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Present

5 Room Dungeons

Volume 17

Thank you for downloading the 5 Room Dungeons PDF, which contains short adventure seeds you can drop into your campaigns or flesh out into larger adventures. All dungeons in this PDF are submissions from the 5 Room Dungeon contest co-hosted by Roleplayingtips.com and Strolen's Citadel. Dungeon entries had to follow the 5 Room Dungeon template, which is provided at the end of this file (it's a great recipe for crafting your own quick dungeons too). Thanks to everyone who entered the contest. Your great entries are now inspiring and helping game masters around the world. Thanks also to the volunteers at Strolen's Citadel for their hours of editing.

You can download this file, and all other parts in the series as they are released, at www.strolen.com or www.roleplayingtips.com.

Special thanks to manfred/Peter Sidor for editing.

Cheers,
Johnn Four and Strolen



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



Retreat

By Aki Halme

Another 5-room dungeon: manhunt. Rather than have the PCs take the initiative, have the dungeon come after them.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Initial Clash.

The PCs break away from the enemy and make their getaway. Whether they have been prisoners, or have to get away from an ambush, depends on the campaign.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The path that the PCs take to get away from superior enemy forces determines what they need to do elude their pursuers. Finding a safe place to rest in the wilderness, or perhaps having the people at an inn refrain from turning them in.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The rest of the PCs ends abruptly - perhaps a little too early for the spellcasters to have regained their strength, so melee types need to keep the magic types alive so the latter can save the day. Perhaps the PCs were betrayed by their hosts, perhaps the opposition used other tricks to find where the PCs rest.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Fortunately for the PCs, the main force of the enemy is absent, but a sizable group remains for the PCs to fight.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The enemy force includes important targets such as spell casters or nobles, the ones who managed to track the PCs to their resting place. As such, there are good news - a victory against this foe is both feasible and likely to have a lasting effect. Also, the enemy has pursued the PCs for quite some time so they won't be as fresh as the PCs will. The bad news of course are that such targets are likely to fight smart and have useful equipment to hurt the PCs with, and the PCs will be wounded to begin with, barring massive investment in expensive and immediate limited-number-of-uses healing.



Tomb of the Colossus

By Bryan Smart

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

Trekking into a sandstorm-ridden desert following a map that leads them to the legendary Tomb of the Colossus, the players must deal with a desert storm that can scour flesh from bone. The storm forces players to work together to construct a shelter despite winds blowing materials away and the biting desert sand getting in their eyes. Failure could result in exhaustion, sickness, blindness, wounds, and even death.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The adventurers arrive at the location of the tomb designated on the map to find a partially weathered obelisk. Language specialists will be able to make out hieroglyphics symbolizing life, earth, height, death, depth, and sky carved on the length of the obelisk. You may want to give them these hieroglyphics in a mixed-up order, as touching the glyphs (or runes, if you prefer) in the order listed here opens the tomb. Failures could result in the summoning of a desert monster or pest of the gamemaster's choice – a burrowing scorpion (giant or small) would be a good option.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

When the hieroglyphs are pushed in the correct order, a tremor shakes the desert and a crack opens in the top of the buried tomb upon which the adventurers are standing. The sands shift, pouring into the tomb below, and the adventurers may very well be taken with them. Only quick thinking or quick reflexes (grabbing onto the obelisk, jumping or running away from the area where terrain is being affected) can save players from plummeting into the depths of the tomb below. The drop to the floor of the tomb is over 120 feet. Gamemasters who have characters who fall, but don't want them dying, can have them drop onto the hand of the colossus statue that is a mere 40 feet below the opening.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle or Conflict

The opening reveals the tomb below. Standing at the head of a huge (60 feet long and 20 feet wide) sarcophagus is a standing statue of a giant that rises 100 feet above the floor. Approximately 40 feet below the opening, the statue's hand is extended, palm upward. This hand-platform allows adventurers to climb from the hole in the ceiling to the platform of the extended hand, then down onto the top of the sarcophagus below. When the first adventurer alights on the lid of the sarcophagus, a tremor shakes the tomb as the lid slides open, revealing the mummified colossus himself. A climactic battle ensues.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The greatest treasure here is the colossus's ankh signet ring. The ring is made from gold and jade, and measures a good three feet in diameter. An evil djinni enslaved within the ring makes this not only an item of great monetary worth, but also of great magical power. The characters' current antagonist will stop at nothing to gain possession of this artifact. The ring itself brings other dangers as well – the master could become the slave if the djinni's influence upon the possessor's mind becomes too strong. The ring could also have political or cultural significance to the surrounding tribes or countries, causing upheaval or other ramifications across the land.

Many colossus-sized treasures may be found in the tomb aside from the ring. Unfortunately, removal of other large treasure could be a challenge unto itself in such a remote area and over such difficult terrain.



Too Many in the Tomb

By John Moseman

The player characters have discovered the location of an old lord's tomb that holds some item that interests them. This might be a magical item, a book that contains knowledge that the PCs need, or a necessary component for some important spell or ritual. They have discovered the location of the tomb, a cryptic message, and a warning that any who disturb the treasures in the tomb will have the dead rise up against them.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The entrance to Room 1, and therefore the rest of the tomb, is a thick stone door with various creatures and symbols carved into the stone. Closer examination will reveal that each carving can be pressed into the door slightly, although it will only stay depressed as long as it is held down. Three of these carvings match elements mentioned in the cryptic message that was found along with the location. (“The moon shall shine upon the lion and the lamb.”) Alternatively, a difficult search can determine that these three carvings seem different from the rest. If all three carvings are held down, the heavy stone door will slowly open. After one minute, the door will close again unless blocked; the door can be opened from inside simply by pressing the sole engraving on the inside of the door, a carving of the lord’s crest. Beyond the door is a room with faded murals on the wall depicting the heroic deeds of the entombed lord. Another doorway, at the far end of one of the side walls, leads on to Room 2.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Room 2 is a long hall; there is a single door visible on the far side, with what looks like a large stone statue standing near it. When anyone enters the room, the statue raises its head and declares in a loud booming voice, “Speak the word or meet your doom!” Unfortunately for the party, they have no way of knowing the password. The stone guardian then attacks all intruders in the room until it is destroyed or all intruders are gone. The guardian will not leave the room that it guards, so if the characters retreat into the first room, they will be safe until they reenter. Likewise, if the characters manage to get past the guardian somehow, it will not pursue into the next room. After one minute passes with no intruders in the room, the guardian will return to its original place and wait until activated again.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Room 3 holds several stone pedestals, each adorned with a metal plaque; on the other side of the room is a sturdy wooden door, which is locked. The plaques identify each pedestal as the place for an important object; the plaque on the central pedestal has the name of the item the PCs are seeking. Unfortunately for them, all of the pedestals are empty. A careful examination will reveal that the items were removed recently, and a search of moderate difficulty will find tracks leading up to the locked door. Any additional information the tracker can gain about number, size, etc. of the individuals who made the tracks will match the occupants of the next room.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

A short hallway leads to Room 4, which holds the opened stone casket of the person who was buried here. Dismembered pieces of what were once undead warriors lie on the floor, and behind the stone casket are the tomb robbers who the PCs have seen evidence of, looking very much alive and pointing weapons at the party. When the rival party heard the sound of the stone guardian in Room 2, they knew that someone might be coming. One of them snuck back and closed and locked the door to Room 3, and then all of them set in to wait. If the party was noisy in Room 3, such as by breaking down the door, the rival party will have made preparations for immediate combat. If the party was quiet enough, on the other hand, the rival party may be unsure of the exact position of the PCs, causing them to wait on using any effects with short duration until combat begins.

As for the rivals themselves, if the PCs have any rivals from previous adventures, they can be used as the occupants of Room 4. The rivals can be either previously encountered individuals or members of a group

that the party has fought or competed against before. If the party doesn't have any appropriate rivals, then the occupants can simply be treasure hunters who picked a bad time to try robbing this particular tomb. Established rivals will either attack immediately or attempt to parlay depending on their history with the party. If they have no history with the party, they will at first assume that the party is hostile, but may be open to negotiations if the party proposes a cease-fire. The treasure hunters won't let the party just take the treasure that they've "acquired" from the tomb, but may be willing to trade for the item the party came looking for. In addition to appropriate equipment (including whatever thieving or magical means the rivals used to open the locked door) the rivals also have sacks containing the treasures from Room 3, an ornate sword and suit of armor taken from the body in the stone casket, and a set of notes that include the password for the stone guardian in Room 2. (The notes may also include an explanation of how the rivals got the password when the PCs didn't.)

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Room 5 is actually a return to the first room in the tomb. As soon as anyone takes any treasures from Room 3 or Room 4 into the first room, undead emerge from the mural-covered walls to attack any living creatures they can find, giving preference to those who are carrying treasures from the tomb. (On the bright side, any characters who came prepared to fight undead will finally get their chance.) Although the characters can try to escape through the door to the outside, the slow opening of the heavy stone door will give the undead at least some time to attack. If the rivals from Room 4 are still alive at this point, their reaction will depend on their current attitude towards the party. The rivals may fight alongside the party, they may try to escape, or they may attempt to stay out of the way and let the undead and the party fight it out, hoping that whoever wins is weak enough that the rivals can finish the winners off. Of course, if the rivals leave with some of the treasure first, they will trigger the attack of undead, and the party will have to choose how to intervene.



Minaret of the Smoking Tankard

By Michael Sinclair

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The Courtyard

Approaching the Minaret of the Smoking Tankard, players find themselves in a seemingly empty and desolate courtyard. Ahead of them is the Minaret, a path encircling its base. No discernible entrance can be found. Scaling the structure is not an option; it is built in such a way that the feat is virtually impossible and is also protected by enchantments. Gaining entrance requires knowledge of the door's exact location. This knowledge is contained within the Ruby Orb of Memories. The Orb's physical presence is also required.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

Outer Ring Room

Once inside the Minaret, players are confronted by a second wall. This time the doors are visible. In fact, there are as many doors as there are party members, plus one extra. The problem is that each door must be opened simultaneously. If one remains closed, the Minaret becomes "locked down"; outer exit is sealed preventing escape, inner chambers are literally filled with sand, effectively trapping players inside indefinitely. To proceed, the players are going to need to find a local to cooperate and open the final door.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

Inner Chamber Room

After passing through the doors, the players will find themselves at the base of a spiral staircase. Unlucky for them, the local they found actually turns out to be a protector of the Ruby Orb of Memories and so recognizes the players as trespassers. Acting as though he knows nothing of this, the local attempts to trigger a silent alarm of sorts. If successful, the journey may not be as easy as they would have hoped....

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

Stairway up the Shaft

Regardless of whether or not the local was successful in their attempt to trigger the alarm, the party will find themselves facing a colony of bats looking to escape the tower. Numbering in the hundreds of thousands, these bats will be very likely to knock the players from the staircase several stories up. A mage with fiery spells would come in handy here, or perhaps enough swords can cut these flying mammals from their path.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

Upper Chamber Room

If the local was successful in triggering the alarm, the chamber they find themselves in at the top of the stairs will be alive with ghastly beasts, summoned from the depths of time. They may be without souls, but they are not without wit. Should the local not have made an escape already, they can be used as cannon fodder for the attack. Defeat is easiest achieved through proper use of the Ruby Orb. Perhaps it can be used to recall the beasts, or maybe used to focus arcane magic offensively.

After defeating the last of the guards, the players find themselves standing before a pedestal. Upon the pedestal and protected by a glass dome is an elegantly designed tankard. Myths speak of its bottomlessness, but its true power lies in its ability to infuse any common ale with powers any ruler would kill for. To keep it for their gain, or to sell it for limitless wealth, that is the question.



The Witchwood

By H L

A somewhat stereotypical medieval fantasy adventure, with a bit of a twist. If the name Witchwood is too cheesy for your group, Morichthonius Wood is a suggested alternative. (Latin-derived name meaning 'death from under the ground.')

Everything isn't in exactly the same order as in the guidelines, but it's all there.

Magic forests are common in fantasy, but where do they get their magic? Legend goes that the potent magic of the Witchwood stems from a bound demon, trapped below the earth long ago. This demon was bound along with a great treasure horde, sacrificed as part of an elaborate ritual to ensure that the demon would remain forever sealed in its prison.

Many centuries later, but still very long ago, an altar was built over the demon's cage, where creatures greedy for some of the demon's power could offer sacrifices. The dark magic from the many sacrifices seeped into the surrounding woods, and now the trees in the center of the forest grow so tightly together that they form a maze. Stories say that, on the dark and the full of the moon, a path can be opened through the maze by those who know the proper spell.

Room One: Entrance and Guardian

The Witchwood

The Witchwood is a vast, sprawling forest. Nearby villagers have many superstitions about it; one particularly strong one is that it is very unlucky to enter the forest on the full or the new moon. Villagers lock their doors on such nights, rarely even venturing from their homes. Odd creatures are often sighted on the fringes of the forest; the deeper one ventures, the more powerful and more dangerous the inhabitants become. Some creatures within the forest are friendly, but most are indifferent or hostile. Even to those unafraid of a fight, the forest is a spooky place, glimmering with a perpetual twilight, and filled with the song of strange birds. Even at midnight, the birdsong does not cease - however, no birds are visible in the forest, nor are any other typical woodland creatures. Many stories abound about the source of the eerie songs - who knows if any are true?

The maze in the center of the forest is not difficult to find. However, it is nearly impossible to enter it without the proper spell. This spell may be inscribed on a stone somewhere in the forest in the form of a riddle, or perhaps the party already knows the spell. If not, some of the friendly creatures within the forest know the spell, and will help, for a suitable reward. An unfriendly creature might even be tricked into revealing the spell.

If the spell is performed at the entrance to the maze, during the middle third of the night on a full or dark moon, a pathway will open straight through the maze.

Room Two: Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge

The Glade

At the center of the maze is a glade, in which is a large, elaborate, bloodstained altar. Surrounding the altar are strange, warped creatures who attack the party. These creatures appear humanoid, and are dressed in human clothing, but possess some demonic features. There may also be a large wolf or bear. When a fight takes place near the altar, any blood spilled directly on the altar enhances the creatures in a way that is associated with the character or creature whose blood was spilled. The creatures can be lured away from the altar - in fact, some may try to escape the glade altogether.

Upon closer examination of the bodies, the creatures will be revealed to be carrying things usually associated with adventurers, such as a map, gold, spell scrolls, a holy symbol, and maybe even enchanted weapons. Some of the items and clothes possessed by the creatures seem to be very, very old. If one of the creatures was a bear or wolf, the body will transform back into a humanoid after death.

Room Three: Trick or Setback

The Guardian

Once the glade has been cleared of enemies, the guardian spirit of the altar will appear. It will demand to know why the party is worthy to brave the might of the demon and win the treasures concealed beneath the altar. Depending on the party make-up, they may prove this via righteousness, cleverness, wisdom, skill, musical talent, or other relevant means. There may even be an individual challenge for each party member depending on class.

If the party fails to satisfy the guardian, it can resurrect any dead creature whose blood is upon the altar, no matter how old that blood may be (and including any possible dead party members). If the party defeats

several of the guardian's creatures, the guardian may change its mind; alternately, it may decide that the party is not worth continuing to expend its resources, and vanish.

Once the guardian is convinced that the party is worthy, the altar will split into several parts, which move aside to reveal a ladder into a hidden cave. If the party cannot get the guardian to cooperate, this same effect can be achieved by sacrificing the bodies of the slain creatures, and possibly some of the treasure, on the altar. This can be discovered by reading these instructions in any one of several ancient, arcane languages inscribed on the altar.

Room Four: Climax, Big Battle, or Conflict

The Cavern

In the very center of the cavern is the demon, who actually turns out to be a demoness. She is bound in magical chains, and will plead with the party to free her. This can be done simply by touching the chains and willing them to vanish. If the party does intentionally free the demoness, the guardian of the altar will appear, enraged, and the battle will become a three-way melee with the demoness and guardian attacking both each other and the party. The guardian cannot resurrect creatures while in the demoness' domain, but it itself is a formidable opponent. If the party defeats the demoness in this way, all of the treasure will be available - however, some of the treasure may be destroyed during the battle, as it will not be protected.

If the party tries to attack the demoness while she is chained, portions of the treasure will be destroyed, commensurate with how much of the chains are destroyed. The chains will be completely destroyed before the demoness is slain; however, she will be significantly weakened.

If the party ignores the demoness, they will quickly notice the treasure stacked about the room, in piles marking the cardinal points of concentric circles. Each stack is covered with a translucent magical 'bubble.' These bubbles can be destroyed simply by touching them, but may deal a very small amount of the damage to the creature who does so. Each bubble that is broken weakens the binding on the demoness; the more treasure the party removes, the stronger the demoness will be. The demoness will probably not mention this fact. The demoness may elect to pretend to still be trapped until a significant amount of the binding is broken, or she may attack as soon as she is able. If any unbroken bubbles are bumped into by the party in the course of the fight, they will break, further strengthening the demoness. The demoness herself cannot harm the bubbles, and because of this, they make adequate shields against any area attacks she may employ.

If the party discovers that they are unable to overcome the demoness, there may be a method to re-dedicate the treasure and strengthen the seal. This will weaken the demoness. However, any treasure that remains sealed when the demoness is slain will vanish. The difficulty of the encounter is thus dependent on the party's greed.

Room Five: Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist

The Aftermath

The pathway through the maze is only open while the moon, shadowed or full, is high in the sky. The party must quickly haul the treasure out of the cavern and escape the maze before the path closes, or else face the fate of the former adventurers they slew on the way in. To complicate things, the altar guardian is actually bound, not to the altar, but to the demoness - and now, to the treasure.

Depending on the party's previous actions, this may be a help or a hindrance in leaving the woods. Perhaps the party will be sympathetic to the guardian, and vow to help free it from the treasure. Alternately, the angry guardian may act as a curse on the treasure, which must be removed before any of the items can safely be used. The guardian may even impede the party's attempts to make it safely out of the maze. If there is an interesting or surprising story behind the demoness's original imprisonment, the guardian may reveal it, prompting further questing on the part of the party.

Now that the demoness is gone, the Witchwood may begin to change. Perhaps the magic fades, or perhaps it simply becomes friendlier. Or maybe the demoness was never actually the source of the magic in the first place, and there are other magical treasures to be found in the woods.

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.