frustration in which the heroes cannot devise the solution, the body of the youngest daughter will speak in a low, hissing whisper:

"Father is inside. He doesn't want us to see him."

A startling interjection from a hundred-year-old mummy! The youngest daughter is the most forthcoming, and will divulge the combination to the door if it is promised that she will see her daddy and that she will marry the handsome Prince of the Kingdom someday (she is a bratty and fickle little child who wants her dreams fulfilled, even in the grip of undeath). The other two corpses are angry and bitter, having dwelt a century beyond the veil of death, and are very mistrustful of the heroes (recognizing them as the treasure seekers that they are), and will not speak unless the heroes can prove that they will see be allowed to see Jjun of Ir-goz one last time.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The Hall Of Dust And The Giant

The great bronze portal opens with a sigh of old musty air. Within, the heroes perceive a long hallway lined with thick Kaitakian carpets. At the far end, a short stair is elevated into the baronial bedroom.

The heroes pace up the carpet, their footsteps raising puffs of heavy dust. Thick cobwebs tear apart as they brush through them. Approaching the stairway, they discern a large dark figure, seated on the steps and slumped against the wall.

This figure is Xaggarn, the count's personal bodyguard. Loyal to his death, this huge man died puking out his rotten innards into his lap (like the countess), and his shriveled corpse is encrusted with the gruesome dried remnants.

The heroes should know by now that the dead do not rest well in this cursed keep. As they near the doors to the bedroom, Xaggarn releases a thick sound like a deep sigh, and a cloud of black dust pours forth from his distended jaw. Flickering green embers awaken in the wrinkled pits of his eyes as he lifts himself heavily from the steps. Despite the withering of age and mummification, which has made his grey-black skin peel away from his bones and crack apart at his gruesomely-twisted teeth, he remains a giant among men, 7 feet tall, with long arms and hands that have become claws through the action of rigor mortis. He fills the narrow

hall and attempts to smother the heroes in a horrible embrace. An unholy strength fills him, and driven by a loyalty to Jjun of Irgoz that lives beyond death, he will not die until hacked into pieces.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Jjun Of Irgoz

The heroes ascend the staircase, spattered with the congealed guts and caked dust of the terrible fort. This is the count's bedroom, the family abode buried deep beneath the keep, and (hopefully) just above the coffers.

As the heroes push open the bronze doors to the bedroom, they are driven back by an overwhelming, sick stench of rot and foulness. They feel an unfamiliar wetness as the dust that cakes their sandals is washed away by a thin, warm fluid.

The heroes are standing in a dark chamber, filled with a noxious moisture and humidity not present in the rest of the dust-choked fort. The blackness of the chamber is complete- their torches gutter and flicker in it. The fluid that rushes across their toes lies in slicks and pools across the stone floor of the chamber, and has reduced a once-fine Kaitakian bed-rug into a soggy rotten mat of mushy fibers. Along the walls, several ancient divans have collapsed into wet piles of splinters and rotten silk. In an alcove in the left wall, there is a step upward into the private family shrine, containing statues of Tlonos, the Mother Goddess, One-Eyed War, and a small altar to the God of Gods. However, examining this altar will show that the sacrifice bowls of these altars have been defiled with some kind of stinking filth, and the statue of Tlonos (the goddess who preserves from harm) has been strewn with what appear to be human entrails.

The heroes move slowly through the defiled room, until coming upon the great platform of the count's bed. Lying in the center of the denuded slab of the bed is the cursed lord himself, Jjun of Irgoz.

Cursed never to die, but to live eternally, cancerously stricken by the hideous curse of disease which slew his entire household. Over the course of a century, the endless pain has driven him beyond insanity, and all semblance of what it is to be human has been lost to his rotten brain. He appears to the heroes now in a form that could only be vaguely described as human- composed of rot-blackened organs that swell and split, clustered around his crumbling bones like sacks of stinking awful, with his intestines hanging in ropey coils from his belly. His arms hang long and loose and end in twisted skeletal claws. His skull seems to have collapsed into a mass of hideous tentacular cancers that writhe and whip about in a medusa-like fashion. All that remains of his skull are the bridge of his nose and his eye-sockets, nested masklike and eerie amidst the pulsing, rotten flesh. Out of a mouth-like cavity, filthy grey-black puke, filled with shredded, bloody organs, dribbles and splashes about on the floor. This is the horror that was once Jjun of Irgoz, lord of the keep.

The horror-that-was-Jjun will not die easily. With a disturbing howl, the creature reverses its joints and crawls up the wall and ceiling of the chamber like a cockroach. The creature attacks with its flesh-tearing claws, and spits hideous plague-bearing fluid at the heroes, a substance so filled with the curse that it raises festering sores on their arms and causes them to bleed from their noses and mouths. The creature also attacks them with its intestines, which animate like arms to strangle and slap at the heroes.

This disturbing atrocity seems impervious to pain, and only after it has been hacked apart into tiny fragments (or burned) will the creature die. With the end of its life, there is a huge sighing throughout the keep, and a wave of putrescent air sweeps out from the bedroom throughout the whole tower.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The Treasure Chamber

There is a small door at the back of the bedroom. It opens upon a narrow stairway that descends deeply into the bedrock. The heroes descend the shadowed stairway with trepidation- the bottom is illimitable inky blackness.

When they reach the landing of the stairway, they find themselves in a low-roofed long slot chamber. At the far end they find, finally, the coffers of Jjun of Irgoz.

The heroes have worked striven hard for this moment, and crack their knuckles in anticipation. The lid of the stone box is slowly pried away to reveal...

Nothing.

What is this? No gold bars stamped with old Imperial seals? No jewels? No silver goblets, jade rings? What have they been fighting for?

None of these things remain the box. Some of the count's unscrupulous guards and his vizier broke into this chamber and stole away with the gold, escaping the plagued household with the treasure, before dying of the disease somewhere out in the badlands.

Left over at the bottom of the cask, however, is something that might highly interest the heroes- it is a document, on vellum, marked with the gold-leaf seal of the Great King himself (of a hundred years ago). It is a deed of debt, redeemable to the Great King at any time, for a tract of land to the bearer- a gift to Jjun of Irgoz for taking on a command in a Godforsaken wasteland and giving up his ancestral tracts. This document bears the seal of a Great King, and is written in the most proper of High Sorgic. Should the heroes present this document to an Imperial governor, they are fully within their power to demand a tract of Imperially-sponsored land be given over to their lordship as their manor, with accompanying serfs and servants.



The Well

By Bert Isla

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Entrance

Jagged high mountains rise above this little town. It is the last supply outpost that can be found for many miles before a dangerous trek across the mountains will lead travelers to the next kingdom. Escaped slaves are often ran to ground here, desperate to flee into the free kingdoms they find this outpost to be their only chance at freedom. The populace, sympathetic to the escaped slaves, had opened their long abandoned mines that stretch from beneath the town and end on the opposite side of the mountain range. The dried up town well acts as the hidden entrance to this escape route. Perhaps the PC's are escaped slaves or slavers themselves. Perhaps there are rumors that escaping slaves eager to make better speed hid valuables and wealth along the many miles of passages.

The wood covering the well is old and brittle, easily broken. The stone making up the walls are large and uneven making easy handholds to the dry bottom. Unless the keystone is discovered by bribing a towns

person or threatening one, a detailed search will reveal a section of the well that is fake. The entrance beyond is dark, musty and slightly damp.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The long tunnel

The tunnel stretches east into darkness. The walls are shored up with timber and clay. Every 20 feet or so unlit torches lie in brackets attached to support beams. The PC's will need to provide some illumination. If they use the torches along the walls, when lit they produce a sickly sweet smell along with a dim light. The smell will attract the shades of dead slaves. There are 5 of them haunting this length of tunnel, they will only attack those holding the scent producing torches.

If PC's continue down this passage they will run into a collapsed area of tunnel the will provide no further passage. If the PC's were informed or produce a good search score they will notice that there are many scratches and glyphs on the supporting timbers. At the glyph that represents "freedom" there is a hidden passage with a downward slope. If the PC's are mislead and search the glyph "tyranny" it will lead to a different passage.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Freedom

This downward sloping passage is lit by clusters of luminous fungi. If PC's disturb the fungus, they will feel slightly ill within the hour and develop an irritating rash within a day. Careful searching of this area will reveal several caches of food, water, clothing and maps to the kingdom beyond the mountain. Helpful town folk would have warned the PC's about the fungus. This tunnel is long but several hours of walking will lead to the mountainside exit.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Tyranny

This passage leads to a seemingly empty circular room. When the last PC has stepped out of the tunnel and into this room, the room will quickly drop fifteen feet. At this new height, another chamber is accessible, but the walls leading back up to the previous room are smooth and offer no hand holds. The smell of rotting meat comes from the new room. This area was once used as an elevator shaft to move ore from one level to another, now this new revealed cavern is the home of many under dark dwelling monsters. This deadly destination is given by the townsfolk to those following the escaped slaves in the hopes of ridding themselves of pestering slavers.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Escape

At the end of the long tunnel followed in "Freedom" the PC's will again feel the movement of air and the chill of the frosty mountains. The end of their trek however leads to a recently installed iron gate covering the exit of the tunnels. Apparently the much sought after kingdom of freedom has gotten tired of letting in escapees! The iron gate can be overcome with enough combined strength from the PC's or magical help.



The Governor's House

By Anthony Hart-Jones

Originally written for D&D, this 'dungeon' sees a governor's house taken over by pirates. The governor and his daughter are held inside as hostages, making the pirates inside rather bold.

They fight a little like Tucker's Kobolds in some ways, using tactics, cover and the (altered) design of the house to make up for lack of power and numbers.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The pirates have barricaded all of the doors and have a cannon or two on the roof, which they are using to harass the players. They also have some ranged weapons. Once the party are inside, they are safe, but if they get too close, the pirates will drop bombs on them.

There is also the issue of 50 ft. of open gardens between the gates and the mansion. Low hedges block line of sight, but not projectiles; they are not good cover.

Bashing down the doors leaves them vulnerable, but there are a number of large windows which can be broken and entered by a character with any talent for climbing.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Fight!

Most of the pirates who survived the attack on the mansion are now waiting on the other side of the main door. If the party try to break it down, they will be faced with a barrage of arrows / bullets / spells. If they creep in through a window, they might be able to get the drop on the pirates.

A smaller group of pirates with ranged weapons are waiting on a balcony above the main group, where they can see the main doors, but not any side doors. These are weak, but numerous adversaries.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The large sweeping staircase, the only direct means of getting to the second level, is destroyed. Climbing might be possible, but the conditions are not favourable and it is a 20 ft. drop if they fall.

The ground floor of this mansion will reveal dead servants, dead pirates and a typical house. The servants did fight back and many pirates lie dead in other rooms. There might come a woman's scream from upstairs if the party need to be hurried. The only way is up, as they say...

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Jack, the pirate captain is waiting outside the master bedroom. He will have set up the arena to give himself the advantage, but he is not hiding. Unlike the crew, he should be more of a challenge for the party.

What the players do not see is that the first mate is also around, but he *is* hiding. He will join when the party are focused on Jack, going for anyone who is hanging back. While not as proficient as the captain, he does have the element of surprise and knows how best to aid Jack.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

A key around Jack's neck will open the door to the master bedroom, though the party might want to kick the door down or pick the lock. It is a good lock and a rather sturdy door, so the key is actually a good idea.

Inside, the governor and a young woman lie dead. There is also a terrified-looking servant hiding in a wardrobe, whose sobbing will be easily noticed. She will use any excuse to get away, including trying to incapacitate anyone left alone with her.

The pirates have a chest of typical treasure - gold, gems, small ivory statues - appropriate to the party-level. Any pirates left on the roof will surrender once they learn that Jack is dead.

The Twist: the 'servant' was actually the pirate captain. Until now, she has been letting Jack pretend, reasoning that the crew would rather follow a man. Now, without any choice, she take command of the ship, "Revenge", and sails off to get some more crew.

The party will recognise her face on a poster or other document soon, since she will be busy pillaging to replenish her crew and money.



Blind Pack

By Jean-Christophe Pelletier

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

An old druid and his apprentice have been blessing the crops of the villagers of a small agricultural community every year. Using a precious stone, called the Heart of the Forest, the druid helped plants grow strong within the valley. But this year, the druid is nowhere to be found and the villagers ask for help.

In the forest on the wooded slope of the druid's mountain, strange animals have been spotted. These wood animals have turned livid and blind after drinking from the chalky white water of the surrounding streams. They roam freely and attack any suspect source of noise. Anyone who touches the waters can suffer the same fate. Players will have to fight a few of them to go up the mountain or find a way to slip by unnoticed.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Beating Around the Bush

Further up the wooded slopes of the mountain, players face a huge dome formed by living thicket. The thicket climbs high in the air and forms a huge dome that continues up the mountain to a rock cliff a few thousand feet higher. The tops of old trees are seen poking out of the dome as well as the spire of a ruined guard tower. Streams and small pools of chalky water exit at different spots around its walls.

The dome is 30 feet thick and cannot be crossed normally. Normal fire cannot harm the thicket and magical fire can burn through slowly. Hacking through the wall is possible with much effort, but vibration on or in the wall rapidly attracts thousands of tiny spiders that cover the victim and bite relentlessly. Prolonged shaking attracts all of the spiders in a 15 foot area, thus clearing the surrounding area. The spiders can only be removed using effect actions such as wind, fire, cold or immersion in water.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Down Memory Lane

Inside the thicket dome, the forest is enveloped in humid darkness. Higher up the slope, the silhouette of the ruined guard tower can be seen. The entrance to the tower is a 100 feet tunnel that leads under it. Light can be seen shining at its end. The tower is completely empty, only rocks and moss can be found inside.

Within the tunnel lives a colony of Memory Moss (Obliviax). Any who enter 20 feet in the tunnel are attacked by the moss which tries to steal memories of the last 24 hours of any living being, starting with spell casters. Players who succumb to the attack are confused for a few hours. Only by eating the moss can characters regain their memories.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The Druid's Heart

Higher up the slope, near the rock wall, lies a huge tree near a big pool of chalky water. As players advance, they are met by a man wearing a muddied robe. He explains that he is the old druid's son and apprentice and that his father has been killed by a huge plant monster. He begs the players to help him kill the monster to avenge his father.

Near the big tree sits a huge Shambling Mound monster. The monster attacks anyone on sight. The young druid attacks the monster but anytime he hits, the monster lets out an anguished cry. The monster also refrains from attacking the young druid.

If players kill the monster, its vegetable body withers away revealing the body of the old druid. A green glow can be seen inside his chest. The monster's death also makes the thicket dome wither and the waters of the streams become pure again. A cavern leading inside the rock wall is revealed.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Heritage

After the fight, the young druid approaches his father's body and digs deep within its chest to pull out a green glowing gem, the Heart of the Forest. He then tries to escape inside the cavern.

If players stop him, he reveals how he feels he should have been ordained a druid by his father but was refused the honour. The apprentice tricked his father in showing the location of the gem in hope of stealing it, but the old druid saw the trap and swallowed the gem. The gem's power transformed him into the monster and mutated the forest around. The young druid then prepared his revenge, setting the trap inside the tower and waiting for adventurers to help him kill his father.

If the young druid manages to escape, the players are left with the task of figuring out what has happened and letting the villagers know of the old druid's fate. Of course, following him down the dark cavern is always an option.

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.