# THE CLASSIC
# DUNGEON
# DESIGN GUIDE

## KENT DAVID KELLY

WONDERLAND
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WORKS OF FANTASY

# CASTLE OLDSKULL

## The Classic Dungeon Design Guide

**(Supplement CDDG1)**

*An Old School Supplement*
*For Fantasy Role-Playing Games*

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*Only the Finest Works of Fantasy*

**OSR**

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> "Flee then, loquacious fool. What do you think we care of lore and parley and introductions? What is there to understand? We kick the door down, and we charge in with weapons drawn."
>
> — *Anonymous, Famous Last Words*

## Description

**A Platinum Medal DriveThruRPG Best Seller**

*Deep dwarven cities of the underworld,*

*Infested by conquering orcs,*

*Enslaved by demons of skull and pyre ...*

*Black labyrinths of mad demigods,*

*Proving grounds for daring adventurers*

*And graveyards for greedy fools ...*

*Twisting passages, all alike,*

*Where lurking trolls and shadow beasts*

*Guard the deepest riddles of the nether ...*

If you have ever wanted to know how to quickly and masterfully create your own mega-dungeon for your pen-and-paper Fantasy Role-Playing Game (PNP FRPG) campaigns, this is the perfect book for you. This Game Master's guide will show you, step by step, how to take your vague-yet-promising ideas and how to sculpt them with precise and careful design decisions (enhanced, if you prefer, by random die rolls), allowing you to conceive an endless mega-dungeon in record time.

Best of all, the CASTLE OLDSKULL CLASSIC DUNGEON DESIGN GUIDE is also *system-neutral*. No matter which of the many FRPGs you choose to play, from basic skill level to advanced, a first edition or a fifth or anything in between, the lessons you master here will serve you in your gaming for years to come. Learn how to make the most of your ever-dwindling prep time, so that you can spend those saved hours gaming with your friends!

This old school Guide is filled to overflowing with nearly 200 pages of design material and dungeon generation tables. Highlights include:

➢ *Hack and slash and beyond.* 39 adventure scenarios, with 20 diabolical twists, totaling 780 great ideas for your next campaign.

➢ *A myriad of options.* Over 10,000 unusual benefactors ("quest givers"), unusual wilderness encounters your players will never forget, and extensive rumor and dungeon history generation systems.

➢ *Every endless labyrinth ever, under one cover.* Extensive details on realistic underworlds, hundreds of dungeon dressing ideas, over 10,000 room types, and much more.

➢ *The imagined made real.* A complete second book is included herein as a detailed example of dungeon design, featuring many pages of specific examples. The **Goblin Head** campaign environment supplement reveals exactly how a 13-level mega-dungeon can be conceived in a matter of hours.

The CLASSIC DUNGEON DESIGN GUIDE is brought to you by Kent David Kelly of Wonderland Imprints, a role-player and Game Master with over 35 years of play experience. Best of all, if there are any other materials you would like to see relating to

dungeon design, feel free to contact the author. Many more CASTLE OLDSKULL supplements are being prepared specifically to support the players, initiates and Game Masters of the Old School Revival (OSR). This Guide is your gateway to the realms of sword and sorcery. Join us for the adventure!

(A complete reference work designed to supplement existing pen-and-paper Fantasy Role-Playing Games. 12 chapters, over 100 section topics; organized via a fully ordered table of contents. Just one of the proud creations available now from Wonderland Imprints — *Only the Finest Works of Fantasy*.)

# Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of the great classic dungeon and fantasy milieu designers who are no longer with us: David Lance Arneson, M.A.R. Barker, Bob Bledsaw, E. Gary Gygax, Dr. John Eric Holmes, Tom Moldvay, and David Trampier. It is also dedicated to the great fantasists who inspired them, some of whom are fortunately still with us today: Poul William Anderson, Edgar Rice Burroughs, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Michael Moorcock, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Jack Vance. In the spirit of creating wonders with which to inspire others to write their own unique works of enchantment, the author salutes you.

# Incantation

Thus roving on in confused march forlorn,

The adventurous bands

With shuddering horror, pale, and eyes aghast

Viewed first their lamentable lot, and found

No rest. Through many a dark and dreary

vale

They passed, and many a region dolorous,

Over many a frozen and many a fiery Alp.

Through rocks, caves, lakes,

Fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death …

A universe of death …

All monstrous, all prodigious things

Abominable, inutterable, and worse

Than fables yet have told, or fear conceived,

Beholding Gorgons, and Hydras,

And Chimaeras dire.

— An adapted excerpt from *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton
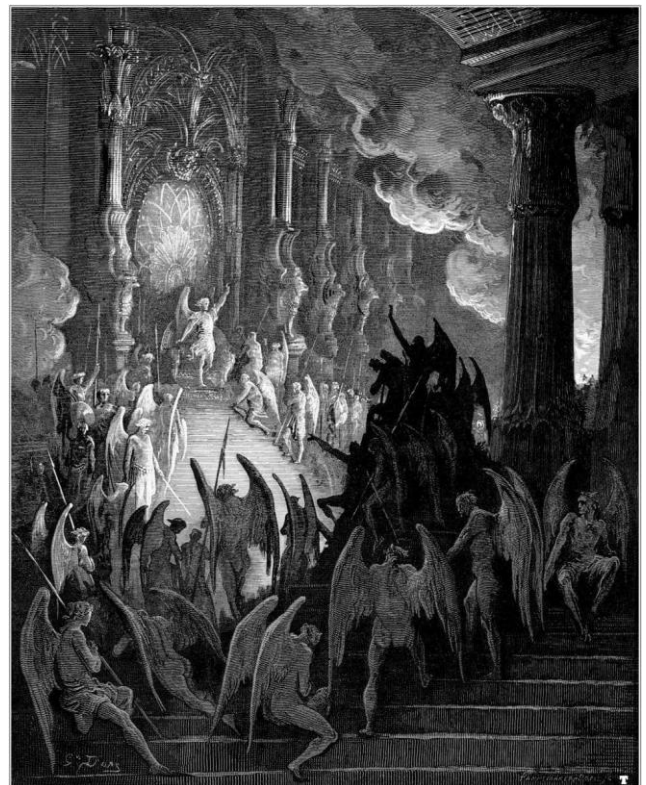
# CHAPTER 2: PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

> "And so the adventurous souls arrived, one by one, at the Emerald Wyvern Tavern, an establishment of some repute which stands high upon a hill overlooking the Shores of the Great Black Loch, the Loch of Fathoms Numberless."
>
> — *The preamble of the Canticle of the Mad, as sung by the Great Bard, Tansorian Gaxegon*

## How to Use This Book

*The Classic Dungeon Design Guide* is by no means a replacement for your own creativity. Rather, it is designed to spur the imagination, to offer unexpected ideas which you may not have come up with on your own. The secrets herein are intended to fill in the spots in your dungeon which you were uncertain about, and to speed up the entire development process by eliminating as much of the "grunt work" as possible.

The book is laid out in a sequence so that you can create a dungeon step by step, from initial adventure conception to the intricate details of the labyrinthine rooms themselves. Please note that monsters and treasures, as well as tricks and traps, are beyond the scope of this single work; but two more extensive volumes in these series explore these subjects in detail.

Nevertheless, the book is vast and thorough. You will find it to be one of the most elaborate and detailed treatises on the topic. When designing a dungeon you can use this entire Guide page for page, or you can pick and choose the particular sections that will enhance your already-existing partial creation. Once you are familiar with this tome and its contents, you should be able to plan an adventure, create a dungeon theme and generate between one to three dungeon levels in just a day or two ... easily enough time to be prepared for a good long weekend gaming session.

To make use of the random elements in this Guide, you will require two 10-sided polyhedral dice. These special dice, available from gaming stores and online retailers, will allow you to generate random percentage rolls with results varying from 1 to 100 (1d100). Note that when you are rolling, you use both dice. The first die should be read as tens, while the second is read as ones. A roll of 8 and 7, therefore, would indicate a result of 87; while a roll of 0 and 3 would give a result of 3. A double zero always equals one hundred.

If you do own physical dice, but have a home computer, you can quickly replicate the d100 function in Excel (or any similar spreadsheet program) by entering the following function in a cell:

=RANDBETWEEN(1,100)
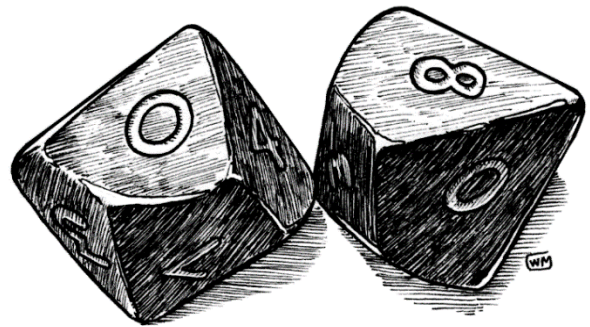
This will give a result between 1 and 100 with a single key press. You can copy this formula to other cells to roll multiple times at once, and you can press F9 to "reroll" your electronic dice at any time.

Random rolls can provide fascinating and surprising results, and will challenge your creativity as you try to make unexpected combinations work in a plausible manner. This chaotic effect is intentional, and is meant to get you thinking in unforeseen directions.

However, this book can never be a replacement for your intelligence. Do not let the dice rule you. Nonsensical results should always be rerolled. If (for example) your dungeon lies deep in the jungle and the dice indicate an arctic encounter, reconsideration is certainly in order. Similarly, you as the GM should ignore any result which you dislike, regardless of whether it is a matter of game balance, play style, or simply your personal preference. Always overrule *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide* when you are not satisfied with its random suggestions. At the same time, however, give each result consideration before you disregard it.

## Adventure Scenarios

An adventure scenario is a "plot hook," a suggested reason for the Player Characters (PCs) to enter the dungeon. Sometimes, riches and danger and enticing secrets are enough to tempt the unwary; but a good GM will always provide one or more higher reasons to entice the players and to make them want to know more about the underworld.

As a rule of thumb, your adventure can have from one to three scenarios at a time. One scenario idea is sufficient to drive a small adventure, and three can instigate the beginning of an entire campaign. Note also that some of the suggestions below imply that an earlier adventure has taken place with certain conditions, and the scenario presents a follow-up. For first-time adventures, these results should be rerolled.

Once you have decided how many scenarios you would like to feature in your dungeon, roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-02] The Alliance in the Deeps (Basic-Intermediate):** The adventurers are asked to find a beleaguered allied faction in the dungeon (dwarves, gnomes, subterranean humans, etc.) and to render an offer of allegiance on their benefactor's behalf.

**[03-04] Blood League (Intermediate):** The PCs' goal is to find an adventurous allied faction in the dungeon (dwarven giant slayers, elven dragon hunters, halfling burglars, etc.) and to assist them on a mission in the deeper dungeon.

**[05-06] Bodyguard Escort (Basic-Intermediate):** PCs are hired to escort their benefactor into the dungeon and to protect him on a peculiar mission (collecting monster parts for potion creation, gathering ancient scrolls for spell research, returning a dwarven noble to his underground homeland, etc.)

**[07-09] Bound for Justice (Intermediate-Advanced):** A powerful enemy who is wanted alive (a wizard gone rogue, a baron's only son, an extremely rare monster, etc.) has surrounded himself/itself with traps and minions in a nearby dungeon stronghold. The adventurers are tasked with capturing the subject ... alive, if at all possible.

**[10-11] Bounty Hunting (Advanced):** A dozen criminals, escaped gladiators or other assorted ne'er-do-wells have been discovered in a nearby dungeon ruin, plotting revenge against the king who deposed them. The adventurers are asked to take in as many of these enemies as they can, dead or preferably alive, for a significant bounty. The Non-Player Characters (NPCs) should be colorful, powerful and perhaps sympathetic. Counter-bounties (with the evil hunted ones hiring humanoids or monsters to capture the PCs) can make things interesting.

**[12-13] The Curse Eternal (Intermediate, Dependent on Earlier Circumstance):** A vile curse (an infernal strain of lycanthropy, a cursed sword which cannot be dropped, an incurable wasting disease, etc.) afflicted one of the adventurers in the last scenario, and the only cure to be found is in a distant dungeon.

**[14-15] Destroying the Relic (Advanced):** A powerful item (a magical ring, an artifact, a lich's phylactery, etc.) proves to be too evil an influence to maintain (causing madness, disease, summoning demons, etc.). The item needs to be destroyed in a certain dungeon in a certain way (thrown into a volcano, shattered with the Hammer of Kolm, fed to a dragon, etc.). The owner of the item — perhaps a henchman, associate or PC — may have other plans ...

**[16-18] Divine Slaughter (Intermediate):** The adventurers are tasked with entering a truly evil place (the temple of a mad god, a haven for demon worshippers, the future locale of Armageddon) and slaying the monsters there in the name of a sacred cause. They are aided by a force of good (a trapped demigod, an imprisoned elf lord, an intelligent sword) which they recover as the first goal of their dungeon mission. For added fun, monsters encountered can be made more numerous and dangerous if the PCs are backed up by a contingent of NPC cleric healers.

**[19-20] The Dungeon Base Mission (Intermediate):** The adventurers are tasked with clearing the ruins and the upper level of a dungeon, so that their benefactor can move in a legion of troops to wage war on the monsters lurking in the lower depths. The dungeon thus becomes the PCs' base of operations, with weapon shops, taverns, raids to defend against, etc. In a future scenario, the adventurers may well lead these troops on missions of their own, growing the temporary base into a full-fledged underground village.

**[21-23] The Dungeon Adventure Reprise (Intermediate, Dependent on Earlier Circumstance):** A dungeon the adventurers cleared long ago when they were neophytes (a kobold lair, a bandit hideout, a ruined castle, etc.) has recently been taken over by powerful monsters (evil elves, a dragon, fire giants, etc.). The adventurers are given a significant reason return to a familiar setting with far deadlier foes and unexpected traps and reconstruction, while using their past knowledge of secret doors and dungeon features to their advantage.

**[24-25] The Escape from Insidious Peril (Intermediate-Advanced, Dependent on Earlier Circumstance):** In the last adventure, the heroes were captured by an overpowering enemy (slavers, the evil wizard, the evil elves, etc.) They may be interrogated, charmed and forced to serve for a time, or even forced to fight one another in an arena to the near-death for sport. A grim opportunity (a fellow prisoner, a traitor, a

henchman who has come to rescue them) presents itself, and the adventurers make an escape from their cells. They must reclaim their equipment, flee their captors and perhaps even seize the chance for some hard-won revenge.

**[26-28] The Evil Lord Perilous Arises (Basic-Intermediate):** In this adventure, the arch-enemy (a chaotic fighter, the Grandfather of Assassins, a lich, etc.) has returned and surrounded himself with vile minions. The adventurers are asked to rid the world of this foul bane once and for all. Evil lords can be relatively minor (a nasty and wily kobold chieftain, for instance) and still provide a considerable threat — especially if surrounded by traps and minions. Some evil lords (if the players love to hate them) can become recurring villains.



**[29-31] Exploring the Unknown (Basic):** The players are simply enticed by a remarkable environment (a crystal maze filled with waterfalls, a fungal garden being

tamed by druids and beast masters, an underground sea plied by ships with spider-silk sails, etc.) and wish to explore it. The lure to this area can be a map, a vision in a crystal or a dream, a strange inscription, or simply a dramatic overlook view described by the GM.

**[32-33] The Fallen One ... Avenged? (Intermediate, Dependent on Earlier Circumstance):** A beloved adventurer or ally was slain in the last adventure, and has come back in a horrid form (a vampire, a twisted mirror image, part of a flesh golem, etc.) and needs to be put to rest by his faithful former companions. A merciful GM might allow successful completion of this dungeon adventure to grant a wish or similar magic, restoring the fallen comrade to life.

**[34-35] Familial Calling and Family Drama (Basic-Intermediate):** One of the PCs is asked to assist in a family matter (a brother has been kidnapped by pirates, a haunted mansion has been inherited, a strange heirloom is found when the family steading burns down, etc.) which leads to a high stakes dungeon adventure. These types of adventures can be used to create long-term familial allies, and to help add some depth to a formerly uninspired PC.

**[36-38] The Gate (Intermediate):** The dungeon is the shell surrounding a magical gate; for example, the gateway to Hell ("Abandon all hope ..."), or a dimensional rift which leads into another time, world or alternate dimension. The adventurers either want to enter the dungeon and use the gate to enter another world, or they want to destroy it to prevent an invasion or some other kind of terrible calamity.

**[39-40] The Great Hunt Is On (Basic-Intermediate):** The adventurers are hired to capture a rare monster alive — perhaps a young badgerbear, a beautiful griffon, some endangered unicorns, or even some silver dragon eggs. The party's benefactor may or

may not have good intentions. The monster might well be worthy of sympathy, or the adventurers might feel the lure of greed and want the monster as a future mount, companion or guard-beast for themselves. "NPC monsters" who are rescued (and therefore devoutly faithful to the group) can make excellent defenders if the party is currently underpowered.

**[41-44] Hack and Slash in Excelsis (Basic):** The adventurers are asked to enter a dungeon and to kill every monster they can find, taking any treasures they can discover as their blood price and reward. The enemies are of a kind that is universally despised (a murderous cannibal orc tribe, the minions of the Ghoul King, the pirate assassins who murdered the Faerie Queen, etc.) and moral issues are few and far between. The goal quite simply is to kill them, and to kill them all.



**[45-46] Inciting a War (Advanced):** Two immense swarms of monsters (evil elves and Deep Ones, two gnole tribes, demons and devils, etc.) populate a nearby dungeon and are preparing to eradicate nearby human cities. The outmatched adventurers are called upon to decimate the fiends' numbers. They must start a war between the two hordes, perhaps by slaughtering a few

guardians on each side and then planting evidence which indicates the other faction is to blame. Once the violence begins, the adventurers will all too happily make the situation even more chaotic by adding to the slaughter as best they can.

**[47-48] Leadership and Minions Galore (Intermediate):** The adventurers are asked to escort their benefactor's force (fighters, men-at-arms, druid initiates, etc.) to the dungeon, and then to lead them in a campaign to purge the dungeon of evil forces. Challenges unique to command — morale, supply, deserters, fighting in formation, disobedience, slack guards on the night watch, etc. — will probably come into play so that the players can refine their leadership skills.

**[49-51] Lore and Legendry of the Labyrinths (Intermediate):** A clue (a treasure map, a mad sage, a magic mouth uttering a prophecy, etc.) gives the adventurers the location of an extremely valuable and fabled treasure (the lost trove of the ancient dragon, a 1,000,000 gold coin value gem, an artifact or relic, etc.). The treasure will of course be in the depths of a deadly dungeon. For added fun, the same clue can fall into the hands of a rival group of NPC adventurers.

**[52-53] The Lost Race (Intermediate):** The adventurers enter a dungeon and learn of a vast netherworld ruled by a forgotten race (the evil elves, the Deep Ones, the Implementers, the serpent people much like those who dwell in Pellucidar, etc.) and this new world becomes the focus of a new underworld campaign. Issues of culture clash (invasions, disease, holy wars, gold rushes, colonization and wiped out colonies, etc.) are likely to come to the fore.

**[54-55] The Lost Shrine Reclaimed (Basic-Intermediate):** The dungeon was once a place of great good, and an ancient ruined temple remains hidden in the deeps. Perhaps the kingdom is being destroyed and the adventurers will need to wake a slumbering god of paladins and justice, whose temple is now split into pieces by seismic activity in the underworld.

**[56-57] Mission of Mercenary (Basic-Intermediate):** The rather questionable benefactor offers a lucrative reward if the adventurers will kidnap or kill a powerful rival. The target may be evil or innocent. This is an excellent urban dungeon adventure (which could require stealth, exploring sewer tunnels, avoiding patrols and the law, etc.). As a twist, the target may offer a very tempting counter-proposal if the adventurers are willing to betray and kidnap their employer.

**[58-60] The Mystery (Intermediate):** Something very strange occurs (a wizard once slain by the group returns as a vampire, a map leads to an ancient temple covered for centuries by an illusion, the king goes mad and declares the adventurers are now criminals with a death price on their heads, etc.), and the players want to know why. The answer lies within an unexpected dungeon. Of course, the solution to the group's troubles is never as simple as it seems.

**[61-62] Peace Mission (Advanced):** The PCs are called upon to settle a blood feud between two of their benefactor's allied factions (elven beast masters and dwarven trophy hunters, for example). To do this, they must perform a dungeon quest to earn the trust of each side. In classic cinematic fashion the GM might decide that exploring the dungeon wakes a horrible, overpowering evil which requires the two factions to band together with the PCs in the name of mutual survival.

**[63-64] The Plunge into the Nether (Intermediate-Advanced):** While the adventurers are exploring the wilderness (or even a night-enshrouded city street), a sinkhole opens and one or more PCs tumble down into the abyss. Naturally, the PC's companions will want to perform a rescue. For added fun, you can have the poor victim who crashes down into the depths be abducted by monsters and dragged away. The adventurers remaining on the surface will only hear a frantic scream, cut off by mad cackling. They may have only a few minutes to complete the descent and save their comrade.

**[65-66] Prisoner Rescue (Intermediate-Advanced):** The quest for the PCs is to infiltrate the dungeon and free the important prisoners (a captured paladin, damsel in distress, gnomish master smiths, etc.) without getting any of the rescued people killed. Fun twists include surprise prisoners (doppelgangers, illusions, madmen, etc.), nastiness (all the prisoners were killed and are now ghouls), or general mayhem (one of the prisoners is greedy and splits off from the group after rescue to go steal the dragon's chalice, and the awakened dragon pursues the group all the way back to town). Alternately, the adventurers may be seeking an important and/or mysterious NPC who was recently reported to have disappeared in the region of the dungeon's surround.
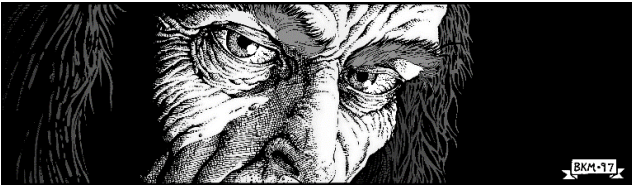
**[67-69] Prophecy (Basic-Intermediate):** The PCs must fulfill the ancient prophecy (the thief is fated to save the elder ki-rin or die in the trying, the weakest PC is the descendant of a lich, a portrait in a haunted mansion looks exactly like the party's leader, etc.). The adventurers will need to solve the mystery, avert a crisis, and hopefully secure a great reward.

**[70-73] The Quest (Basic):** One of the most archetypal and forthright scenarios. The party's benefactor hires them to fulfill a deed (purify the desecrated temple, slay the dragon, find the fabled robe of the elders, etc.) and offers a significant reward for doing so.

**[74-76] The Quest Once Again, Yet Corrupted (Intermediate):** Similar to the above, but the benefactor is not what he seems (a noble slain and replaced by a doppelganger, a wizard possessed by a demon, an assassin in disguise with the benefactor tied up in the cellar, etc.). The quest, once completed, involves the villain receiving a powerful treasure and using it against the adventurers, and then escaping (perhaps to become a recurring villain).

**[77-78] Race of Rogues (Intermediate-Advanced):** The adventurers are given a mission, but an elite group of evil NPC adventurers is competing with them in a race for the object / location / goal, possibly in service to an evil lord. These NPCs are just as powerful and cunning as the PCs, and the taunting role-playing encounters, thefts and skirmishes will be preludes to the deadly final conflict.

**[79-81] Rare Reagents Recovery (Basic-Intermediate):** The adventurers are hired to procure a rare spice, an exotic mushroom, a resonating crystal, or something similar, which can only be found in one evil-infested place underground. The Black Lotus, it is whispered, grows only in subterranean swamps where the Eyes of Azathoth behold and reign ...

**[82-83] The Reconnaissance Mission (Intermediate-Advanced):** The dungeon monsters are too strong for the benefactor's forces, and are preparing to conquer the cities of good. To even the odds, excellent reconnaissance on the enemy numbers, leaders and weaknesses must be acquired by daring scouts. The adventurers must first use stealth to gather the information, then return to their benefactor, and finally ally with the NPC forces of good in a desperate fight against the odds.

**[84-85] Repelling the Invasion (Basic-Intermediate):** The dungeon is controlled by an allied faction (a dwarven city, a diamond mine, a ruling thieves' guild, a cabal of underworld wizards, etc.) as a subterranean stronghold. Monsters swarm up from the deeper levels and invade. The adventurers need to defend the "good dungeon" against the invaders, using the dungeon level's traps, tricks and allied "monsters" to overcome the odds.

**[86-87] The Restless Spirits (Basic-Intermediate):** A fabled cabal of once-good personages (the dwarf kings of old, the extinct order of dragon slayers, the Ancients who created the human race, etc.) are trapped in this world as haunting spirits, and cannot rest until the evil usurper within the dungeon (an evil high priest, an Eye of Azathoth, a demon lord, etc.) has been slain. Drama can be heightened if the evil lord is actually the last fallen survivor of the once-good race.

**[88-90] Saving the Scion (Basic-Intermediate):** A rare, good monster (a copper dragon in a world where good dragons are almost extinct, an ancient tree giant, a ki-rin, or perhaps a shedu with unique knowledge of the past) is in peril, and needs to be rescued. The PCs may find themselves acting in concert with unexpected allies; for example, a small army of elves and halflings hoping to save the world's oldest good dragon from a legion of invading Deep Ones.

**[91-92] Surprise, I'm Not Me (Advanced):** This adventure hook works best with a willing player who loves mischief. Take that player into your confidence while you are planning the adventure … and you should probably reassure him that his character will not be dead before the game even begins! To set this hook up, begin the adventure with the PCs relaxing and having a good time. A feast, tavern revel, or campfire storytelling session might be appropriate. Suddenly, one of the PCs reveals he is not what he seems. An illusion melts away, the full moon comes out and someone turns into a werewolf, or a doppelganger decides it is time to flee. The interloper dashes away (toward the nearest dungeon, of course), leaving the players wondering: should we follow? And if that thing isn't Bob, then where is Bob? Mercifully, the GM may want to allow the helpful player to adventure as a fairly powerful NPC until poor Bob can be relocated (and hopefully rescued).

**[93-94] The Thwarted Collector (Basic):** A wealthy benefactor would like the PCs to enter a notoriously deadly dungeon, seize a wondrous treasure (an intelligent weapon, an arch-mage's spell book, a cauldron of one hundred potions), and bring it back for a monetary reward. Of course, any canny player will strongly consider keeping the hard-won treasure as a prize in itself, and much of the adventure might entail the repercussions of such a decision.

**[95-97] Trailblazing (Intermediate):** A benefactor asks the adventurers to clear the wilderness (a lost path, an overgrown canal, a ley line, a series of open-sky caves, etc.) of all beasts and monsters, thereby connecting the base of operations to the dungeon locale. Once the path has been cleared, a force of NPCs will be sent to assist the adventurers in clearing the dungeon. This may be the beginning of a "colonization" campaign.

**[98-00] Words of Terrible Power (Basic-Intermediate):** There looms a golden gate

within the mountainside, a gate immune to all forms of magic. A mighty artifact is said to lie in the deepest vault inside. The gate has been sealed for three thousand years. The password is in the clutches of an ancient dragon's crystal ball, and the dragon's power prevents anyone from magically spying on it or learning the password in any way. The dragon, it seems, must die.

The particular details will need to be individualized by the GM to suit the players and the appropriate level of challenge.

## Scenario Twists

The scenario twist is an unexpected complication which makes the adventure more interesting. No table can do justice to the idea of a truly worthy and devious twist. In devising the twist the GM should be devious in the extreme. For those GMs who are stumped or who find themselves compelled to invent a new twist on the spur of the moment, however, here are 20 suggestions to stir your imagination.

Results are described as follows. The GM will need to adjust the severity of the twist to accommodate the skill level, patience, and creativity of the players.

**[01-04] Accursed Affliction.** During the adventure, a curse / unholy relic / lycanthrope / vampire afflicts one of the party members, and the cure (a shrine of good, a fountain, a spell book, etc.) lies much deeper in the dungeon.

**[05-08] Backstabbing and Betrayal.** A traitor / doppelganger / shape-shifter infiltrates the party and betrays them at the worst possible time.

**[09-12] Catastrophe.** (For groups of advanced skill.) Something strange and horrible happens. As one example, the badly-wounded adventurers have slain a dragon and are carrying a huge treasure chest filled with magic items. They turn the corner, and come face to face with exact but evil duplicates of themselves, carrying a chest filled with the exact same treasures. The PCs' chest melts away as it if were only an illusion.

**[13-17] A Change of Plans.** Discovering a secret area or trap (falling down a waterfall and into a locked treasure vault) changes the mission entirely. Alternately, the adventurers may accidentally rescue an important NPC (a princess, a wounded elderly wizard, a hatching good dragon wyrmling) and realize that they need to return to the surface quickly … likely for a reward.

**[18-22] Dante's Revenge.** The dungeon opens into the netherworld / an alternate prime / a different time / or another plane of existence. The adventurers must deal with the new, much more hostile environment they discover.

**[23-27] Dungeons Deeper.** Clearing the dungeon also results in the adventurers finding or saving a group of NPCs (halfling treasure seekers, elven artifact hunters, tomb robbers, etc.). These NPCs possess a key / password / spell leading into even deeper dungeons, and certainly a much more valuable and alluring treasure as well.

**[28-32] Dungeons Stranger Still.** The dungeon the group was expecting is not the one they discover (example, they fall into a pit, open a secret trapdoor, and look out into an upside-down cavern wilderness filled with butterflies and cave dinosaurs).

**[33-37] Environmental Cataclysm.** The dungeon changes while it is being explored (a flood submerges many rooms, an earthquake opens a fissure to undiscovered caverns, etc.).

**[38-42] Forbidden Stronghold.** The monsters gain the upper hand. The monster population proves to be far too overwhelming for a direct assault; a different approach (stealth, hit and run, disguise, infiltration, alliance, etc.) will be required.

**[43-47] The Gaxegon.** The evil overlord / race / terror is actually serving a far greater evil power (a demon lord, arch-devil, demigod, etc.). The adventurers must discern the secret nature of the evil hierarchy, seek out the true puppet masters and kill them.

**[48-52] Hunters Become the Hunted.** Bounty hunters or assassins have followed the adventurers into the dungeon and are seeking to capture / kidnap / kill them for their own reward.

**[53-56] Imbalance of Power.** When the most powerful monster (a red dragon, a devil, etc.) is slain, all of the other monster factions in the dungeon gather forces to fight for the newly-ownerless treasure hoard.



**[57-61] The Lord Duplicitous.** The benefactor was not telling the truth about the adventure, or is not what he seems, or secretly wants to get the adventurers killed / framed / lost.

**[62-65] Obsessive Behavior.** A treasured intelligent sword, when "rescued," takes over its wielder and compels the beginning of a new adventure to fulfill its special purpose.

**[66-70] The Perilous Fate.** A player decision (stealing a forbidden crown that animates 6,666 zombies, for example) immediately causes the mission to change (in this example, from treasure hunt to panicked escape).

**[71-75] Serious Competition.** A rival group of NPC adventurers has been hired and is acting against the PCs to reach the same goal. Things can get interesting if the rivals are good-aligned, or if killing the rivals would have grave consequences.

**[76-80] Two Goals for the Price of One.** After the adventure gets started, spring another goal on the party. (For example, the PCs may be setting out to the dungeon to spy on a powerful army of monsters, when they encounter a few desperate elven spy NPCs who stop them and say that they have friends being held for ransom by the monsters.) If the adventurers are forced to choose between their intended goal and the new goal, with certain disaster for one side of the equation, all the better.

**[81-85] Ungrateful Allies.** A haughty demi-human group (exiled dwarves, elven rangers, etc.) arrives to lay claim to the adventurers' hard-won treasure or cleared dungeon rooms. They may have a legitimate ancestral claim, and they are probably none too kind about it.

**[86-90] Underworld of Evil.** It turns out that the dungeon is actually sentient, or filled with a collective of haunts who try to kill or deter the adventurers (slamming doors, bleeding walls, winds dousing torches, etc.).

**[91-95] Unintended Surroundings.** On the way to the dungeon, the adventurers are captured by monsters and must escape from a different dungeon entirely (an underworld goblin town, netherworld prison, stronghold of evil gnomes, etc.). They may or may not ever get to the intended area of exploration.

**[96-00] Villainous Complications.** The enemy the adventurers have been sent to kill is actually lawful good / mad / was possessed / not what he seems.

# Unusual Benefactors

The benefactor, in gaming parlance, is the NPC who provides an incentive for the PCs to go on the adventure. Not every scenario or group requires a benefactor, but they are common in the game and are fundamental to classic play (even if the adventurers typically have their own reasons for entering the dungeon).

Despite their usefulness to the GM, benefactors can quickly become cliché … much like the "quest givers" in online MMOs. If you are weary of regaling your players with yet another predictable preamble of, "The king / wizard / dwarf of the land has called upon you, wanting heroes to …" and you need something a little different, here is a selection of strange benefactors who can offer the adventurers a quest and begin the scenario. If the players do not trust the benefactor, or are intrigued by the person, or if they are morally conflicted, interesting subplots can occur.



Not every benefactor should be unusual, but they can certainly spice up a game if the players become too comfortable with the

routine. Do please note that these benefactor encounters are designed more for role-playing potential and uniqueness, and not necessarily to inspire feelings of goodwill between the GM and the players!

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. The GM will need to tailor the results to mesh appropriately with the campaign setting.

**[01]** The local lord (baron, count, marquis, king, etc.), but harboring a grim secret.

**[02]** A chaotic evil madman, doing an exceptionally fine impression of a sane person.

**[03]** A greedy but highly charismatic guild master, a villain with a heart of gold.

**[04]** An usurping mob of still-angry peasants, still counting their plundered treasure.

**[05]** A mysterious and wraith-like cloaked figure.

**[06]** A mischievous pseudo-dragon and her silver dragon protector.

**[07]** A halfling champion with a scarred throat and haunted eyes.

**[08]** A melancholy jester, garbed in silk and threads of gold.

**[09]** A dwarven rune priest and his nine surviving acolytes.

**[10]** A bored and highly annoyed eccentric dandy.

**[11]** A swirling eye glittering within a crystal ball.

**[12]** A drunken, chaotic fighter and his minotaur brawlers.

**[13]** A furious arena master and his sycophantic slavers.

**[14]** A mysterious ethereal woman riding a griffon.

**[15]** A grieving family with their scraped-together and meager wealth.

**[16]** An outlander elf lord and his giant eagles.

**[17]** An elven maiden riding a unicorn.

**[18]** A mischievous band of sprites and pixies.

**[19]** An old potbellied satyr and his maenads (female martial artists).

**[20]** Baba Yaga.

**[21]** A wide-eyed waif protected by a band of hunchbacked ogres.

**[22]** A wry and obsessive intelligent sword, willing to be wielded.

**[23]** A telepathic ring of wishes.

**[24]** A melancholy once-barbarian turned king.

**[25]** A pirate prince, carried in a litter by carnivorous apes.

**[26]** The disturbing, whispering voice of a dead god within the mind.

**[27]** The ghostly spirit of a great dragon.

**[28]** A long-dead friend rising within a dream.

**[29]** The long-time liege of one of the adventurers, badly wounded.

**[30]** The family of one of the party's henchmen.

**[31]** A band of tattooed dwarven exiles.

**[32]** A matriarchal gnomish clan and their caparisoned giant wolverines.

**[33]** A gathering of rangers based in the hollow tree of a haunted forest.

**[34]** The thieves' guild and their allies in the beggar's guild.

**[35]** A halfling assassin riding a giant spider.

**[36]** The assassins' guild, making an offer the adventurers cannot refuse.

**[37]** A neutral good half-orc boss and his merry boar-riding bandits.

**[38]** A monastic order of the three great martial arts masters in tenuous balance (one evil, one good and one neutral).

**[39]** A Sybil or prophet sitting atop her tripod in a chasm filled with glowing fumes.

[40] A lost tribe of albino savages from out of the depths, covered in gems and feathers.

[41] A wealthy hermit who lives in the treasure cave of a slain dragon.

[42] An ancient moss-covered tree giant upon the barrow hill.

[43] A mysterious lammasu atop its sandstone tower in the wasteland.

[44] A crippled and renowned elder huntsman, accompanied by his cave bear.

[45] A cunning and eccentric illusionist, followed by a legion of shadows.

[46] An embittered ducal widow and her sycophantic astrologer.

[47] A powerful wizard with a gleam in his eye.

[48] The goggled gnome piloting his magical Apparatus of Cwol.

[49] A high priest, circled by the giant snow owls from his temple.

[50] A beastman enthroned in his accursed palace.

[51] A kingdom in the shallows, of tritons and mermaids.

[52] A wereboar who has taken an oath of silence, and the berserker clan who speaks for him.

[53] A conniving and greedy elemental creature.

[54] The zombie master, surrounded by zombies and skeletons.

[55] A grumbling but amiable androsphinx.

[56] A band of inebriated centaurs offering rare stolen wines.

[57] A tribe of lizard men leading a subdued black dragon.

[58] A mournful titan sitting atop the mountain.

[59] A jolly and dangerous storm giant.

[60] A badly-wounded conclave of veteran adventurers.

[61] An arch-druid in his chariot of flame.

[62] An elven master thief and his retinue of leprechauns.

[63] A merchant prince in his desert caravansary.

[64] A Roma princess and her motley-mantled rogues.

[65] A deposed Grandfather of Assassins with a surprising code of honor.

[66] A wise and mysterious old blind woman, stirring her cauldron.

[67] A living mandrake root, the familiar of a mad druidess.

[68] The spirit of a legendary barbarian fighter.

[69] A guardian naga in her ancient treasure vault.

[70] A silent ranger surrounded by white wolves.

[71] A werebear in his forest lodge and the tree giants who are in council with him.

[72] The reflected nymph behind the waterfall.

**[73]** The feathered serpent in its rainbow shrine, surrounded by coiling vipers.

**[74]** A foul-tempered spirit trapped in a mirror.

**[75]** A family of cloud giants in their aerie castle.

**[76]** A tyrannical devil and his high priest captive.

**[77]** A riddling and extravagant genie noble.

**[78]** The satiric familiar of a distant but watchful arch-mage.

**[79]** An imprisoned demon and its lavish offer of riches.

**[80]** A princess encased in crystal, deep within a frozen lake.

**[81]** A polymorphed gold dragon surrounded by exotic songbirds.

**[82]** The avatar of a recently awakened chaotic neutral god or goddess.

**[83]** An imprisoned and dreaming demigod.

**[84]** A clan of hammer-dwarves and the master smith who leads them.

**[85]** Elves in gray lace, who dwell in a ruined palace.

**[86]** A band of halfling bounders and the shire-reeve who leads them.

**[87]** A beleaguered village of silent folk represented by their black-eyed elders.

**[88]** A leprosy-afflicted prince in his golden mask.

**[89]** A rising city faction of unlikely power (the jugglers' guild, the weavers' consortium, the Dark Crescent Menagerie).

**[90]** A drunken jouster, recently triumphant and bellowing at his tourney fete.

**[91]** The last, silver-bearded survivor of a legendary knightly order of paladins.

**[92]** A corrupt and mad overlord, carried by female slaves.

**[93]** A dwarf, an elf, a gnome and a halfling who are no longer speaking to one another.

**[94]** A tyrant who collects idols, statuettes, shrunken heads and blood dolls.

[95] An infamous traitor vowing to redeem himself.

[96] A wealthy collector, and his two counter-offering rivals.

[97] A befuddled sage atop a pile of scrolls, with birds nesting in his library.

[98] A fox-faced bard dressed in exquisite black leathers, coyly strumming a lyre.

[99] A meditating psion surrounded by piles of levitating gold.

[00] A dwarven alchemist, barely visible through a rack of bubbling potion bottles.

# Chaotically Random Benefactors

For over ten thousand more possibilities, GMs can also roll once on each of the following tables to create even more unusual benefactors. All results will demand GM creativity, and some results may be unworkable for some campaigns!

**Adjectives**

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. Where two or more interesting words appear, pick your favorite.

[01] Abhorrent, Abrasive, or Abyssal

[02] Accursed, Aggressive, or Alien

[03] Aloof, Altruistic, or Amnesiac

[04] Ancient, Antagonistic, Apologetic, or Arcane

[05] Arrogant, Astral, or Bawdy

[06] Beautiful, Befuddled, or Besieged

[07] Bewildering, Blackmailed, or Blasphemous

[08] Blind, Brave, or Brooding

[09] Cackling, Callous, Careless, or Chaotic

[10] Charismatic, Charnel, or Choleric

[11] Chthonic, Contrarian, or Corpulent

[12] Courteous, Corrupted, or Cowardly

[13] Craven, Criminal, or Crippled

[14] Crude, Cruel or Cryptic

[15] Cunning or Cursed

[16] Damned, Deathless, or Deceitful

[17] Deceived, Decrepit, or Deformed

[18] Delusionial, Demanding, or Demonic

[19] Deposed, Destitute, or Diabolic

[20] Diplomatic

[21] Diseased

[22] Domineering

[23] Doubtful or Dour

[24] Draconian

[25] Drunk / Drunken

[26] Dying

[27] Earnest or Eccentric

[28] Elderly or Eldritch

[29] Elegant, Emaciated, or Embittered

[30] Energetic

[31] Enlightened or Enshrouded

[32] Escaped or Ethereal

[33] Evil

[34] Exiled or Faceless

[35] Famous

[36] Fanatical

[37] Fearsome, Filthy, or Foolhardy

[38] Foul, Frightened, or Funereal

[39] Gaunt or Ghastly

[40] Ghoulish or Good

[41] Greedy or Grieving

[42] Grim or Grotesque

[43] Guarded or Guilt-Ridden

[44] Hallucinating, Hard-Hearted, or Hasturian

**[45]** Hateful or Haughty

**[46]** Haunted, Hedonistic, or Hideous



**[47]** Honorable or Horrible

**[48]** Horrifying, Hostile, or Hyperborean

**[49]** Hysterical, Ichthyoid, or Imprisoned

**[50]** Infamous or Infernal

**[51]** Infested or Inquisitive

**[52]** Jaundiced, Jealous, or Jesting

**[53]** Kindly or Kleptomaniacal

**[54]** Lawful, Lazy, or Lemurian

**[55]** Leprous, Loathsome, or Lusty

**[56]** Macabre or Mad

**[57]** Malevolent, Manic, or Manxome

**[58]** Malignant or Mephitic

**[59]** Mischievous, Misguided, or Mute

**[60]** Mysterious or Mystical

**[61]** Necromantic, Neurotic, or Neutral

**[62]** Oath-Bound or Obsessed

**[63]** Odious, Overbearing, or Pale

**[64]** Paranoid or Perfidious

**[65]** Pessimistic, Pleading, or Polymorphed

**[66]** Possessed

**[67]** Powerful, Predatory, Proud, or Quavering

**[68]** Questing / Geased

**[69]** Reanimated or Reborn

**[70]** Redeemed or Reptilian

**[71]** Repugnant, Repulsive, or Righteous

**[72]** Rude, Ruined, Ruthless, or Sacred

**[73]** Sadistic, Scabrous, or Scheming

**[74]** Scraggy, Secretive, or Seductive

**[75]** Sepulchral or Serpentine

**[76]** Shivering, Sickly, Silent, or Spectral

**[77]** Stygian, Subservient, Summoned, or Suspicious

**[78]** Terrified, Treacherous, Trusting, or Trustworthy

**[79]** Twisted, Undead, or Undying

**[80]** Unholy

**[81]** Unpredictable

**[82]** Untrustworthy

**[83]** Vainglorious

**[84]** Vengeful or Vile

**[85]** Violent, Vorpal, or Warmongering

**[86]** Wealthy

**[87]** Wild or Withered

**[88]** Worshipped

**[89]** Wounded or Wretched

**[90]** Xenophobic, Yithian, or Yuggothian

**[21]** Cleric, **[22]** Collector, **[23]** Conclave, **[24]** Conqueror, **[25]** Counselor, **[26]** Demigod, **[27]** Demon, **[28]** Devil, **[29]** Dragon, **[30]** Dragon Slayer

**[91-00]** Roll twice; if incompatible results are indicated, then two different benefactors are present

### Nouns (I)

GMs are encouraged to use Noun Table I 50% of the time, and Noun Table II 50% of the time. Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Adventurer, **[02]** Agent, **[03]** Alchemist or Animal Trainer, **[04]** Arena Master, **[05]** Armorer or Artificer, **[06]** Assassin, **[07]** Astrologer, **[08]** Bandit, **[09]** Barbarian, **[10]** Bard / Troubadour

**[11]** Beast Master, **[12]** Beggar or Berserker, **[13]** Blacksmith or Bodyguard, **[14]** Bounty Hunter or Brewer, **[15]** Cabal, **[16]** Cartographer or Cavalier, **[17]** Champion, **[18]** Charlatan, **[19]** Chieftain, **[20]** Child

**[31]** Druid, **[32]** Duelist, **[33]** Dwarf, **[34]** Elder, **[35]** Elemental Power, **[36]** Elf, **[37]** Explorer, **[38]** Faerie, **[39]** Familiar or Farmer, **[40]** Fighter

**[41]** Figurehead or Fisherman, **[42]** Genie, **[43]** Giant, **[44]** Giant Killer, **[45]** Gnome, **[46]** Godling, **[47]** Guild, **[48]** Guild Master, **[49]** Gypsy (Roma), **[50]** Half-Elf

**[51]** Half-Ogre, **[52]** Half-Orc, **[53]** Halfling, **[54]** Heir / Heiress, **[55]** Henchman, **[56]** Herald, **[57]** Heretic, **[58]** Hermit, **[59]** Humanoid, **[60]** Hunter

**[61]** Illusion, **[62]** Illusionist, **[63]** Inquisitor, **[64]** Inventor, **[65]** Jester, **[66]** Judge / Magister, **[67]** Justiciar / Warden, **[68]** Ki-Rin, **[69]** King / Queen, **[70]** Knight

**[71-00]** Roll twice, ignoring results higher than 70; if incompatible results are indicated, then two separate

individuals/factions are present (possibly with competing offers).

**[71-80]** Roll Twice on Noun Table I.

**[81-90]** Roll Twice on Noun Table II.

**[91-00]** Roll Once on Noun Table I and Once on Noun Table II.

## Nouns (II)

GMs are encouraged to use Noun Table I 50% of the time, and Noun Table II 50% of the time. Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Knightly Order, **[02]** Lammasu, **[03]** Lich, **[04]** Lizard Man, **[05]** Lord / Lady, **[06]** Loremaster, **[07]** Lycanthrope, **[08]** Madman, **[09]** Magic Mouth, **[10]** Magic Shrine



**[11]** Magic Weapon, **[12]** Magic-User, **[13]** Magister, **[14]** Maiden, **[15]** Mapmaker or Mariner, **[16]** Martyr, **[17]** Mastermind, **[18]** Matriarch, **[19]** Mayor, **[20]** Menagerie Keeper

**[21]** Mentor, **[22]** Merchant / Caravan Master, **[23]** Miner or Monastery, **[24]** Monk, **[25]** Monster or Mountebank, **[26]** Mystic or Naga, **[27]** Necromancer, **[28]** Noble, **[29]** Ogre, **[30]** Ogre Mage

**[31]** Outcast, **[32]** Outlaw, **[33]** Overlord, **[34]** Paladin, **[35]** Patriarch, **[36]** Patron, **[37]** Pirate, **[38]** Planar Explorer, **[39]** Planar Power, **[40]** Pretender

**[41]** Prince / Princess, **[42]** Prophet / Prophetess, **[43]** Psychic / Psion, **[44]** Puppet Master, **[45]** Ranger, **[46]** Relative, **[47]** Sage, **[48]** Saint, **[49]** Satyr, **[50]** Savant
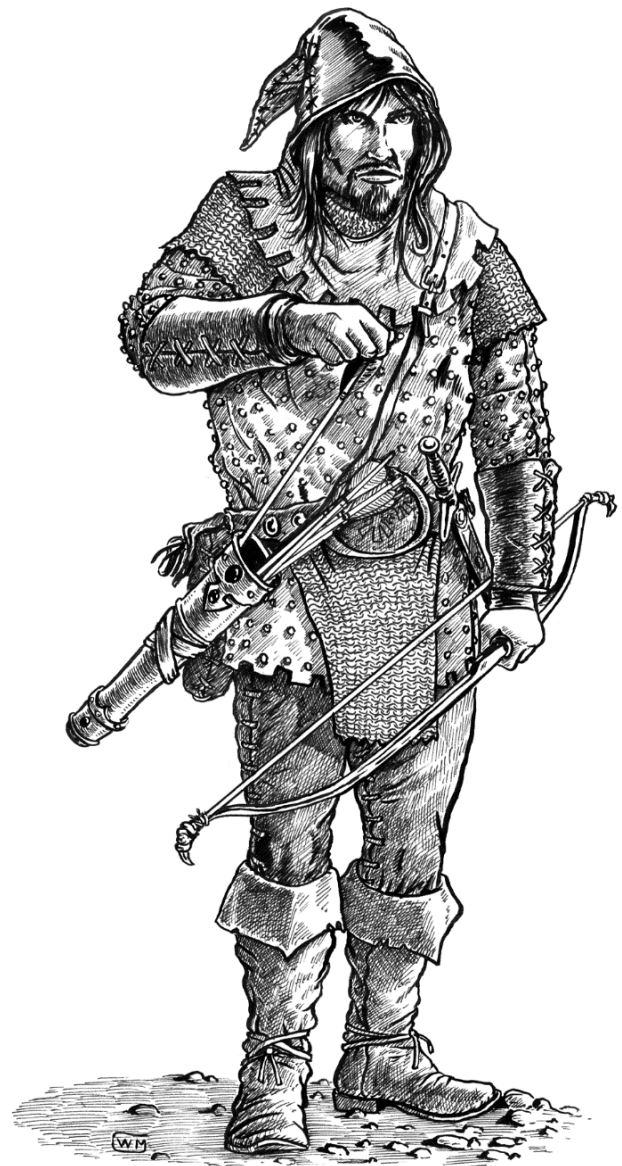


**[51]** Secret Society, **[52]** Sentient Room / Structure, **[53]** Shade, **[54]** Shaman, **[55]**

Shedu, **[56]** Siege Captain, **[57]** Slaver, **[58]** Sphinx, **[59]** Spy, **[60]** Tavern Keeper

**[61]** Temple Order, **[62]** Thief, **[63]** Time Traveler, **[64]** Titan, **[65]** Traitor, **[66]** Tree Giant, **[67]** Trickster, **[68]** Tyrant, **[69]** Unbeliever, **[70]** Usurper

**[71]** Vampire, **[72]** Vampire Hunter, **[73]** Village, **[74]** Vision, **[75]** Warlock / Witch, **[76]** Widow / Widower, **[77]** Wish-Maker, **[78]** Witch Doctor, **[79]** Witch Hunter, **[80]** Zealot

**[81]** Zombie / Undead, **[82]** Zombie Master

**[83-00]** Roll twice, ignoring results higher than 70; if incompatible results are indicated, then two separate individuals / factions are present (possibly with competing offers).

**[83-87]** Roll Twice on Noun Table I.

**[88-92]** Roll Twice on Noun Table II.

**[93-00]** Roll Once on Noun Table I and Once on Noun Table II.

# CHAPTER 3:
# SETTING THE SCENE

"Another wealthy and elderly giver of quests, eh? If he wants us to do his dungeon delving for him, how 'mighty' can he possibly be? If the offer's too paltry, we'll subdue him, bind him well, and take his treasure."

— *Interesting words, overheard by the Silverskull guardians of the White Rune Temple of Tolshuthra*

## Unusual Bases of Operation
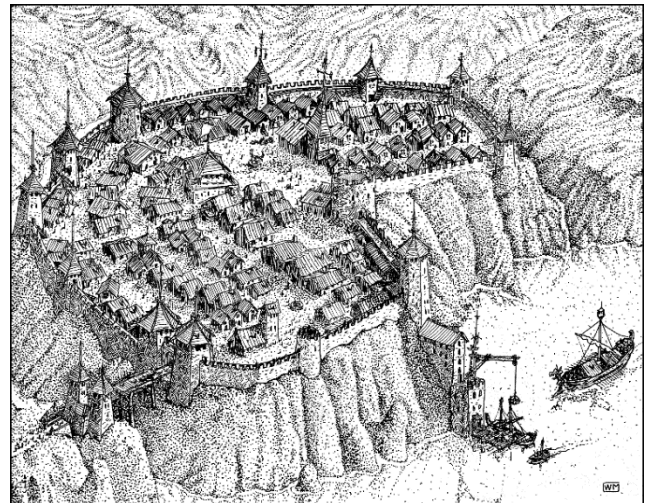


Typically, the adventurers will either be based in their favorite campaign city or in the last town / village / castle where they were healing and recovering from the last adventure. At times, however, the GM can create an interesting atmosphere by telling the players that their heroes have been

traveling for a specific purpose, and have just arrived at the last civilized place nearest to the dungeon. Your players will simply need to trust you that you have moved them to the edge of a wilderness for a very good reason (the lucrative adventure). Here are some possibilities.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01-02] A Roma caravan on the windswept moors.

[03-04] A pirate den, reachable only from a waterfall cavern.

[05-06] A desert ruin, recently recovered from the shifting sands.

[07-08] A palace of harems and masquerades.

[09-10] A walled town beset by plague.

[11-12] A basalt pillared city where all alignments have their own factions beneath the overlord.

[13-14] A city of canals, drawbridges and crystalline buildings.

[15-16] A tyrant's city state of coliseums, circuses and slave quarters.

[17-18] The tallest and broadest tower in the world, with every archway leading into a different quarter of the labyrinthine vertical city.

[19-20] A vast and creaking river barge, the only safe passage through the ice of the dreaded river.

[21-22] A village on the edge of the jungle surrounded by an immense wall.

[23-25] A smoky wasteland town, vied for by competing gangs of brigands.

[26-27] A city of sinkholes and fungal streams, half ruined and hastily rebuilding.

[28-29] A gnomish enclave in a secluded and frigid valley.

[30-31] An ancient city of crumbling quarters, falling walls and decadent festivals.

[32-34] An undercity where humanoids and demi- humans meet in sinister emporiums under a flag of truce.



[35-36] A lonely steading amidst the dust-clouded grasslands.

[37-38] An elven city of creepers, vines and wildflowers.

[39-40] A recovered ruin of toppled marble pillars, now filled over with shantytowns.

[41-42] An icy town built of catwalks and elevators built into the side of a cliff.

[43-45] A great trading outpost filled with monster trophies, standing in the middle of a smoky forest.

[46-47] A bustling barge city at the confluence of two rivers.

[48-49] A traveling wizard's faire, complete with menagerie cages and subdued monsters.

[50-51] A log fortress built around the geysers in the frozen mountains.

[52-53] A swamp village of hanging huts dotting the great trees.

[54-55] A Petra-like desert town carved from the stone itself, hidden in a secret canyon.

[56-57] A dwarven town mostly destroyed by hot mudslides and volcanic ash.

[58-59] A besieged castle surrounded by an army of gnoles, supplied by griffon riders.

[60-61] A nomadic city of tents and lean- tos, governed by seven bandit princes.

**[62-63]** An ancient ziggurat covered with tiers of huts and shaky hovels.

**[64-65]** A village which is one enormous house, completely interconnected and expanded for centuries.

**[66-67]** A bisected city of the gods, co- ruled by two religious sects who are forbidden to intermingle or even speak to one another.

**[68-70]** A magisterial castle in the clouds, populated by only nine souls.

**[71-72]** An abandoned temple of many towers, turned into a village ruled by fools.

**[73-74]** A coral city surrounded by a dome of force at the bottom of the sea.

**[75-76]** A sub-tropical city of spices, birds and willow-like trees.

**[77-78]** A mossy chasm filled with canvas-roofed hovels along its ledges.

**[79-81]** The reclaimed upper ruins of the dungeon itself, bristling with spear points.

**[82-83]** A beautiful village carved from the glacial ice, the only shelter from the storms.

**[84-85]** A floating city of rafts and lashed-together pirate ships.

**[86-87]** A series of interconnected villages on the shores of a volcanic caldera lake.

**[88-90]** A beautiful waterfall city of spires and soaring bridges.

**[91-92]** A dwarven undercity, half- freed from an infestation of orcs.

**[93-94]** A halfling city burrowed into the sides of seven hills.

**[95-00]** Reroll twice, ignoring results of 95 or higher; or GM's preference.

## Rumors About the Dungeon

In classic play, the adventurers typically meet at an inn, tavern or guild hall to plan their expedition to the dungeon. Doing so creates an opportunity for the characters to overhear interesting rumors, hearsay and legends which relate to the dungeon itself. In recent years, this classic play mechanism has been somewhat neglected and has received short shrift in published adventure modules. The author of this supplement encourages rumor-telling to encourage role-playing and player strategizing, and to build atmosphere, expectation and intrigue.
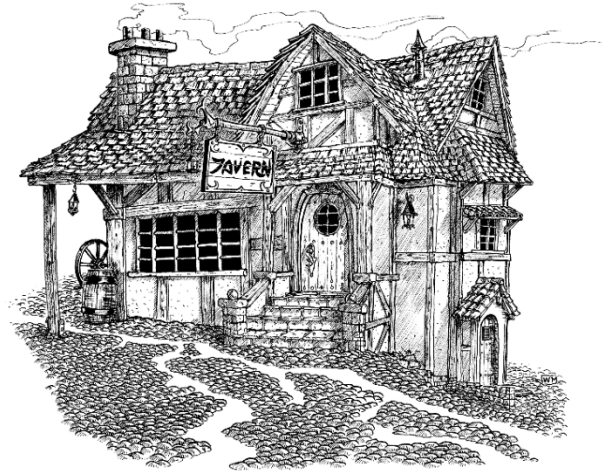


Most communication with commoners and NPC adventurers will result in a few drinks, perhaps an argument, and small talk mixed in with idle local gossip. But in each conversation, there will be one point of particular interest to the PCs which pertains to their imminent dungeon adventure. GMs are encouraged to create a table of possible rumors before the adventure begins, and to randomly determine which rumors are heard at the beginning of play.

## Rumor Validity

As a rule of thumb, approximately 65% of rumors should be true or mostly true, and 35% should be false. A 50-50 split might seem more intuitive, but many savvy players tend to stop asking for rumors if dangerous misinformation results as often as not. The "65% threshold" is recommended to encourage players to engage in this classic preamble to the dungeon exploration itself.

GMs can use the following results to determine the validity of a rumor (d100 roll):

**[01-20]** True

**[21-40]** Mostly True

**[41-60]** Partly True, and Partly False

**[61-80]** Mostly False

**[81-00]** False

## Rumor Topics

The next section provides an example of dozens of possible rumor types which townsfolk might share about the dungeon. For GMs who want to create their own specific rumors, the following random spread provides a good selection of potentially valuable information.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

The rumor concerns ...

**[01-05]** One of the major monster types.

**[06-10]** A single powerful monster.

**[11-15]** A type of treasure (gems, gold, magic items, ore, spices, etc.).

**[16-20]** The way to the dungeon.

**[21-25]** A secret dungeon entrance.

**[26-30]** A secret dungeon exit.

**[31-35]** The "evil overlord" of the dungeon.

**[36-40]** One of the dungeon's levels.

**[41-45]** A specific and very important room.

**[46-50]** A riddle, puzzle, trick or trap.

**[51-55]** A single very powerful treasure.

**[56-60]** The history of the dungeon's builders.

**[61-65]** The history of the dungeon's occupants.

**[66-70]** The history of the dungeon's environs and wars.

**[71-75]** Faction relations between monster populations.

**[76-80]** The last adventurers to enter and claim a treasure.

**[81-85]** The last adventurers to enter and never leave.

**[86-90]** A password, command word, map or key.

**[91-95]** A patrol route, secret passage or undiscovered chamber.

**[96-00]** The dungeon's most nefarious secret.

## A Sampling from the Rumormongers

Here is a sampling of rumors which can be beneficial to adventurers, and which can lead the unwary astray. Twist the details according to taste. The GM must decide which rumors are true, and which are not.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-04]** The name of the dungeon is (X).

**[05-07]** While the name of the dungeon is now (X), in elder days it was known as the (Y).

**[08-10]** The dungeon has (X) known levels. There are likely many more.

**[11-13]** While the dungeon has (X) known levels, elder histories state that there are (Y).

**[14-16]** Level (X) was delved and burrowed by (Deep Ones / dwarves / giants / orcs), and some of them still dwell there in the deeps.

**[17-19]** The dungeon has a secret (entrance to/exit from) level (X). It is said to be a (chute / elevator / ramp / teleporter).

**[20-22]** The dungeon is yet unfinished, and construction is still continued by the (monsters).

**[23-25]** The last group to enter the dungeon and return alive was the (NPC party name). They recovered (treasure) and swore that there was much more to be had, but the

(monsters) were too fierce for them to ever return.

**[26-28]** In the last expedition, the (NPC party name) cleared much of level (X). It is said that (monster type) has been seen repopulating the dungeon recently, likely lairing in the very same caverns that the adventurers had cleared.

**[29-31]** Down in the dungeon, the fearsome (monster X) wage war against the (monster Y).

**[32-34]** Undead (monsters) infest the dungeon, and expeditions who lose members often find themselves facing the animated remains of their fallen companions if they ever dare to return.

**[35-37]** The (walls / magic mouths / spirits) speak to adventurers who dare intrude upon the (dungeon region), and the wise are well advised to heed their words.

**[38-40]** An enchanted (trick) in the dungeon, should it ever be rediscovered, shall bequeath (benevolent trick power) on the first bold adventurer to find it. Cowards, however, will suffer the (malign trick power).

**[41-43]** The (treasure) fabled to lie within the dungeon is truly there, but it remains untouched because of the (magic / trick / curse).

**[44-46]** An evil wizard has recently summoned (monster type) to guard his new stronghold within the ruins.

**[47-49]** Despite all the others of its kind being thoroughly evil, a strange hermit (monster type) is said to help adventurers in need.

**[50-52]** If anyone ever recovers the (treasure), woe to them if the former owner (NPC name) every learns of it, for he will name the reclaimer as a traitor!

**[53-55]** "Gol'tuul" is (humanoid language) for "We wish a truce."

**[56-58]** The (monster faction) are being manipulated by the (second monster faction) who are said to live in the (dungeon region).

**[59-61]** Beyond the (dungeon region) are deadly traps, such as (trap A) and (trap B). Beware.

**[62-64]** The local lord has placed a bounty on (monster type), for it is said that they are soon planning an invasion.

**[65-67]** There are two tribes of (humanoid type) within the dungeon, and clever adventurers might be able to play them against one another or even incite a war.

**[68-70]** Everyone knows that (monster A) built the (dungeon level B), but few realize that (monster C), the true powers, are burrowing the (dungeon level D).

**[71-73]** The (demi-human type) sent an expedition into the dungeon last winter, and the survivors are still there, imprisoned by the (monster type). A second expedition is being planned and bold adventurers might do well to go along with them.

**[74-76]** There is a secret door somewhere in the (dungeon area) which is said to lead to (monster / treasure / trick).

**[77-79]** A wealthy adventuring (NPC type) may well be imprisoned within the caves, because she was captured by (monster type) when her bodyguards abandoned her.

**[80-82]** A powerful (NPC class), guarded by a horrific (subdued monster), has taken over much of the (dungeon level).

**[83-85]** There is a (room / area / cavern) which features (strange element / trick / treasure). No one has ever been able to solve the riddle of this place.

**[86-88]** A great treasure is hidden in (dungeon area), but is guarded by (trap or trick).

**[89-91]** The (monster X) have besieged a group of (allies Y), and no one has yet been able to adventure deep enough to relieve them.

**[92-94]** There is a wizard's (conjuring room / gate / laboratory / menagerie / redoubt) deep in the dungeon, where (an imprisoned demon awaits / a passage leads to the netherworld / a hundred potions are hidden / undead beasts await in cages / animated suits of armor lie in wait).

**[95-97]** Tread with care. It is said that anyone who dares (defile the shrine / steal the jewel / pass between the pillars) will doom one of their companions to certain death.

**[98-00]** A wondrous (gem / relic / staff / sword), worth hundreds of thousands of gold pieces, is said to lie (on the ledge of a bottomless pit / in the dragon's lair / at the bottom of the underground sea).

## The Way to the Dungeon

The majority of dungeon adventures typically begin with the PCs plopped directly in front of the entrance, following a quick preamble. However, classic adventures and dungeon modules once used a significantly wider array of approaches which served to greatly increase player interest and engagement at the beginning of the adventure. As a suggested return to such modes of play, the following "ways to the dungeon" are recommended for GM consideration.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. Please note that the defined adventure scenario, as detailed earlier, might also inform the decision on which of these approaches to use.
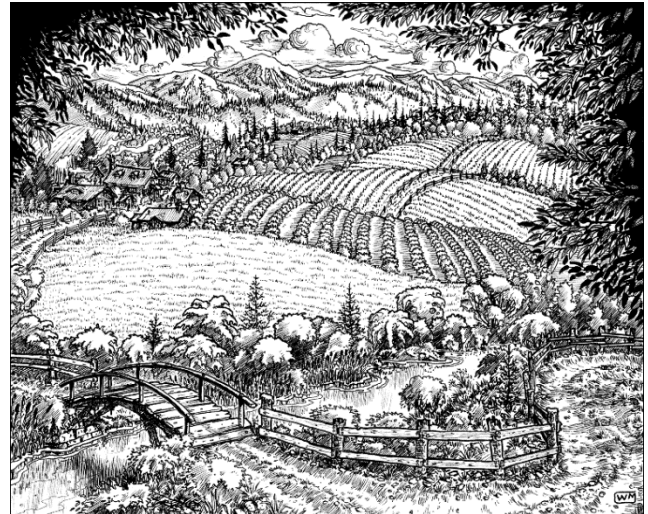


**[01-10] Accompanied Travel:** Low-level characters might be wisely reluctant to enter the wilderness alone. You as the GM can solve this impasse by having the PCs ally with an NPC (say, a 5th level dwarf fighter) who knows the way; perhaps a fatalistic avenger who is sworn to reclaim his legacy, one who will have no reluctance in sharing treasure with the group.

**[11-25] Beginning at the Dungeon Gate:** One way to run the adventure is to hand wave everything, and just begin the play session with "You are standing in the ruined gatehouse. There are stairs going down." This focuses the entire session on dungeon exploration. What is lost in initial atmosphere and "buy in" can be made up for with expediency.

**[26-33] Dungeon in the City:** The dungeon can be directly underfoot, or inside a sinister tower within the quarters of the city itself. Gray Mouser and Conan stories are good examples of this. Good ideas to propagate include: mage towers, sewers, undercities (old cities literally built over by the new),

thieves' guilds and urban graveyards filled with sealed crypts.

**[34-40] Flight:** the group can fly to the dungeon magically, or by using tamed beasts such as hippogriffs or pegasi. An aerial adventure can occur, with flying monsters encountered along the way. This is an ideal choice for cloud castle and mountaintop dungeons.

**[41-50] Lost Dungeon:** In this scenario, no one knows where the dungeon is, and half of the adventure is in finding it. The treasures to be found will likely be far richer because no one has been there for centuries. This is a good scenario choice for classic settings such as pyramids buried beneath the sands, ancient tombs and villain hideouts. This scenario choice shifts the focus away from dungeon delving and toward wilderness adventuring and exploration.

**[51-60] Magical Gate:** The dungeon is thousands of miles or even a world away, but the adventurers simply need to step through a gate to journey there and back again. Things can be made much more complicated and interesting by setting a time limit before the gate fades away, having it be one-way, having invaders follow the group back, or having the gate also invoke planar or time travel.

**[61-67] Overseas Travel:** The group needs to journey by sea to the dungeon. This sets up a strong mariner theme, which can incorporate themes found in classic literature like The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, or in pirate movies. Other inspirations can include Greek myths (such as The Odyssey or Jason and the Argonauts) or classic pirate tales.

**[68-73] Planar Travel:** The dungeon is located on another plane. Good ideas for a party's first exploration of other dimensions include: the Elemental Plane of Earth, the Abyss or Limbo. See the Magical Gate entry, above, for ideas on making this already-challenging scenario even more so.

**[74-80] River Travel:** This option has the group going on a long, deep river before they get to the dungeon. The destination could be downstream, and the adventure might feature fast travel, racing encounters (river pirates trying to catch them etc.), rapids and whirlpools. Or, it can be a long and grueling adventure upstream, seeking the source of a fabled gold river, lost cave or a fountain of youth. The river might be the only "safe" way to the dungeon; e.g., it could be an underground river leading to a subterranean kingdom, or the only liquid water in frigid mountains where high winds blow everywhere except through the one river canyon.

**[81-85] Teleportation:** The adventurers can either journey a long way toward the dungeon overland, or they can teleport there. If the characters are too low level, their benefactor may teleport them to the dungeon; but then the daunting logistics of the return trip will need to be worked out. A clever (and to the players, perhaps upsetting) alternative can be to limit the range of effective teleportation, so that teleporting cuts the distance to the dungeon from 200 to 100 miles, but the group is then stuck in a vast swamp and completely lost. Teleportation should never be the de facto mode of travel, as that erases much of the challenge and exploration inherent in the game, unless a high-level version of the "Beginning at the Dungeon Gate" scenario is desired by the GM.

**[86-90] Underwater Travel:** The dungeon is a sunken city, an underwater cavern, or a floating island which is fated to surface soon. Underwater adventures are extremely perilous and players are reluctant to have their characters undertake them willingly at times; so a "training" adventure (perhaps with unlimited water breathing and a shallow, Grendel-inspired lake lined with

treasure caves) might serve as an effective taster.



**[91-00] Wilderness Travel:** A classic option; the dungeon is fairly close, but the reason it is not plundered is because the terrain is difficult and there are monsters everywhere. A suggested distance for a standard wilderness adventure is 25 to 100 miles, so that part (or perhaps all) of the first game session is spent getting to the dungeon itself.

## Unusual Wilderness Encounters

A discouraging number of recent published dungeon adventures feature zero-encounter wilderness travel, which can make players bored or complacent. Similarly, some adventures serve up a steady diet of repetitive and predictable monster encounters, with little significant variation between encounters. This Guide serves to illustrate an alternative method of play, in which the wilderness is returned to its iconic and mythic state, a wild place filled with wonder, dread, uncontrollable powers and sheer unpredictability.

When developing an iconic wilderness surround to the dungeon, it is recommended that perhaps only half of all the potential wilderness encounters should involve "normal" monsters. A clever GM will use the party's time in the wilderness to build

atmosphere, seed doubt, and heighten player interest as the heroes near the site of the main adventure. Unique wilderness encounters will help to reflect the depth of the fantasy world, and to make it seem truly alive.



However, they are many potential complications. Wilderness encounters are an art unto themselves. "Realistic" encounters will feature considerably more monsters than in the underworld, because the environment is there to sustain larger populations. This needs to be balanced with the cold hard fact that powerful monsters encountered in the wild may be easier to detect and avoid, but once they are engaged it is much harder for adventurers to run away from them. The GM must be careful to ensure that the encounters are dangerous to the adventurers and interesting to the players, without becoming so disruptive that the dungeon is never reached or explored. The Castle Oldskull Classic Wilderness Adventure Guide (in development) will be written to provide much more detail pertaining to wilderness exploration, overland monster encounters and travel to distant dungeons.

When creating a wilderness mini-adventure, each encounter should be uniquely tailored to the environment and to the level of play. For those GMs who are in want of ideas to flesh out or modify when designing such areas, this list of 100 possibilities will serve as an ample starting ground.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Incidental animals are encountered, perhaps frightening the adventurers as they emerge from the underbrush (deer, flightless birds, fleeing wildlife, etc.).

**[02]** Minor animals are encountered, which could prove mildly hazardous if provoked (skunks, porcupines, mountain sheep, etc.).

**[03]** Prey animals are sighted at a distance, providing an ideal opportunity for hunting (deer, sheep, antelope, wild pigs, wild cattle, etc.).

**[04]** Fur-bearing animals are encountered, giving trappers, rangers and skinners a chance to glean significant treasures (ermine, mink, sable, etc.).

**[05]** Dangerous predators are encountered, either warning the adventurers away from their own territory or kill, or attacking from the shadows (great cats, bears, warthogs, etc.).

**[06]** Fresh signs (tracks, hoof prints, footprints, bent reeds, etc.) indicate that a group of large animals has passed through or is lurking nearby.

**[07]** A relatively unintelligent and aggressive monster is encountered (giant spiders, a griffon, a dinosaur, etc.).
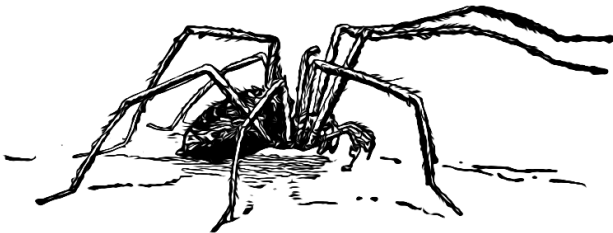


**[08]** A somewhat intelligent and aggressive monster is encountered (a cunning wyvern, a rotting tree giant, a pack of frost toads, etc.).

**[09]** A good and powerful monster is encountered (shedu, lammasu, sphinx, etc.).

**[10]** A band of minor evil monsters is encountered (orcs, goblins, kobolds, etc.).

**[11]** A band of wary but possibly friendly demi-humans (dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, etc.) meets the group under a banner of truce, but with weapons drawn.

**[12]** A patrol of knights and archers gallops toward the party, mistaking them for a group of raiders.

**[13]** A patrol of knights and pikemen approaches, sounding a horn and demanding that the adventurers pay a tithe of travel through the borderlands.

**[14]** A small patrol of merry nomads offers the adventurers safe passage through the wilderness for a price.

**[15]** A group of wily bandits, disguised as a patrol, asks the adventurers to follow them to a nearby "trading post."

**[16]** A well-guarded caravan approaches, roll randomly for alignment; carrying valuable goods for trade (spices, mithril, gems, scrolls, etc.).

**[17]** A ravaged caravan approaches rapidly, pursued by warhorse-mounted brigands.

**[18]** A poor and ragged group of traders (merchants, peddlers, tinkers, or even blacksmiths fleeing an invaded city) offers the group something enticing (cheap weapons, equipment repairs, healing herbs, etc.).

**[19]** A pilgrimage of clerics and followers approaches, roll randomly for alignment; the group may offer healing, demand obeisance, or attempt to enslave the adventurers.

**[20]** A weather-worn monument indicates where a great hero fell in battle with a demon lord. There are blighted patches of earth where to this day, nothing will grow.

[21] A pennant-covered border marker, lined with orc skulls, gives warning to adventurers to travel no further.

[22] A solemn cairn, once shrouded in woods and revealed by a recent forest fire, is silhouetted upon a hill.

[23] Eerie gravestones covered with phosphorescent moss tilt outward from a wormy circle of loose and muddy earth.

[24] A lone child, filthy and dressed in rags, walks out of the forest and begins following the party.

[25] A group of hunters, pursuing a wounded golden stag, rushes out in front of the adventuring party.

[26] A group of painted wild women, gathering tubers and berries, drop their baskets and point at the adventurers while screaming for help.

[27] A lone trapper dressed in silver furs bumbles out of the forest, engaging on a drunken rant with the strongest-looking adventurer.

[28] A band of wounded outcasts comes down the road, warning the adventurers to turn back at once.

[29] A beautiful woman approaches the group with hands outspread, while her thieving brethren look on from the treetops.

[30] Hidden trapdoors pop up in a circle around the group, and shouting gnomes rise up from tunnels with crossbows cocked and ready.

[31] Laughter is heard and delicious food is scented; a caravan of Roma wagons is ahead, encamped for the evening.

[32] A strange but impressively appointed building (inn, tavern, outpost, caravansary, etc.) seems to loom up ahead from out of nowhere. It may be an illusion, or mirage, or entirely real.

[33] One of the adventurers chances to look back over his shoulder, and sees a translucent tower in the distance which was certainly not there an hour ago.

[34] An enticing source of fresh and cool water (a spring, bubbling brook, pool, etc.) is discovered; animals may be drinking there.

[35] Nervous prospectors come out and hail the adventurers; one of them is obviously hiding a sword behind his back.

[36] Claim jumpers panic and hurl slingstones at the group's horses before fleeing into the forest.

[37] An abandoned camp is found, with burnt tents and bloody bodies strewn around.

[38] A pile of fresh and recently abandoned smoked meat is found; drag marks lead to the west.

[39] A strange person (wounded knight, unconscious dwarf, confused madman, etc.) is found slumped beneath an ancient sundial, singing to himself.

[40] Dead animals are discovered (and perhaps some predators as well).

[41] Dead (or undead) monsters are discovered; the even more deadly monsters that killed them are very near.

[42] A huge and deadly foe (an army of 2,000 orcs on the march, an ancient red dragon, a bellowing cloud giant) is seen in the distance.
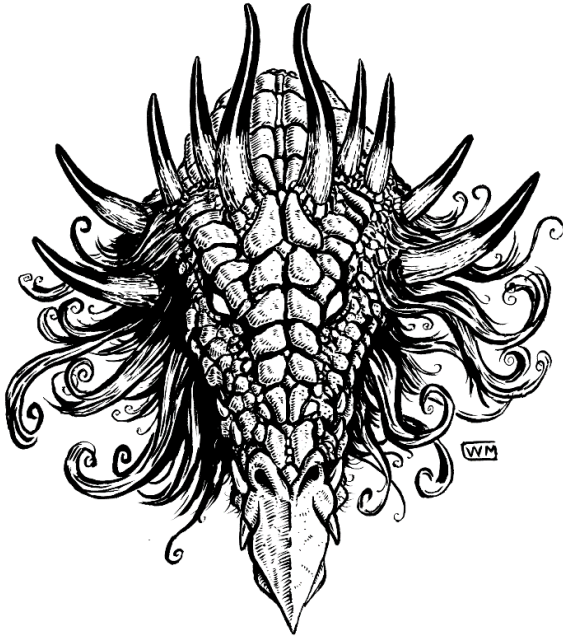


[43] A field of bones is discovered; the bones have been immaculately piled. Strange chanting is heard.

[44] Primitive and sinister stick figures hang from the trees on strands of moldy sinew, swaying in the breeze.

[45] Enormous spider-webs are found, strung with cocooned birds and a very dead halfling.

[46] A band of lustily singing dwarves is encountered, dragging a paralyzed ogre bound with ropes; their clan leader is sitting on the ogre's forehead, getting very drunk on wild berry ale.

[47] The cracked-open head of a colossus is discovered, its bulk buried deep in the earth.

[48] A line of tilted statues indicates that a processional here led off to a nearby temple which no longer stands.

[49] A strange sensation, ominous feeling, shared thought or nightmarish vision surges through the minds of all of the adventurers at once.

[50] In the deep of night, one of the exhausted adventurers on sentry duty hears an urgent whisper from behind, "You fool, not yet!"

[51] A wonderful smell wafts on the breeze (sweet flowers, baking bread, a distant fire in the snowfields, etc.).

[52] A pile of something significant indicates recent industry (logs, ore tailings, dirt, sand, etc.). The area appears to have been abandoned with some urgency.

[53] Something completely bizarre is discovered, such as a long-dead giant king entombed in amber, or a shipwreck in the middle of a forest.

[54] A bizarre sound is heard on the wind (croaking, howling, singing, screams for mercy, etc.).

[55] A shattered box is found in its crater, as if it had fallen from a great distance; inside are two random ivory plaques from a magical deck of Tarot cards.

[56] Panicked wild animals flee past the adventurers, colliding with them; they are covered in gnashing swarms of bees, spiders, army ants or worse.

[57] A burned building is discovered in the middle of nowhere; the cellar is intact. Sobbing is heard.

[58] A boulder crashes out of the sky, nearly killing someone and panicking all of the horses.

[59] A thunderclap is heard, and a silhouetted figure appears hovering in the sky.

[60] The group becomes lost.

[61] Something in an adventurer's pack (a squirrel, a scarab, a rat, etc.) is found nibbling away at iron rations.

[62] A scarecrow stands alone on a misty hill. The more the adventurers stare at it, the

more they become convinced that it is moving.

**[63]** A bottomless pit is found, with an immense and horrible-smelling mass sticking halfway out of it (which proves to be a very dead giant worm).

**[64]** A veiled nymph rises out of the snows, laughing musically and daring the adventurers to chase her.

**[65]** Fearsome pets / vermin / leeches / spiders / insects / centipedes afflict the adventurers, perhaps while they are encamped or after they have struggled through difficult terrain (such as a swamp or dense forest).

**[66]** The adventurers find an unexpected terrain feature, such as a tar pit, geyser or hot spring; the smell and / or sound of the place will probably draw the PCs to discover the area.

**[67]** The PCs find themselves in an ideal hunting ground. Birds and game animals will be plentiful, but rival hunters (territorial demi-humans, tribesmen, humanoids, etc.) or predators are likely as well.

**[68]** A strange way off-track (overgrown trail, predator's path, blighted ground, underground stream covered by flowers in the desert, etc.) is discovered.

**[69]** The adventurers discover medicinal herbs (easily identifiable by a druid, spell or herbalist).

**[70]** The adventurers discover a rare and valuable spice (saffron, pepper, cloves, etc.) dependent on climate and terrain.

**[71]** Bushes of wander-berries are found, a favored form of iron rations. These overripe berries are curative and slightly hallucinatory.

**[72]** The adventurers find a surprising overlook above a vast expanse of terrain (a cliff, lost valley, collapsed cavern, etc.).

**[73]** The adventures find a place of power (holy ground, ruined shrine, ley line, druidic grove, etc.).

**[74]** A grim place of burial is found (a barrow, mass grave, funeral pyre, remnants of a battlefield, etc.).
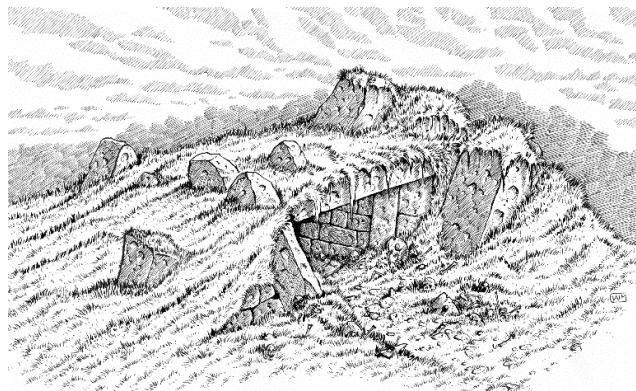


**[75]** A minor but compelling ruin of some kind is discovered (ankle-high foundations and a hole in the ground, a razed tower, Cyclopean masonry indicating an ancient toppled wall, etc.).

**[76]** A good hermit, who offers shelter, food, drink and information.

**[77]** An evil hermit, similar to above but attempts to rob or attack the PCs in their sleep.

**[78]** A mad hermit, with highly unpredictable behavior (singing songs and embracing people, treating the adventurers as pets, rushing out shrieking and covered in feathers, etc.).

**[79]** The PCs find a perfect hiding place / camping spot / treasure stash area, which they may use this night and perhaps on the way back from the dungeon as well.

**[80]** A strange terrain or road feature is found, depending on the wilderness region (a huge burned oak, ominous painted sign, fallen log over the road, painted rocks, clay pits, etc.).

**[81]** Mercenary men-at-arms cross paths with the adventures, and may well be willing to be employed.
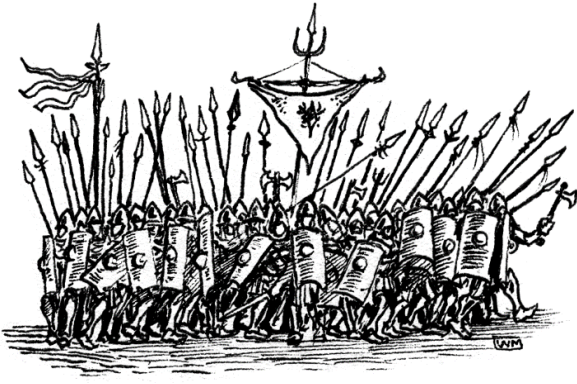
**[82]** Two monster types are found battling one another.

**[83]** A strange event occurs (a crow landing on an adventurer's shoulder, wind calling with spectral song, clouds forming a shape, an eclipse, etc.) which everyone witnesses. This could be interpreted as an omen.

**[84]** One of the PCs has a terrible nightmare, which the DM describes; later, the first room discovered in the dungeon will bear a perfect resemblance to this description.

**[85]** A familiar-like animal of significant intelligence (dog, falcon, toad, wildcat, lost horse, etc.) gravitates to one of the adventurers and wants to be kept as a companion.

**[86]** A few normal humans of random alignment are found in a nearby cabin / thorp / farming settlement. They will be highly suspicious of travelers.

**[87]** Significant sign of nearby monsters (tracks, bodies of victims, spoor, banners, warning trophies, claw marks on trees, etc.).

**[88]** A sparse shower is followed by a beautiful rainbow. Leprechauns, sprites, pixies or other faeries may be near.

**[89]** Minor but slowing weather is encountered, depending on the terrain (rain, cloud cover, wind, fog, etc.).

**[90]** Significant and troubling weather, which may be hazardous (heat wave, thunderstorm, snow storm, etc.).

**[91]** Extremely hazardous weather event, depending on terrain (avalanche, sandstorm, flash flood, mudslide, etc.).

**[92]** A disease or parasitic infection afflicts the dirtiest party member.

**[93]** Supplies are stolen by bandits in the night; posting vigilant sentries will instead trigger a nighttime encounter.

**[94]** Dwarven warriors, rogues or orc-slayers are encountered.

**[95]** Elven hunters, scouts or rangers are encountered.

**[96]** Gnomish beast-tamers, herbalists or prospectors are encountered.

**[97]** Halfling bounders, burglars or wanderers are encountered.



**[98]** A riddle master, loremaster, wandering sage, bard, jester, etc. approaches with a gleam in his eye.

**[99]** After a brief but heavy rainstorm, fog rises. Minor but fearsome undead (skeletons, zombies, shadows, etc.) crawl out of the earth.

**[00]** A battle between gods or great powers is seen in the sky, as radiant silhouettes and flashes of blood-colored lightning fill the air.

## The Builders and the Dungeon Forgers

A question too rarely asked is, who actually built the dungeon?

This simple question leads to many other interesting lines of questioning, which can turn the nebulous background of the dungeon's history into an intriguing mystery for the adventurers to solve in bits and pieces over time. It is not necessary to write a detailed history all at once, but for any dungeon — and especially for a mega-dungeon, one which will be the center of the campaign — it is helpful for the GM to write a brief historical synopsis of the dungeon's creators. The purpose of this exercise is to give the dungeon more thematic coherence, to intrigue the players into solving its mysteries, and to provide interesting and plausible avenues for expansion of the dungeon if it proves to be popular with the players.

Players will latch on strongly to the idea of dungeon history once they realize that their knowledge increases their play skill. For example, knowing that a certain rune marks where a secret escape tunnel is hidden within twenty feet; or identifying different types of stonework which hint at different types of monsters; or even learning an ancient tongue which lets the adventurers read inscriptions that offer secrets, passwords and even spells.

Given the nature of the unknown, a simple dungeon history will inevitably unfold into greater mysteries. Most dungeons, due to their size, complexity, hazardous surfaces and oftentimes-ancient inhabitants, are

centuries old. Who built the temple and the ten dungeon levels beneath it? Why? Was it once a small church, with a cellar beneath it that needed to be expanded into sealed burial vaults during the age of plague? Did the creation of the vaults lead to the discovery of an underground cavern? Did the cavern yield gems and gold, which caused the church to become wealthy? Was the small church then expanded into a rich and powerful temple, which was then conquered by the forces of evil? As you can see, each question leads to another, and the dungeon's history soon becomes a story of past adventures, conflicts, and the primal forces of good and evil.
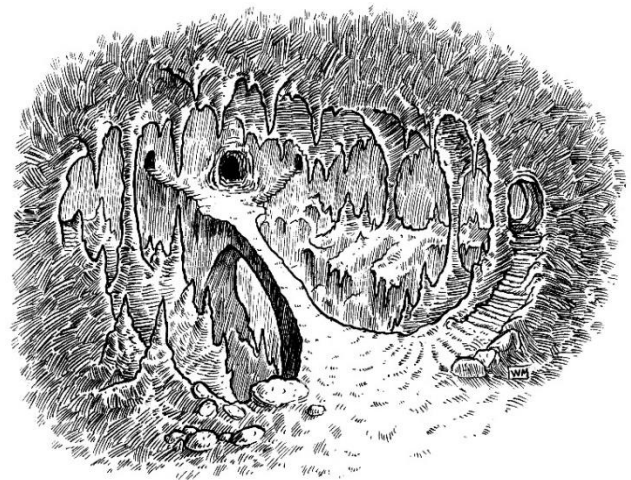


## Principles of Dungeon Background

A good dungeon should have five basic tenets which drive the creation of its history:

**(1)** The dungeon is *old*.

**(2)** No one group built the dungeon.

**(3)** The dungeon has gone through generations of builders, and the new builders are not always aware of who the older builders were.

**(4)** No one faction ever controls an entire dungeon; and

**(5)** These mysteries exist to be solved by the players, but every answer always leads to

further mysteries. No one will ever know the entire history.

With these tenets in mind, you should probably have between two and five generations of "dungeon builders" briefly fleshed out with details and then go from there. The following tables will help you ton randomly designate each generation of builders if you are so inclined. (The system can be used to flesh out a partially-written preexisting history as well.) Fifteen minutes of ground work on these themes can often inspire unexpected ideas, which lead in turn to an improved dungeon design that is easier to envision and create.

The following quick design system can be used to craft the initial details:

## In Which Direction Was the Dungeon Built?

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-25] On the surface first, then underground:** For example, first there was a castle, and then the castle architects built the dungeon beneath it (when they feared they would be besieged).

**[26-50] Underground, dug down from above, and then on the surface:** For example, a mine was dug, gold was found, and then a protective keep was built over the mine.

**[51-75] Underground, dug up from below, and then on the surface:** For example, goblins burrowed up from the netherworld, created a city, broke out into the surface, found themselves besieged by gnomes, and then built a defensive camp.

**[76-00] In both directions:** For example, dwarves dug down, demons from an excavated netherworld gate rose up, and when the two factions met, there was a cataclysmic war.

## Lore of Dungeons Deep: How Many Generations of Builders Constructed the Dungeon?

If you have not already decided this for yourself, simply roll 1d100 and determine the succinct history of your dungeon's creation as follows:

**[01-20]** Two, **[21-40]** Three, **[41-60]** Four, **[61-80]** Five, **[81-00]** More (with much of the truth unknown)

## Who Were the First Builders? Who Arose Thereafter?

Repeat the following determination for each generation of dungeon builders. Note that most evil races use slave labor, while most good races do the work for themselves. Reroll results as appropriate to suit your own campaign.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-02]** "Aliens" (humans from an alternate prime or another time)

**[03-04]** Bugbears

**[05-06]** Burrowers (giant worms, earth elementals, etc.)

**[07]** Chaos Incarnate

**[08-09]** Deep Ones

**[10-11]** Demons

**[12-13]** Devils

**[14-15]** Dragons

**[16-17]** Dreams and Magic

**[18-19]** Evil Dwarves

**[20-21]** Evil Elves

**[22-23]** Evil Gnomes

**[24]** Eyes of Azathoth

**[25-26]** Fire Spirits

**[27]** Genies

**[28-29]** Giants

**[30-31]** Gnoles

**[32-33]** Good or Neutral Dwarves

**[34-35]** Good or Neutral Elves

**[36-37]** Good or Neutral Gnomes

**[38-39]** Goblins

**[40-41]** Golems and Automatons (controlled excavators)

**[42-43]** Great Old Ones

**[44-45]** Halflings

**[46-47]** Hobgoblins

**[48-49]** Humans (Asian theme; Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, etc.)

**[50-51]** Humans (desert kingdom theme; Arabian, Canaanite, Egyptian, etc.)

**[52-53]** Humans (English medieval theme; Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Norman, Pictish, Arthurian folklore, etc.)

**[54-55]** Humans (French medieval theme; French fairy tales of Perrault, paladin folklore, etc.)

**[56-57]** Humans (Greek theme; mythology, Byzantine, Thracian, etc.)

**[58-59]** Humans (India theme; rajas, nomads, age of empire, etc.)

**[60-61]** Humans (Mesoamerican theme; Aztecs, Maya, etc.)

**[62-63]** Humans (Mesopotamian theme; Assyrian, Babylonian, Sumerian, etc.)

**[64-65]** Humans (Norse theme; Vikings, Icelandic, Scandinavian, etc.)

**[66-67]** Humans (tribal / ancestral / indigenous theme; Aboriginal, African, Amazonian, Amerindian, cavemen, Hittite, Hun, Phoenician, Polynesian, etc.)



**[68-69]** Humans (Russian theme; folklore, tales of Baba Yaga and Kostchtchie, Scythians, etc.)

**[70-71]** Humans (savage theme; cannibals, cave degenerates, cultists, madmen, etc.)

**[72-73]** Humans (Spanish / Iberian / Moorish theme)

**[74-75]** Humans (Teutonic theme; tales of Hoffmann and the Brothers Grimm, etc.)

**[76-77]** Kobolds

**[78-79]** Lizard Men

**[80]** Lovecraftian Horrors (Elder Things, Flying Polyps, Shoggoths, etc.)

**[81-82]** Lycanthropes

**[83-84]** Nagas

**[85]** Ogre Magi

**[86-87]** Ogres

**[88-89]** Orcs

**[90]** Planar Powers of Balance

**[91]** Planar Powers of Chaos

**[92]** Planar Powers of Law

**[93]** Spawn of Cthulhu

**[94-95]** Trolls

**[96-97]** Undead

**[98-00]** Underworld Demi-Humans (perhaps albino, blind or cannibalistic)

## Creating the Dungeon Surround



Every classic dungeon has a shell, a grim and foreboding exterior presence which hides the levels within. This shell, like the House of Usher, compounds and reflects the corrupting evil and the dark secrets festering within. Some of the more classic possibilities for a dungeon surround include: a graveyard, a haunted house, a chasm, a ruined castle, or a fortress of evil. Each of these themes, however, has thousands of potential re-imaginings waiting to be fulfilled.

More than 80 basic dungeon environments are described below. Creative GMs can also roll twice (with most paired results being workable, but requiring some creative finesse), thereby providing over 6,000 possible surround environments.



Roll 1d100 once or twice, and consult the following table.

**[01]** Abandoned (?) Dragon's Lair

**[02]** Abandoned Excavation

**[03]** Abbey

**[04]** Abyss

**[05]** Armory

**[06]** Arsenal

**[07]** Bandit Hideout

**[08]** Barrow Mounds

**[09]** Bastion

**[10]** Blighted Ground

**[11]** Burial Pits

**[12]** Burned-Down Forest

**[13]** Canyon

**[14]** Castle

**[15]** Cathedral

**[16]** Cemetery / Graveyard

**[17]** Chapel

**[18]** Charnel House

**[19]** Citadel / Fortress

**[20]** Cliff Face Dwellings

**[21]** Cloud Castle

**[22]** Crashed Spaceship

**[23]** Delve / Deep Mine

**[24]** Deserted Lake / Raft Town

**[25]** Deserted Village

**[26]** Dolorous Garde (of the Lancelot myth)

**[27]** Domed City

**[28]** Eerie Island

**[29]** Endless Stair

**[30]** Faerie Manor (Sacred / Verdant)

**[31]** Faerie Manor (Unseelie Court)

**[32]** Folly / Illusionary Masterpiece

**[33]** Forest

**[34]** Fractures in Reality

**[35]** Gaol

**[36]** Glacial Rift

**[37]** Great Inn (consider *The Shining* by Stephen King)

**[38]** Hanging Gardens

**[39]** Haunted Battleground

**[40]** Haunted House

**[41]** Hive

**[42]** Hollow Hill

**[43]** Hunting Lodge

**[44]** Illusory Terrain

**[45]** Keep

**[46]** Living House

**[47]** Lost Valley

**[48]** Lyceum

**[49]** Manor House

**[50]** Mansion

**[51]** Mausoleum

**[52]** Moathouse

**[53]** Monastery

**[54]** Mountaintop Aeries

**[55]** Necropolis

**[56]** Nunnery

**[57]** Oasis / Watering Hole

**[58]** Outpost / Walled Village

**[59]** Palace

**[60]** Pirate Den

**[61]** Plague Pits

**[62]** Prison

**[63]** Pyramid

**[64]** Riverbank Dwellings

**[65]** Ruined Castle

**[66]** Ruined Church

**[67]** Ruined City / Town / Village



**[68]** Ruined Fane

**[69]** Ruined Mansion

**[70]** Ruined Moathouse

**[71-72]** Ruined Temple

**[73-74]** Ruined Tower

# 1,000 Evocative Dungeon Names

Here is a list of 1,000 pre-generated dungeon names if you think you need a little more inspiration.

Roll 1D1000 and consult the following table:

**Part I:**
**Evocative Locales**

[75] Sacred / Haunted Grove

[76] Sanctuary

[77] Scholomance (School of Magic)

[78] Sea of Grass

[79] Shifting Sands

[80] Sinkholes

[81] Steading

[82] Stockade

[83] Strip Mine

[84] Sunken City

[85-86] Temple of Evil

[87] Tidal Cliffs

[88] Tiered Pools

[89-90] Tower

[91] Volcano (perhaps dormant)

[92] Waterfalls

[93] Ziggurat

[94-00] Roll twice, disregarding further rolls of 94 or higher

[001] The Ghastly Torture Chambers

[002] The Shadowed Domains

[003] The Undead Cauldrons

[004] The Masters' Undervaults

[005] The Resplendent Corridors

[006] The Shattered Volcano

[007] The Scavengers' Narrows

[008] The Gothic Duskhalls

[009] The Shimmering Barrow

[010] The Noxious Pits

[011] The Ghostly Elemental Vortex

[012] The Elementalists' Sandpits

[013] The Night Daemon's Vigil

[014] The Batrachian Mazes

[015] The Heresiarch's Redoubt

[016] The Sorceress's Retreat

[017] The Cartographer's Waterfall

[018] The Cairn Mirrors

[019] The Reverent Inquisition Chambers

[020] The Gibbering Abyss

[021] The Distorted Arsenals

[022] The Crumbling Redoubts

[023] The Topaz Caverns

[024] The Ifrit Holm

[025] The Widow's Lighthouse

**[047]** The Eldjotnar Torture Pits

**[048]** The Swarming Crystal Forest

**[049]** The Rising River

**[050]** The Balorian Gaols

**[051]** The Rhyolite Marches

**[052]** The Babbling Quagmires

**[053]** The Dweomered Under-Spires

**[054]** The Forbidden Courts

**[055]** The Witch Doctor's Bulwark

**[026]** The Bestial Cauldrons

**[027]** The Tentacled Pyramid

**[028]** The Emperor's Crypt

**[029]** The Crocuta Eidolon

**[030]** The Badger Tunnels

**[031]** The Cumulus Bulwark

**[032]** The Azure Reaches

**[033]** The Forsaken Cesspits

**[034]** The Gated Bastions

**[035]** The Sapphire Clan Halls

**[036]** The Withering Arena

**[037]** The Elementalists' Crematoriums

**[038]** The Plague Prisons

**[039]** The Deeping Conclaviums

**[040]** The Quaking Enclave

**[041]** The Infidels' Maw

**[042]** The Inquisitors' Tower

**[043]** The Unguarded Reservoir

**[044]** The Soul Eater's Chasm

**[045]** The Ghoulish Runic Chambers

**[046]** The Lightless Crematorium

**[056]** The Bandits' Obelisk

**[057]** The Lizardfolk Havens

**[058]** The Enchanted Oblivion

**[059]** The Secret Defiles

**[060]** The Insectile Armories

**[061]** The Chthonic Pools

**[062]** The Yuggothian Sewers

**[063]** The Mephitic Bawms

**[064]** The Locking Shipwrecks

**[065]** The Thalassic Eye

**Part II:**

**Complex Evocative Locales**

[066] Mercy Sacrariums of the Temptress

[067] Quartz Vortex of the Elemental Tentacle Beast
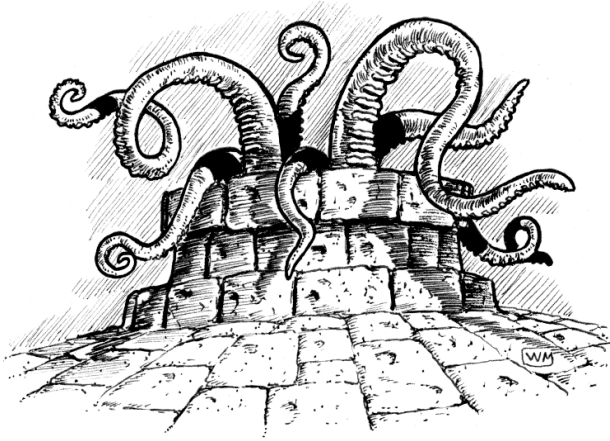


[068] The Mourning-Keeper's Martyrium

[069] The Forgotten and Silver Undercroft

[070] Waterfalls of the Deeping Doom

[071] The Dusk Riders' Chambers

[072] The Unhallowed Tribal Havens

[073] The Inescapable Mithril Citadel

[074] The Ancient Scarlet Enclave

[075] Ethereal Menhir of the Ensnaring Kings

[076] Forge of the Giant Salamandra

[077] The Ghouls' Immortal Underworld

[078] Cathedral of the Iridescent Ghouls

[079] The Hyperborean Headsman's Under-Mountain

[080] The Earthen and Undying Crematorium

[081] The Abyssal Paths of Yuggothai

[082] Bane-Chambers of the Immolated Skeleton

[083] Dolmen of the Diabolical Sprites

[084] The Shoggoth's Frozen Manor

[085] The Lost and Hateful Guardian Halls

[086] The Mysterious Whiteschist Wastes

[087] Bulwark of the Iniquitous Blade

[088] Labyrinth of the Whispering Webs

[089] Eidolon of the Hydra Tempest

[090] The Bladed and Forgotten Underworld

[091] Scarab Shards of the Guardian Beast

[092] Holm of the Angelic Hrimthursar

[093] Under-Isles of the Fabled Spear

[094] The Planetar's Purification Chambers

[095] Holdfast of the Goblin Sage

[096] Duskhalls of the Undying Mesmerizer

[097] The Vampire's Hideous Armory

[098] Vigil of the Dao Scion

[099] Forges of the Vile Succubus

[100] The Ogre Magi Colosseum

[101] Benighted Guardian Halls of the Fly Demons

[102] Domain of the Dream Eater

[103] Nightmare Realm of the Tyrannical Beithir

[104] The Mildewed Sepulchers of Hades

[105] The Noxious and Lunar Underworld

[106] Cathedral of the Deeping Wizard

[107] The Gorgon's Silent Asylum

[108] Death Gates of the Hobgoblin King

[109] Monolith of the Sagely Hierophant

[110] The Nebulous Iron Mansion

[111] Tomb of the Grisly Doppelganger

[112] Reliquary of Veiled Shadows

[113] Scrapheap of the Juggernaut

[114] The Sapphire and Umbral Chantries

[115] The Hideous and Nameless Stones

[116] Crypt of the Enigmatic Bloodletter

[117] The Beastmen's Spiral Stones

[118] The Ensnaring Yuggothian Eye

[119] Ossuaries of the Lamia Queen

[120] Treasure Vaults, Secret and Unbeheld

[121] Plundered Hallows of the Amber Behemoth

[122] The Exiled Augurs' Abattoir

[123] Gard of the Cacophonous Beast

[124] Pyramid of the Pharaoh-Devil

[125] Undervaults of the Shedu Revenant

[126] Trophy Halls of the Dire Manticore

[127] Burial Vaults of the Sacred Pyre

[128] Clan Hold of the Warding Huntress

[129] The Artificer's Pools of Aquamarine

[130] Clouded Glacier of the Ice Beasts

## Part III:
## Locales with Evocative Concepts

[131] Temple of the Slumbering Peryton

[132] Inquisitorial Chambers of the Masked Champion

[133] The Megaron of the Elder Thorn

[134] Scrapheaps of the Prophet of Never-When

[135] Doom Vaults of the Miasmal Sacrifice

[136] The Archive of Lost Lies

[137] Sacred Crypts of the Tortured Aeon

[138] Bone Pits of the Golgothus Wars

[139] Castle of the Oozing Conflagration

[140] The Glacier of Venomous Resplendence

[141] Moat of the Flawless Hatred

[142] The Crucible of Tyrannical Annihilation

[143] Craters of Unknown Sacrilege

[144] The Sacrarium of Immortal Redemption

[145] The Healing Cistern of Ill Omen

[146] Beacons of the Unchained Minotaur

[147] The Fire Pits of the Fell Ones

[148] Steading of the Imprisoning Beast

[149] The Donjon of the Alcove Scythes

[150] Fell Domain of the Barbarians' Deliverance

[151] Ramparts of the Bloodletter's Staff

[152] The Pyres of Gothic Unreflection

[153] Tormented Isles of the Lost

[154] Sewers of the Worm Deceiver

[155] The Tempest Ossuaries of Gehinnom

[156] The Stronghold of Riddling Contemplation

[157] Folly of the Unforgotten Monolith

[158] Crystal Caves of the Cackling Drum

[159] The Keep of Miasmal Portents

[160] The Maw of the Frozen Truth

[161] The Chiming Caves of Yog-Sothoth

[162] Martyrium of the Dread Protectress

[163] The Gates of the Traitors' Vanity

[164] Ageless Hypocausts of the Overking

[165] The Alabaster Gaol of Nyarlathotep

[166] The Holme of Nebulous Deviltry

[167] Bone Pits of the Abhorrent Chronicle

[168] Haunt of the Golden Concordance

[169] Pyres of the Spider-Dark

[170] The Cyst of Boreal Immolation

[171] Guardian Halls of the Grimlock Tooth

## Part IV:
## Locales with Evocative Entities

[212] Sepulchral Vaults of the Devouring Herzog

[213] Ice Caves of the Balorian Redeemer

[214] Reflecting Pools of the Sinister Besiegers

[215] Reliquary of the Mist Bandits

[216] Under-Halls of the Guardian Chimaera

[217] Airless Altars of the Unborn

[218] The Fane of the Screaming Priest

[219] The Secret Vaults of Ulthrogorgon

[220] Fiend Path of the Artificer

[221] The Eidolon Stair of the Dark Mother

[222] Mansion of the Mystical Swordmaster

[223] Grottoes of the Ifrit Lord

[224] Black Gate of the Dolmen Witches

[225] The Tower of the Phantasmal Elders

[226] Barrows of the Azure Lizard Men

[227] The Monastery of the Merciless Thing

[228] Lava Caves of the Hexer Wraiths

[229] Elemental Gates of the Master Order

[230] Under-Earth of the Forsaken Archmage

[231] Coils of the Warriors of Crom

[232] Mausoleum of the Werewolf Cohort

[233] The Egg of the Corpse-Filled Stone Golem

[234] Chapel of the Death Beetles

[235] The Purification Chambers of Inanna

[236] Pits of the Shambling Ones

[237] Domain of the Griffon Pharaohs

[238] Citadel of the Cyclopean Manticore

[239] Tempest Rift of the Ogre Magi

[240] The Realm of the Syenite Seeress

[241] Conclaves of the Jackal Huntress

[242] Bone Pits of the Wyrm Priests

[243] The Hive of the Brazen Worm

[244] Manor of the Coffin Goblins

[245] Dolmen of the Ensnaring Dragon-Lich

[246] The Gard of the Maddening Slime

[247] The River of the Strega Destroyer

[248] The Den of the Unreflected Tarasque

[249] Portals of the Crocuta Sage

[250] The Abyss of Kali

[251] Fane of the Lurking Demon Spawn

[252] The Gauntlet of the Thralls of Cthulhu

[253] Torture Pits of the Emerald Beast

[254] Sandpits of the Gruesome Souls

[255] The Chambers of the Troll Gaunts



[256] Freehold of the Slithering Flesh Golem

[257] Hallows of the Haunted God

[258] Slaughter Garde of the Executioners

[259] Citadel of the Bladed Lionhearts

[260] The Stones of the Unchained Dire Lords

## Part V:

## Locales of Female Personages

[261] The Spires of Sephare

[262] The Secret Crypts of Bothildir

**[319]** The Under-Isles of Simona

**[320]** The Sepulcher of Bice

**[321]** The Manor House of Sedania

**[322]** The Under-Earth of Lilaia

**[323]** The Echo Chambers of Benedicta

**[324]** The Hideout of Nycholeta

**[325]** The Ash Pits of Herthe
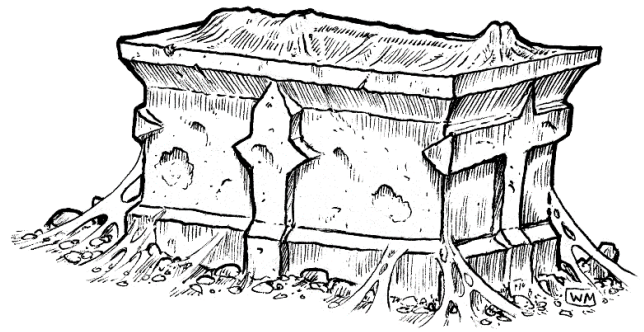
**Part VI:**
**Locales of Male Personages**

**[326]** The Rune Caves of Pascaut

**[327]** The Sepulcher of Baderon

**[328]** The Paths of Octavius

**[329]** The Realm of Giroldus

**[330]** The Hearths of Torgeir

**[331]** The Throne Room of Agathon

**[332]** The Cataracts of Aethon

**[333]** The Eye of Nonus

**[334]** The Dolmen of Granicus

**[335]** The Walls of Roricus

**[336]** The Hypocaust of Moireach

**[337]** The Descent of Gracien

**[338]** The Redoubt of Eurythion

**[339]** The Haven of Aegaeon

**[340]** The Labyrinth of Perimedes

**[341]** The Bone House of Ruprecht

**[342]** The Torture Chambers of Duibhne

**[343]** The Crystal Forest of Amra

**[344]** The Sinkholes of Lixandrinus

**[345]** The Tomb of Arshak

**[346]** The Sunken Caves of Pytheas

**[347]** The Void of Scamandrius

**[348]** The Mines of Fridebraht

**[349]** The Sarcophagi of Leigh

**[350]** The Holme of Sibragtus

**[351]** The Duskhalls of Alain

**[352]** The Crevices of Gillot

**[353]** The Lava Caves of Eoghann

**[354]** The Shrine of Vidarr

**[355]** The Trophy Hall of Oedipus

**[356]** The Royal Tomb of Hengest

**[357]** The Vaults of Keld

**[358]** The Harrow of Ranuccinus

**[359]** The Museum of Godesmanus

**[360]** The Necropolis of Tearlach

**[361]** The Manse of Baal

**[362]** The Reef of Hyrcanius

**[363]** The Gardens of Avenel

**[364]** The Secret Crypts of Elatreus

**[365]** The Psychomanteum of Guntramus

**[366]** The Chasms of Icarion

**[367]** The Garrison of Anaxagoras

**[368]** The Threshold of Nycoletus

**[369]** The Sandpits of Cormag

**[370]** The Shrine of Theodericus

**[371]** The Order Hall of Nycodus

**[372]** The Cesspools of Skelos

**[373]** The Retreat of Tomas

**[374]** The Caverns of Telemachus

**[375]** The Asylum of Duris

**[376]** The Great Hall of Ascianese

**[377]** The Core of Cian

**[378]** The Foundries of Athicus

**[379]** The Eidolon of Eryx

**[380]** The Defile of Meingotus

**[381]** The Museum of Giso

**[382]** The Sacrarium of Arideus

**[383]** The Conclave of Beowulf

**[384]** The Ossuaries of Damon

**[385]** The Delve of Golias

**[386]** The Mansion of Olov

**[387]** The Fire Pits of Hallur

**[388]** The Fane of Rhadamanthos

**[389]** The Carcers of Jofridus

**[390]** The Undercity of Falchimus

**Part VII:**

**Scenario Names and Adventure Titles**

**[391]** The Bane of the Marauders' Monastery

**[392]** The Hecatomb of the Viper Asylum

**[393]** The Trials of the Tormenting Menhir

**[394]** The Chaos of the Ghost Crypt

**[395]** The Tyranny of the Darkling Slime Pits

**[396]** The Venom of the Mourning Deeps

**[397]** Dread of the Brigands' Abyss

**[398]** The Rings of the Macabre Circlet

**[399]** The Revelation of the Grotesque Sepulcher

**[400]** The Tooth of the Whispering Cage

**[401]** The Scythes of the Nebulous Shipwreck

**[402]** The Sorceries of the Myrmidon's Burial Vault

**[403]** Obliteration of the Troglodyte Ward

**[404]** Skulls of the Marble Oubliette

**[405]** The Sarcophagus of the Crystal Martyrium

**[406]** Incomprehension of the Noxious Deeps

**[407]** The Statues of the Slave Lord's Delve

**[408]** Contagion of the Sacred Crypt

**[409]** The Shields of the Trapping Conclavium

**[410]** Deviltry of the Enchanted Shrine

**[411]** Tears of the Crystalline Imp

**[412]** R'lyeh, the Doppelganger's Dominion

**[413]** The Lotus of the Sibyl Grotto

**[414]** Trials of the Ebony Slime Vault

**[415]** Sabers of the Archmage's Infinity

**[416]** The Mystery of the Undying One

**[417]** Chaos of the Harpies' Temple

**[418]** The Witchery of the Wraith Lord Foundries

**[419]** Illusions of the Ogre Pits

**[420]** The Beyonding of the Mirrored Machine

**[421]** Aeons of the Domed Oblivion

**[422]** The Miseries of the Jotunn Realm

**[423]** Thunder Over the Idolater's Garde

**[424]** The Judgment of the Thrall Dominions

**[425]** Curse of the Draconian Ice Caverns

**[426]** The Doom of the Diabolical Folly

**[427]** Tempest of the Assassin's Shipwreck

**[428]** Scepter of the Vermin Chasms

**[429]** The Webs of the Gloaming Hold

**[430]** Imprisonment of the Soulless One

**[431]** The Phial of the Priestess Palace

[432] Tears of the Witch Scriptorium

[433] Daggers of the Sand Redoubt

[434] The Thorns of the Poison Hearth

[435] Trials of the Airless Citadel

[436] Victorious in the Manes Netherworld

[437] Resplendence of the Spider March

[438] The Secret of the Archmage's Ruin

[439] Contemplation of the Ivory Megaron

[440] Aeons in the Wailing Cavern

[441] The Pestilence of the Devastated Underworld

[442] Deliverance of the Lion Asylum

[443] The Bone Knives of the Witch Doctor's Fane

[444] Scepters of the Waterfall Palace

[445] The Truth of the Execution Chamber

[446] Apocalypse of the Snaking Dominion

[447] The Colossi of the Darkening World

[448] Gates of the Spectral Temple

[449] The War Drums of the Goblin Pits

[450] Grimoires of the Timeless Palace

[451] Throne of the Lemure Halls

[452] Lamentation of the Abhorrent Stair

[453] The Withering in the Celestial Freehold

[454] Madness in the Gothic Heroum

[455] Idylls of the Carnifex Sanctum

**Part VIII:**

**Curious Locales and Concepts**

[456] The Gloried Halls of the Redeemer

[457] The Hideous Slime Pits of Deliverance

[458] Bloodstone Asylums of the Dread Fang

[459] The Earthen Garde of the Codex

[460] Gilded Spirals of Silence

[461] Ruins of the Grue Crucible



[462] Mists of the Banishing Quagmire

[463] The Encrusted Circle of Echoes

[464] The Impenetrable Citadel of Untruth

[465] Bladed Cathedral of the Idolaters

[466] The Noxious Stronghold of Discordia

[467] Hollow World of the Chiming Scepter

[468] The Gibbering Egg of Yog-Sothoth

[469] Lost Webs of Unreflection

[470] The Manticore Vaults of Chthonia

[471] The Bestial Void of Immortality

[472] Venomous Cesspit of the Bloodletter

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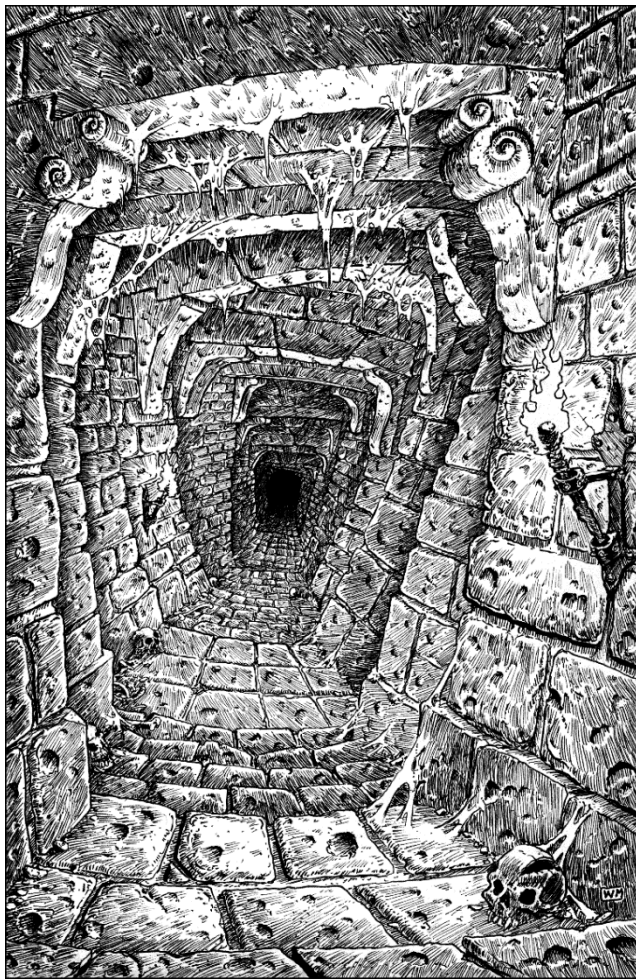
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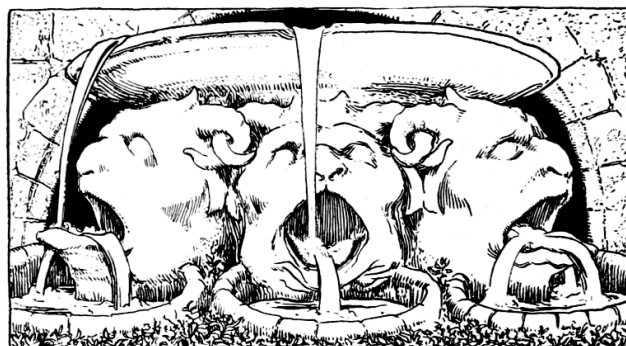


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[930] Umbral Fane of Arideus the Screaming

[931] Golden Defile of Turquan the Medusa Keeper

[932] Bugbear Warrens of Imbrasus the Sluggard

[933] Scion Gardens of Andraemon the Badgerbear Cager

[934] Granite Sacrarium of the Shedu Karanthes

[935] Sorcerous Moathouse of Cormacan the Unbleeding

[936] Toad Crypts of the Mythical Lord Quentin
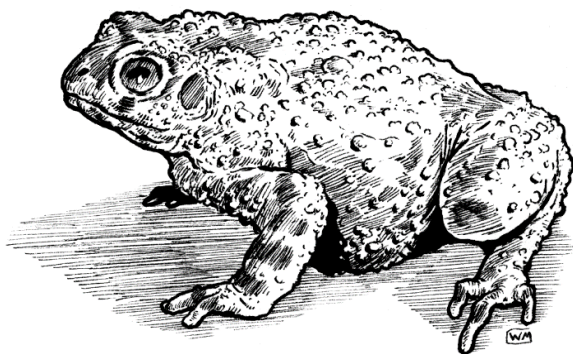
[937] Horrid Spires of Sibragtus the Insidious

[938] The Lava Dens of Nectolus the Burning

[939] Bloodstone Mausoleum of the Tyrant Nazarius

[940] Execution Chambers of Briareus the Exiled

[941] Displacer Ziggurats of Pedone the Goblin King

[942] The Insectile Redoubt of Torgeir the Yellow

[943] Warding Rifts of Guillaume the Wolf Lord

[944] The Cambion Palace of Thror the Immaculate

[945] Stygian Halls of Hengest the Profane

[946] The Myconid Haunts of Marquardus the Silvered

[947] The Volcanic Undercity of Voulo the Encrusted

[948] Unholy Enclave of Bochard the Overking

[949] The Wondrous Keep of Jorius the Slain

[950] Plutonian Vaults of Khossus the Necromancer

[951] Silt Cascades of the Baron Diglach

[952] Cult Grottoes of the Beast Lord Herodion

[953] Assassin Dens of Moranthes the Beguiler

[954] Hatching Vaults of Amalric the Hungerer

[955] The Depthless Drowning Pools of Tarchon the Scorpion

[956] Opalescent Redoubt of Sir Torgeir the Draconian

[957] The Grisly Torrent of Aeson the Solitary

[958] Moldering Caverns of Heinricus the Beheader

**[959]** Viridian Caves of Helwig, the Bugbear Hetman

**[960]** Sludge Pits of the Marquis Heirax

**[961]** The Immaculate Cages of Huguetus The Gaoler

**[962]** Carrion Forge of Siacas the Erinyes Slayer

**[963]** The Gossamered Pools of Orderic the Lizard King

**[964]** Serpentine Grottoes of Avenel the Crystalline

**[965]** The Urd Quagmires of Uldricus the Dagonian

**[966]** Warded Vortex of Eustace, the Cackling One

**[967]** The Undiscovered Kingdom of Asmundur the Fallen

**[968]** Infernal Arenas of Bardur the Mold Bringer

**[969]** Vampiric Crypts of Lord Andraemon the Elder

**[970]** Colossus Halls of Ciaran the Etin King

**[971]** Starless Core of the Knights of Alcon

**[972]** Purification Chambers of Philip the Ever-Dying

**[973]** The Teleporter Halls of Gottolinus the Nebulous

**[974]** Magma Mires of the Overlord Ruissine

**[975]** Blackstone Foundries of Gerald the Hungering

**Part XI:**

**Ominous Horror Singularities**

**[976]** The Holm

**[977]** The Oubliettes

**[978]** The Crowde

**[979]** The Dusk

**[980]** The Shipwrecks

**[981]** The Ziggurats

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**[991]** The Sarcophagi

**[992]** The Vigil

**[993]** The Bone House

**[994]** The Megaron

**[995]** The Cairnstone

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**[997]** The Barrow

**[998]** The Hollows

**[999]** The Falls

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# CHAPTER 4:

# UNEARTHLY REALITY

> "Tortor, I do not believe we are in Clacaedius of the Thirteen Waterfalls any longer."
>
> — *Dorothea of the Ruby Sabatons, Witch Slayer Extraordinaire*

## The Nether Earth

One of the most long-lived struggles in classic dungeon design involves the tension between verisimilitude ("fantasy realism") and the dungeon-as-toy approach ("gamism"). This Guide tends to lean in the direction of gamism, while respecting verisimilitude where it does not conflict with the fun of the game. After all, a game should be enjoyable; one that is not fun for its participants is not worth playing. Gaming is not fiction. Play must win. If a GM's dungeon design is deemed to be more realistic than it is fun, it must then be regarded as a dismal failure. It is this author's opinion that if you are changing a fun dungeon location or encounter in the name of realism alone, you are doing your fellow players a severe disservice. A GM should always strive to create an enjoyable game environment above all, and critics be damned.

However, it must also be noted that as casual players become experienced veterans, their expectations are heightened and their tolerance for nonsensical environments decreases. A sense of expectation supersedes a sense of wonder. In other words, it is perfectly fine for early

games to feature "funhouse," illogical dungeons; but as the game sessions continue and the adventures begin to mesh with one another and to become a long-term campaign, the veteran GM must create more realistic environments while also maintaining the sense of fun. This balancing act can be very difficult, particularly when dealing with players with differing expectations.

One of the easiest ways to create "realistic" dungeons is to emulate actual places that really exist. The following ten environments were chosen for their intriguing features and atmosphere, as well as their opportunities for expansion and development in the name of gamist fun. Game Masters are encouraged to do their own research into these fascinating real underworld locales, and to glean the best bits from reality for use in their own fantasy dungeon designs. Points of particular development potential are noted as well.

**[1] The Catacombs of Paris:** The Catacombs are a massive maze and underground ossuary, filled with the remains of millions of people. Parts of the Catacombs were formerly stone quarries. Burials were made underground due to plague and overflowing cemeteries (and probably, also because of the gruesome stench). Interesting features include plague vaults, walls of skulls, flooded tunnels, labyrinthine spirals, hidden aqueducts and centuries-old graffiti.

**[2] The Caves of Budapest:** The city of Budapest, Hungary is built atop several natural cave systems. Interesting elements include an underground thermal lake (undiscovered until 2008), dripstone columns, a constant 51-degree Fahrenheit temperature, and extensive maze-like caves extending over several miles.

**[3] The Cave Cities of Cappadocia and Anatolia:** Cappadocia is a unique region of Asia Minor, filled with unusual rock formations and countless caves. During the

Roman era, many of these caves were carved into churches, temples, villages and even entire underground towns. Notable sites include Derinkuyu, Kaymakli and Ozkonak. Derinkuyu is an underground city of five levels, capable of sheltering 20,000 souls. Kaymakli features steep, narrow passages and underground forges. Ozkonak features ceiling holes where underworld residents could pour boiling oil on invading enemies. Classic monsters who would reside in such a place in a fantasy world include cave giants, evil elves, dwarves, minotaurs, troglodytes and trolls.

**[4] The Maginot Line:** This massive series of fortifications was built prior to World War I to protect France from Germany. Although the system failed due to the mobility of armored units, it remains an ideal source of inspiration for dwarven strongholds, goblin cities and other militant undercities. A GM who conducts a quick image search for "Maginot Line diagram" will find dozens of inspiring pieces, including three-dimensional cutaways, side views, elevation maps and peculiar defensive room designations. Intriguing features include surface pillbox towers, air locks (iron valves), elevator shafts, ammunition hoists (perhaps for siege weapons) and fallback rooms for regrouping defensive forces.

**[5] Mammoth Cave:** Many cave systems are inspiring, but Mammoth is known to be the inspiration for Colossal Cave Adventure, Zork and other old school computer adventure games. It is the world's longest known system, featuring at least 400 miles of tunnels. This makes it a perfect example of a vast and trackless netherworld, or under-earth. Features include huge limestone galleries, deep pits, sinkholes, albino and cave animals, and waterways including the River Styx.

**[6] Mary King's Close, Edinburgh:** The King's Close is a unique underworld, a multi-level warren of streets and tenements sealed over by later bridges and buildings. The former streets literally became the undercity, sealed away in stone. It is the ideal template for an undercity dungeon in a fantasy campaign. Legends of this place speak of ghost hauntings, murders and assassinations, criminal overlords, stifling air and mists, gas vapor hallucinations, dripping slime, and plague victims being walled up alive.

**[7] The Ruins of Pompeii:** Pompeii is the best-preserved Roman ruin, due to the petrifying volcanic ash of Vesuvius. A fascinating dungeon could be made of ash-sealed ruins, perhaps opened by seismic activity and involving a "gold rush" as demi-humans and humanoids race to secure the treasures in newly opened ash-protected tombs. Other interesting features include grave hollows (voids in the rock showing where people died), mosaics, sculptures, amazing examples of preserved treasures and features, and colorful graffiti.

**[8] Son Doong:** In 2011, National Geographic reported that the most immense cave ever known had been discovered in Vietnam. The Son Doong is up to 460' wide, and an incredible 2.8 miles long ... at least. Much of this real-world wonderland still remains unknown. Intriguing features include a howling underground river, incredible noise and echoes, a hidden entrance festooned in jungle plants, poisonous centipedes, and snail-eating monkeys. Son Doong is the perfect inspiration for a realistic netherworld.

**[9] Valley of the Kings, Egypt:** The Valley of the Kings is a hidden valley which includes at least 63 known subterranean tombs. These tombs range from single-room pits to a unified complex of over 100 rooms. It is easy to imagine such a place in a fantasy world being home to undead, vermin, golem and gargoyle sentries, giant spiders and scorpions, and burrowing creatures which would interconnect the tombs to create a labyrinthine web of peril. Some such tombs would certainly be plundered, while others

(still sealed!) would have secret doors, traps, magical tricks and deceptions, vengeful spirits, treasure vaults and relics bestowing powerful curses.
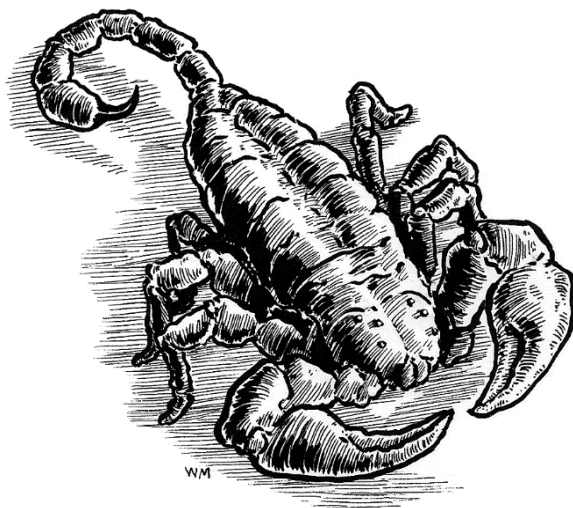


**[10] Winchester Mystery House:** Arguably, the Winchester is the progenitor of the "mad wizard's dungeon," in which a madman (or madwoman) uses exorbitant resources to create a bizarre maze of otherwise-questionable rooms and features. This real-life mansion includes over 150 rooms. Other inspiring features include one-way doors, false doors, stairways to nowhere, occult symbolism, sealed rooms, dead ends and spiritual protections.

## Semi-Realistic Dungeons

It must be said, with some reluctance, that there are very few real dungeon complexes in existence. Soil is too loose for safe excavation, and throughout history — despite the age of castles and sieges — it is simply more practical to build fortifications above-ground than it is to burrow through nether stone. With that said, however, there are certainly places in the world where fascinating underground excavations have been made (as already discussed). When we also consider the potential effects of underworld monsters, dwarves, treasure seekers, gods, demons and powerful magics, it is easy to extrapolate these real-world sites into a conception of a vast and maze-like "realistic" dungeon environment.

When dealing with dungeon verisimilitude, the GM is urged to remember the maxim that fun is more important than realism. The dungeon only needs to be realistic enough to please the designer, to enhance your players' sense of wonder, and to quell their doubts about the dungeon's plausibility (in that order). Do not over-design in the name of logic! Anything detailing air flow capacity, water flow rates, fungal farming sustainability, nocturnal and diurnal light reflectivity rates or any other such "justification" nonsense must be regarded as ridiculously over-complex. Basically, a good GM should borrow dungeon concepts from reality which enhance the *perception* of realism, while ignoring any too-piercing questions which cause the entire creation to fall flat. When you reach the point where your own questions are stifling your urge to create a dungeon environment, it is time to stop asking those questions. The unconquerable truism applies perfectly here and serves as the ultimate authority:

*"Well, it's magic."*

Words to live and game by.

## Dungeon Rooms

By definition, a "real" dungeon is a place of punishment and confinement; an underground prison in which the sequestration of prisoners is more important than the victims' chances of survival. A plausible dungeon therefore would include cells, guard rooms, pits, oubliettes and dead ends. Portcullises, locked doors, gratings, and high window slits providing intermittent sunlight and a little air would be prevalent as well.

It can be logically extrapolated that a dungeon would feature related types of rooms related to the medieval prison configuration: partial excavations,

storerooms for tools and materials, arsenals for the guards, interrogation rooms and torture chambers. There might also be escape tunnels, safe rooms for nobility when under siege, sliding walls and cave-ins as well. Other realistic underground rooms, especially beneath a castle, can include cisterns, ice storage chambers, latrines, grottoes and treasure vaults.

## Air in the Dungeon

One example of a real dungeon and deathtrap was the Black Hole of Calcutta. This dungeon was a prison less than 20' square, in which dozens or more (perhaps sixty, perhaps over a hundred) prisoners were forced to stand in a poorly-ventilated room with only two windows. After a night of standing, wrestling, exhaustion, screams, delirium and suffocation, only about twenty of the prisoners were found alive. The Black Hole can be regarded as a grim reminder about the restrictions that plausible dungeon design would place on living creatures.

Small rooms should have ventilation and only small populations of monsters. Places where these conditions do not exist should either be unpopulated, or occupied by monsters that do not require air (the undead, automatons, golems, elementals, etc.). Most dungeon rooms should feature inconspicuous vents in their ceilings or high in the walls; these would be air-holes and ventilation shafts. It is reasonable to assume that a fantasy world where magic and monsters allow deeper excavations would have a more advanced, perhaps dwarvish, understanding of ventilation than might otherwise be considered in a medieval setting.

## Food in the Dungeon

Food in a prison-dungeon was notoriously horrible and untenable; basically, it typically consisted of slop, moldy bread and unwanted scraps. Deprivation was common, but spoiled or infested food could be a punishment in itself. Valuable prisoners (those who were noble, or who were to be ransomed) would receive much finer food, of course, but the basic truth is quite simple: virtually nothing edible will grow in a non-magical dungeon environment. Cavern ecosystems simply do not thrive in artificial habitats; food in the dungeon needs to be carried in.

Any denizens in a realistic dungeon, therefore, will have their own steady and reliable food source. Such food will either be stolen (from surface-raiding monsters), scavenged (from trash and remains), magically created (perhaps through wishes, items or cleric spells), or predatory (monsters literally eating the other residents). The most pleasant course of action for the denizens, of course, would be to bring preserved food in from the surface. This would include well-preserved goods and long-term foods such as potatoes, turnips, hardtack and salted meats. It is worth noting that real iron and trench rations, dating to World War I, included corned beef, sealed tins, salted fish, wheat cakes and bouillon powder.

The more sinister alternatives for the desperate or vile monsters, of course, include eating the rats, eating adventurers, or simply eating each other.

Sustenance over time is an issue which falls under the mantle of "you're over-thinking it." A real dungeon filled with hundreds of monsters would not be sustainable. Of course, this realist criticism can also be turned around: dungeon monster populations are constantly changing because of predation, magic, and large populations of denizens moving in and out as they struggle to find shelter, food and drink.

# Water in the Dungeon

Water is actually less of a problem in a dungeon than food would be. Possible non-magic sources of water include natural pools, underground streams, rising ground water, ice storage, aquifers, water barrel storage, and meager trickles of captured rainwater dripping down from the ventilation shafts or other conduits. Grimly, swallowed blood is quite hydrating for predators as well.

The larger problem, of course, is access to *pure* water. Again, monsters who raid the surface or live next to a primary source would be the most likely to survive and prosper. Others would either be crafty and boil their water, or be immune to filthy water and resistant to parasites, or would not require water at all. Desperate creatures will, if there is no other option, drink their own urine or each other's blood.

A GM interested in a more mythic campaign (as opposed to a realistic one) could rule that evil creatures are inherently impure, and therefore have different primal biological needs than human beings. Such vessels of living corruption would not only *avoid* pure water; they would seek out filthy water for its own darkly restorative qualities.

# Light in the Dungeon

Classic fantasy dungeons (and their cinematic equivalents) include lots of corridors lined by flickering torches. The problem, of course, is that torches only burn for about an hour. Worse, there is either no one to keep replacing them, or those monsters have a *colossal* pile of torches and nothing better to do with their time than running around every hour replacing the lights! (Aha, the wandering monster conundrum is solved!)

When we also consider the effects of burning pitch and smoke on the fragile dungeon air system, the conception of non-magical torches in the underworld becomes almost impossible. Torches could certainly be found in castles, temples and even stonework manorial halls. Underground, however, the use of lanterns or oil lamps would be far more likely. Fires, if they exist, would be rare, carefully controlled and located directly under chimneys, vents or smoke-holes. Communal fireplaces and bonfires would therefore make ideal centerpieces for great halls and common rooms.

In fantasy there are always more interesting solutions, such as phosphorescent fungi, phosphorescent animals (such as fire beetles), monsters with infra-vision, and heat-free magical light. But none of these solutions are very realistic. Two viable mundane alternatives, however, are rarely considered.



One is simple sunlight. Most real dungeons were located in shallow ground, and many had narrow window slits leading directly up to sunlight. Due to the length of such window shafts, such light would be fleeting at best. A more intriguing alternative would be shafts providing reflected sunlight, involving carefully placed mirrors or plaques of polished metal.

Also, there are legends of *asbestinon* ("unquenchable") lamps and lanthorns in ancient writings. Such lamps would be mildly poisonous and could burn for many hours, perhaps years. There are even legends where tombs were unearthed and lamps were still found burning after hundreds of years. Perhaps it is the souls that feed the flame …

## Denizens of the Dungeon

As mentioned prior, most denizens of real medieval dungeons were either guards or prisoners. The closest non-prison example of a "living" dungeon, or a dungeon inhabited by long-term human inhabitants, is Mary King's Close (if we believe stories of plague victims being walled into the undercity and left to die). The Tower of London bears some consideration as well. The caves of Cappadocia provide us with a more interesting idea, that of cultivated civilizations dwelling underground for mutual protection against adversity for long periods of time.

Other reasonable suggestions abound. Of course, Neanderthals and other cavemen can be inspiring examples of humans living underground. GMs interested in archaeology are also encouraged to research the ongoing excavation work occurring at Alepotrypa, a Greek cave community which may have been the real-world inspiration for Tartarus and Hades.

Regardless of these real-world examples, very few people choose to live underground for any reason. It is here that the GM must rely on "pulp" examples, favoring the works of Burroughs, Howard, Lovecraft, Merritt and Verne as well as others. In a world filled with treasure, dangerous magic, soaring dragons and the promise of arcane immortality for the bold, the idea of people and monsters living in, exploring and reclaiming ancient vaults in the underground becomes much more likely.

As a general rule, "good" civilizations (with the exceptions of gnomes, dwarves and Halflings) live above-ground, and even halflings rarely venture far beneath the surface. "Neutral" monsters such as lizards, insects, beetles and spiders favor shallow caves, and the deeps are left to elementals, the dead and to evil. The underground symbolizes peril, and GMs are encouraged to have dungeons levels' populations become more sinister and magical the deeper any adventurers dare to go. The deepest dungeons should actually be infernal, with magical gates to the Elemental Fire, the Hells, Hades of Phlegethon or the demoniac Abyss.

## Realistic Tombs and Catacombs
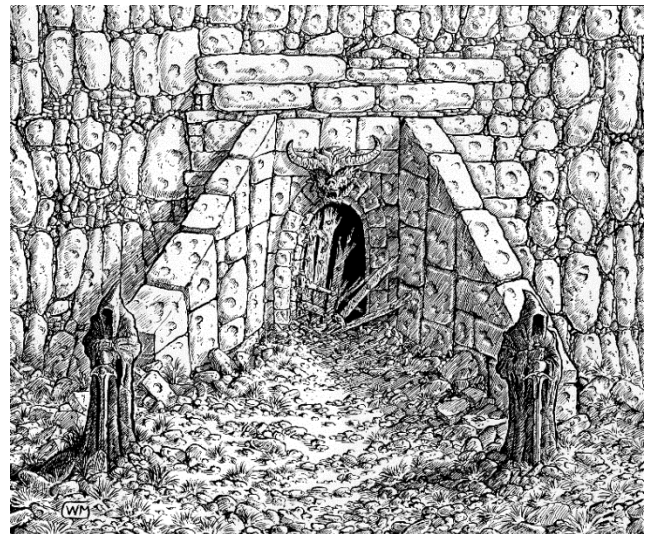


Real tombs have radically different designs than real dungeons. To be blunt, dungeons are built to keep people alive (at least for a while), while tombs are built to hold dead people. Concerns about air, food, water and light are scarcely considered when a real tomb is being designed. A real tomb would be extremely hazardous to explore because of these unavoidable constraints on the explorers' own survival. The deeper explorers go, the more likely they are to suffocate or simply to become trapped in a haphazard narrow.

For these reasons, explorable tombs should be either small or "living" tombs. A living tomb is one in which at least part of the tomb complex has been reclaimed and repurposed as living space by one or more intelligent races. Such tomb-dungeon levels would consist of demi-human or monster lairs, with secret or forbidden catacombs leading down to the still-sealed burial vaults below.

Another example of a "survivable" tomb is a burial cave; that is, a vast cave in which a surface population interred the remains of their dead. Such tribes would claim the cave as territorial sacred ground, and would defend it and perhaps even patrol it without maintaining an ongoing presence there.

## Realistic Caves

There are many different types of caves in the real world. The eight major types which can all be easily emulated in dungeon design are: (1) anchialine, (2) erosional, (3) fracture, (4) glacier, (5) littoral, (6) primary, (7) solutional and (8) talus.

[1] **Anchialine Caves:** Anchialine caves are perfect for large netherworlds, because they feature rare, bizarre and diverse forms of life. Anchialine caves are both erosional and littoral (see below); in other words, there is both salt water and fresh water. An example would be a huge cave system on the coast of a sea, sloping down, where numerous underground streams and rivers flow down into the saltwater. In a fantasy world, a "sunless sea" would probably be surrounded by extensive anchialine caves, perhaps with waterfalls or even lost cities on its shores.

[2] **Erosional Caves:** Erosional caves are most often formed by abrasive sediments in flowing fresh water. Examples would be caves carved by an underground stream, lake or river. However, Aeolian erosional caves can also exist, which are scoured by wind-born particles as opposed to water. Erosional caves would probably feature

freshwater monsters, such as giant pike, gar, lampreys, leeches and so forth. Also, if the water system is thriving, there will be many cave and surface fish available as a food source which could reasonably lead to the establishment of large populations of humanoids and monsters.

[3] **Fracture Caves:** Fracture caves are created in areas of mixed stone. Solid rock, such as basalt or granite, may be interspersed with more fragile minerals, such as limestone or gypsum. Seismic activity causes the softer material to fracture, leaving rubble-filled hollows. Fracture caves would include lots of rubble and sediment, unsafe floors, low ceilings, dangerous cave-ins, eerie sounds (crumbling stone) and great monolithic chambers with "hills" of cleared-away stone. Monsters populating fracture caves would likely be either intelligent (clearing rubble, making safer stone burrows and avoiding dangerous areas) or short-lived (and making up for their brief lifespans with mass migrations or population explosions; such creatures might include slimes, insects, spiders, etc.).

[4] **Glacier Caves:** These caves are extremely dangerous, and are formed by partial melts of glaciers. They may have gravel floors or partial walls, but virtually all surfaces are made of ice. Obvious monsters for such an environment include frost giants, polar bears, ice toads, cold drakes, pale puddings and snow spiders. Foolish adventurers who resort to fire magic (even torches) may well suffer the banes of flash flooding, entombment or some other horrible death.

[5] **Littoral Caves:** Littoral systems are found on sea coasts, or on the coasts of former seas. They are formed by the erosive power of the tides. These caves are relatively small, under 1,000 feet in length (and probably ideal for filling a single sheet of graph paper). Water will be a constant hazard, and can also be used to the adventurers' advantage (for example, floating a raft on high tide to reach secret

caverns above the main floor). Monsters encountered in littoral caves will frequently be of the saltwater variety, and can include Deep Ones, squids, octopi, hippocampi and sea nymphs. "Safer" entrances into littoral caves may exist where there is a ceiling collapse, causing an opening that would allow explorers to lower themselves into sunlit water.

**[6] Primary Caves:** Primaries were created at the same time as the rock that surrounds them. Volcanic caves (including solidified ash and lava tubes) are the classic examples. In reality, many primary caves are in now-dormant areas. In the game, however, interesting primary caves will probably feature partial volcanism and all the threats that go along with that condition (seismic activity, pooled or flowing magma, unsafe floors, poisonous gases, glowing natural gas jets, etc.).

**[7] Solutional Caves:** These systems form when acid-laden groundwaters seep into the deep earth, eroding stone as they go. Typical types of solutional caves include limestone (with sinkhole karst terrain above them), marble, gypsum and salt. The GM should consider the depth of the water table when designing such caves, because the caves above that level will be dry and the ones below it will be partially or fully flooded. Interesting effects can be created with elevation changes; for example, a descending corridor which goes fully underwater and then rises, so that daring explorers can find a secret region of dry caves beyond the tunnel.

**[8] Talus Caves:** Talus caves tend to be small. Like fracture caves, they form where large slabs of rock have fractured and fallen away. Classic talus caves, however, typically consist of one type of stone and are found at the base of cliffs. Such places are ideal for small wilderness encounters, such as a bandit hideout, orc warren (with numerous burrows dug off the main cave) or a classic dragon lair.

For more on cave design, refer to CDDG2, *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide II*, Section 3-1, Designing a Cave or Cavern with Special Features.
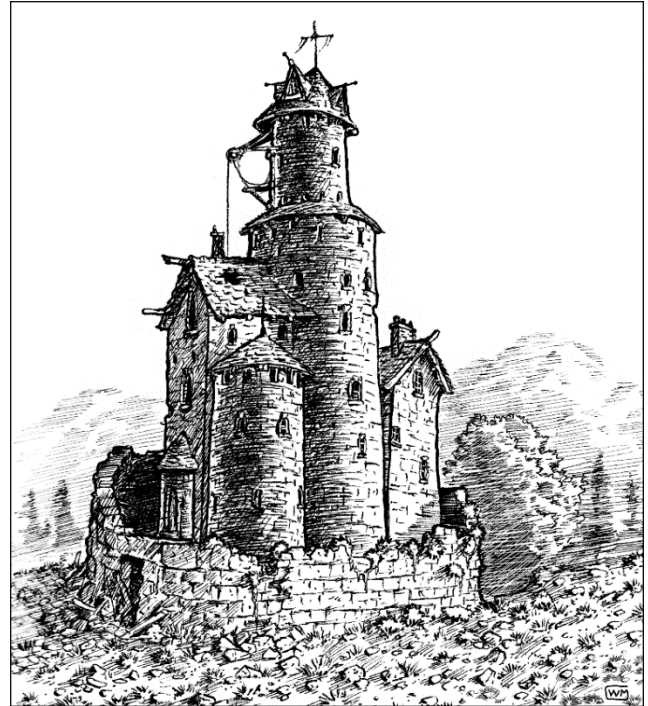


## Realistic Castles

Entire books can be written on the subject of realistic castles. Early castles were defensive fortifications, while those built in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance were more often less-practical palaces which were designed to be more livable (yet far more difficult to defend). Generally, the "militaristic" degree of a castle's design would vary in accordance with the number of enemies that the original builders were facing. Castles in urban (and ancient urban) areas would probably be fancy and palatial, while those underground or in the borderlands would be far more crude, solid and practically conceived.

Very generally, castles consist of concentric circles. At the center is the donjon or keep, the lord's or steward's residence. Near to this area are important areas such as chapels, feast halls, council rooms and bedchambers.

The workshops of lower classes, including stables, smithies, stonemasons' halls and such would be located toward the outside ring. The outermost ring consists of the wall and major towers. The main entrance is typically singular (again, depending on defensibility), and might include a gatehouse, barbican, drawbridge, and so forth.

Towers along the walls are intended as bastions for guards and defenders, especially artillerists and archers. Arsenals, armories and weapon storerooms, therefore, are more likely to be in the towers. This would allow defenders to fall back to a tower and fight on if part of the castle falls. Beyond the wall there may be a trench, ditch or moat.

One or more courtyards typically divide the entrance from the keep, and there is probably at least one internal dividing wall as well. Prisons would either be underground (for the unimportant guests) or in the donjon (for ransom-worthy nobles). The courtyards might even include gardens, arbors, wells or even small parcels of farmland. There could even be a full winery, temple or nunnery.

Outside of these generalities, an endless number of reasonable and interesting castle designs can be conceived.

Many GMs fall into the trap of creating only a single castle level, providing a surface shell to house the dungeon under. Realistically, many fortress buildings (at least the towers) would be multi-level and connected by walkways. Thicker walls could be hollow, sheltering entire passageways inside. Upper works could include guard halls, bedchambers, knights' quarters, and various storerooms. GMs who prefer for ruins to be minor interludes to the dungeon "main course" can easily say that a castle ruin is partial and that only the ground level survives; but it can also be interesting to have the dungeon sprawl vertically in both directions, above ground as well as underground.

Old castles will feature areas of reconstruction, rebuilt towers, annexes, repurposed buildings, patched walls, rubble piles, smithies rebuilt in stone if they burned down, and so forth. A castle which has suffered sieges might even have escape tunnels (some resealed and then forgotten), mines (underground tunnels dug by invading sappers), counter-mines (tunnels dug by defenders to intercept sapping efforts) and forgotten underground traps and fortifications.



## Semi-Realistic Manor Houses

In reality, a manor house is a rare type building found in Europe, featuring large stately rooms and used by the gentry to rule rural areas. In this Guide, however, the term "manor house" is used to define any and all huge, sprawling houses which lend themselves to dungeon adventures. Examples include abandoned mansions, lost palaces, wizardly estates and haunted houses.

A manor house dungeon would include dilapidated luxuries of all kinds — dusty art galleries, tarnished suits of armor, moldering tapestries and decaying chandeliers. Many rooms might be made of dry or fragile wood, making fire-based attacks (and even sources of light) extremely hazardous. Spider-webs might well be

everywhere, and there would certainly be extensive systems of attics, cellars and outbuildings. There might even be a chapel and a graveyard.

Manorial room types include suites, boudoirs, trophy halls, sitting rooms, parlors, salons, museums, galleries, libraries and the like. These environments play host to hundreds of classic adventure elements rarely found in other dungeons — paintings with moving eyes, rotating bookcases, haunted canopy beds, vine-layered greenhouses and Gothic fireplaces hiding secret doors and chimneys with skeletons stuffed inside of them. Some adventures might feature "live" manor houses, in which the dwellers are alive and at least partially in control of the house; Poe stories such as Masque of the Red Death, The Cask of Amontillado and The Fall of the House of Usher can be useful in designing these unsettling haunted dungeon / base of operation hybrids.

Classic monsters for these types of settings include ghosts, spiders, bats, gargoyles, vampires, flesh constructs, illusionists, imps, ogres (in the tradition of Bluebeard), werewolves, zombies, gypsies (magic-users, troubadours and assassins?) and so forth.

# CHAPTER 5: CREATING THE DUNGEON DELVE

"We appear to be entering a labyrinth of winding diminutive corridors, all quite similar to one another. Light well the lanthorns, delvers. We are likely to be feasted upon by a Grimlue."

— *Zarkorius the Cartographer (The Seventh Incantation Ere the Devouring)*

## Drawing the Dungeon

Drawing the dungeon is the most enjoyable *and* the most difficult aspect of dungeon design. Unfortunately, it is also the most difficult aspect to teach by the written word. I personally recommend that any neophyte GM should do an image search for "sample dungeon" and study some of the more interesting results. These play environments have been mapped by hand, software and even taped-together pieces of paper for almost 40 years.

Basically, most dungeons are laid out on a north-south axis on graph paper, with each square representing 10' across the horizontal and vertical axes. Corridors tend to be 10' wide. Some dungeons are "nodular," with small clusters of rooms that are connected by relatively straight corridors, creating a series of isolated pockets of underworld encounters. Others are "dense," nearly filling the entire sheet of paper with an endless array of interlocking rooms and winding, spiral passageways.

Most effective designs for gaming lie between these two extremes.

To draw a dungeon, you can use pencil and paper, a non-specialized computer program (such as Excel or Paint), or a specialized program (such as Campaign Cartographer, RPG Maker or Dundjinni, to name only a few). Your first dungeon will probably be a strictly experimental exercise, with square and rectangular rooms and straight corridors.

The configuring of rooms is easy. The more difficult part of drawing a dungeon lies in filling in the details. Every room needs features such as rubble, pools, tables, chests and so forth. For the novice, it is often easier to name each room first (Torture Chamber, Dead End, Pool Room, etc.) and to sketch in the details later.

Specific dungeon layouts are dependent on room type. A bedroom is small and typically has one entry. A hall is large, long and narrow. A great hall or court is wider, and may have aisles created by columns or pillars. Caves can be of any size and have highly irregular wall surfaces. Pools tend to be roughly circular; common rooms are central and have multiple entrances; storerooms have only one or two entrances and are off of main thoroughfares yet easily accessible; and so forth.

The positioning of specific features is reliant on each room's entries and exit doors. Major features, such as a solitary table, cage or shrine, tend to be in the center of the room or against the farthest wall from the entrance(s). Furnishings (beds, armoires, wardrobes, cabinets, etc.) are usually placed up against the walls. Storage areas and containers (chests, barrels, weapon racks, etc.) are typically moved against the walls and often situated in corners. Defensive preparations such as barriers, overturned tables, traps and so forth are usually located directly in front of a door.

Logic can suggest many configurations. The best advice, perhaps, is simply to envision different room types (in your house, in movies, or described in novels) and to furnish them in accordance with your vision.

When in doubt, add some clutter so that the environment will be challenging and interesting when combat takes place.

# Map Symbols

The following classic map symbols can be helpful to review when you are preparing to draw your final dungeon maps. Keep in mind that you may want to fixate features onto the graph paper and into the squares themselves ("coloring inside the lines"), making it easier to adjudicate adventurer and monster positions during battles. For example, even though a fireplace might only be 5' wide, you may want to show it as occupying a complete 10' square.

Remember that GM dungeon maps are strictly play aids for the Game Master's information, *not* play aids for players! Players who want a map of the dungeon will need to explore and make their own.

## Images of Instant Inspiration

One of the best ways to design a dungeon is to study the work of others who have gone before you. Not only fictional dungeon designs should be reviewed, however; a GM can learn a great deal from poring over the maps of real caves, houses, castles, towers, catacombs and tombs. It is recommended that a new dungeon designer should create an image archive of as many inspiring pieces as possible, collecting floor plans from a wide array of sources. The following image searches have proven to be particularly effective in building such an image archive (keeping in mind that setting search results to large images only will achieve the best results):

Asylum floor plan, Castle floor plan, Catacombs map, Cave map, Cave system map, Cavern map, Cavern system map, Dante's inferno map, Dracula's castle map, Dungeon crawl map, Dungeon geomorphs, Dungeon graph paper map, Dungeon map, Dungeon module map, Egyptian tomb map, Haunted house floor plan, Isometric cave map, Isometric dungeon map, Labyrinth map, Level map, Maginot Line diagram, Manor floor plan, Mansion floor plan, Maze map, Mine map, Moria map, Necropolis map, Old school dungeon map, Paris catacombs map, Pyramid map, RPG dungeon map, Sewer map, Temple floor plan, Temple map, Tomb map, Tomb floor plan, Underdark map, Underground base map, Underworld map, Zork map.

## Random Dungeon Generators and Geomorphs

Some GMs, especially those who dislike mapping, prefer to use online random dungeon generators to create one or more of their dungeon levels. Such instant generation allows the GM to focus on room stocking, as opposed to logistical planning of underground spaces. However, it should be noted that random dungeon generators (hereafter, RDGs) provide nonsensical results based more on algorithmic possibilities than on principles of quality classic dungeon design. In other words, random dungeons are by their very nature haphazard, illogical, "square" and uninspired.

The GM should weigh the convenience of RDGs against the gamist perceptions of the players. Many players do not care if the dungeon is realistic or if the GM's map is pretty; they just want to know what monster lurks behind the next door and where the treasure is. For such gamers, RDGs can provide ideal shortcuts in the long and laborious toil of design. For more discerning and demanding players, however, RDGs may provide unacceptable results if used (and especially reused) on a large and excessive scale.

A more worthy compromise would consist of a selection of *geomorphs*. Geomorphs ("earth-shapes") are interconnecting, previously designed blocks of dungeon rooms which are available on square or rectangular sheets. These sheets can be rotated, reconfigured and extrapolated to create a semi-random dungeon which has more coherence than a purely random array of grid rooms.

Geomorphs can consistently be found as published products, and through online image searches. Free and legal resources are made available on Scribd and other similar websites as well. Large files of such are easy to print, laminate and deploy. Geomorphs can be moved around to create different dungeons in a matter of seconds. Preferred configurations can be taped and photocopied to create a workable instant dungeon ready for stocking.

Online RDGs are more problematic; skilled programmers create and host them, but these resources often move, vanish behind paywalls, or are simply abandoned by their creators. As of this writing (December 2012), the following RDGs are highly recommended. Please note that Amazon

does not always approve of hyperlinks leading outside of Amazon.com. Therefore, this e-book edition of the Guide does not include the exact links. A quick web search will be required. Broken links, if they are found, should be reported to the author at shadowed_sky@hotmail.com.

 (1) Dizzy Dragon Adventure Generator, (2) Donjon, (3) Risus Monkey's Random Map, (4) Dungeon Crawler Prototype, (5) Gozzy's Random Dungeon Map, (6) Myth Weavers, (7) Wizards RDG, (8) Inkwell Ideas, and (9) Labyrinth Lord RDG.

# The Depth of the Dungeon

How deep do the dungeons go? The ideal answer is, always one level further than the players are able to explore.

The unknown should always reign. However, the more practical answer must always be, "it depends." Small dungeons are ideal for quick adventures, while dungeons which are intended to be the focal point of an entire campaign are necessarily immense. It is recommended that every dungeon, however, should be designed with reuse in mind. There should always be a reason for adventurers to revisit a dungeon. Monsters are not passive. New rooms are dug and structured, old rooms are rediscovered, magical gates are opened, wizards summon horrors from beyond, dead monsters are replaced by opportunistic fellows and natural disasters cause entire levels to collapse and reveal deeper caves below. Dungeons become notorious not because they are pillaged, but because they are unconquerable.

Beyond that design precept, the GM should carefully consider how much creative work needs to be done to keep the players yearning for more exploration. How much work will keep the GM one step ahead of the players, and how much work would be redundant or wasted? This is a question which cannot be answered without careful consideration of the players and their personalities.

The initial depth of a dungeon is too important a design constraint to be left to a random roll. The GM must make the appropriate choice. Recommended dungeon size configurations are as follows:

**Small Dungeon (1-2 levels):** For introductory adventures, "one-shots" with different players or specialized areas (in which similar types of rooms, such as ice caves, become repetitive if overused).

**Medium-Sized Dungeon (3-5 levels):** Recommended for most designs.

**Large Dungeon (6-8 levels):** For dwarven cities, undercities and enemy strongholds.

**Immense Dungeon (9-12 levels):** For most short- to mid-term campaigns (perhaps covering a year with the same players and dozens of play sessions).

**Netherworld (13-15 levels):** For major game campaigns entailing 50 or more play sessions, or multiple groups of players under the same GM.

**Mega-Dungeon (16 or more levels):** For epic, long-term campaigns lasting over several years of real time. Mega-dungeons are also excellent for play groups which have a rotating GM position changing over time.

Remember, the underworld is endless. Never design yourself into a corner; always leave the "bottom" of your dungeon ambiguous and expandable. Classic pen-and-paper FRPGs are not videogames, and a level is never "cleared."

# The Forgotten Concept of Sub-Levels

Many classic dungeons, especially those in side-view layouts, feature the concept of sub-levels. This promising idea is rarely used today, except in the largest of mega-dungeons. Basically, sub-levels are smaller levels which feature monsters of similar

power, but which are isolated from one another.

For example, on dungeon level 3 there might be two major ways down, (a) a ladder shaft and (b) a spiral stairway. The ladder leads down to level 4A, and the spiral stair leads down to level 4B. Levels 4A and 4B are either not connected to one another, or are only connected by a single difficult or secret path. You can make an interesting labyrinthine effect by having both 4A and 4B lead down to level 5, which is fully interconnected. In other words, a group on 4A seeking to reach 4B might need to ascend back to 3, or descend to 5 and then find a way up.

Sub-levels are a good solution if you have a lot of monsters of similar power level which do not make sense when found in the same area (example, ice creatures and fire creatures). Sub-levels also give your dungeon a "vertical labyrinth" effect, which increases the atmosphere of a vast, difficult underworld that is filled with secret areas and difficult to navigate.

Sub-levels are not recommended for neophyte GMs creating their first dungeons, as they are easy to do wrong. But they are strongly recommended for ongoing campaigns and veteran play.

# CHAPTER 6: DESIGNING DUNGEON LEVELS

"... For they say a mad wizard crafted these halls, a wizard who believed himself to be a demigod. A demigod of blood, and cackling, and ever-tumbling knucklebones, each of twenty sides. Badgerbears were spawned by his black magics, and slimes and jellies bubbled where his potions dripped down through dungeon grates. Most peculiarly of all, perhaps, he had a penchant for building corridors in-spiral, which seemed to serve no other purpose than to baffle the unwary …"

— *From the Introduction to the* Dungeon Delver's Grimoire, *a Tome of Wide Renown*

## Dungeon Level Themes

A dungeon level theme is a general collection of aesthetic properties — sights, sounds, smells, room types, corridor types and overall architecture — that gives the level a unique feel which sets it apart from the levels above and below it.

As an example, a level that features torture chambers and ice caves might have misty air, chill gusts of wind, cracking and collapsing stonework, fur-laden monsters (perhaps bugbears and gnole slavers) and minor details that reinforce the mood of the rooms. These details might include dripping water, rusty tools and torture implements, shoves and heaps of cleared rubble,

skeletons in cages and iced-over racks, wheels and iron maidens. Having two themes (torture chambers and ice caves) which are not expected to work together, but which are made to do so through careful design, would give this hypothetical dungeon level a unique feel.

Generating a different theme for each dungeon level does not entail creating a "theme park" or "funhouse" mentality, in which each level is a unique circus of bizarre ideas that never mesh with anything else. Rather, each level should be a distinct and intriguing variation on the dungeon's *overall* theme, with levels flowing from one to the other in a logical progression.

Themes can continue through several levels to allow for gradual changes. For example, dungeon level 3 could be fungal caverns and a giant insect hive; level 4 could be the deeper hive and an underground river; level 5 could be the outflow of the underground river and the sunless sea it cascades into, and so forth.

But how can such themes be generated? Normally, one or more themes will simply occur to the Game Master; the initial ideas that made you want to create a new dungeon are probably good themes for dungeon level 1. In making the deeper design, the GM should consider the nature of the dungeon builders, the generations of different builder species, the direction of dungeon level creation (from surface to underground or vice versa), and what kind of historical events and tragedies might have transpired on each level.

## Labyrinthus:

## An Extended Example of

## Thematic Dungeon

## Level Design

Let us say that a dungeon was dug from the surface down, as well as from the underground up. The first builders were

halflings, the second generation were giants, the third generation were dragons and the fourth generation were Deep Ones. The dungeon is initially designed to be eight levels deep. The GM might then decide that the dungeon is situated in lush hilly farmland, because that is the terrain that would attract halflings to begin a community bordering the wilderness. The halflings created a shire around the largest hill and burrowed their homes into the hillsides. They did not dig too deep until they were raided by evil humanoids.

The "shell" of the dungeon is the halfling community, comprised of inter-connected burrows, underground inns and taverns, waterwheels and grain mills over a waterfall-laced surface of hilly tiers, and so forth. Dungeon level 1, we shall name the "Undershire." This would include the deeper root cellars, pantries, escape tunnels, storerooms, cisterns and trade halls where the halflings once met with the gnomes and dwarves whom they later brought in as community patrollers and guards.

However, as the community grew over a century, the population increased and deeper chambers needed to be dug. In doing so, the halflings (and their miner allies) discovered the ancient tombs of stone giants deep in the earth. Exploring revealed that some of the stone giants were undead, either zombies or skeletons, which had been created by an evil necromancer (now a lich). The undead poured out of the hill, wiped out of the halflings, and the area became a forsaken ruin as the Lich Lord drew evil undead and monsters to his cause.

Dungeon level 2, then, is the Tombs of the Crawling Ones. The giants ritually severed the torsos of their rulers and nobles away from their legs in grisly embalming ceremonies. All of the giant skeletons and zombies crawl along on their claws once they are freed from the vaults. A few of these horrors still remain in the deep. This level features sealed tombs, sundered tombs and halfling delves of last-ditch defenses.

Dungeon level 3 is the Vaults of the Granite Queen, a tomb complex created to honor the greatest ruler of the stone giants. This level

has dangerous traps, magical guardians and earth elemental-themed creatures.

The Lich Lord allied himself with two red dragons, and the red dragons served as the tyrannical rulers of the Lich Lord's armies. Many demi-humans and humans were enslaved and forced to dig deeper vaults for the dragons to lair in and lay their eggs. Dungeon level 4, then, is the Labyrinth of Cinders. This level featured fire pits, forges, smelters, vast halls for the dragons, great shafts to the surface for them to fly out of and raid the land, and a deep vault where their main lair was guarded and made inaccessible to invaders. This level also featured their treasure complex, the Lich Lord's throne and hundreds of tiny cells for the working slaves to live in.

Eventually, the reign of the Lich Lord and his dragons became so terrible that the kingdoms surrounding the area gathered a great host of knights, militia, dwarven rune priests and expatriated halflings to destroy them.

A great underworld battle was fought, and hundreds of heroes were slain. But the lich was destroyed, the she-dragon slain, and the elder dragon flew away vowing revenge, never to return (an adventure hook for a later day). However, though many slaves were freed, the Lich Lord cast a terrible curse in the end which blighted the entire area so that nothing would ever grow there. The surface was thus changed; the waterfalls were choked with poisonous creepers, the hillsides were blighted and dead trees creaked in the ashy wind. The area was deemed accursed and never settled again.

Centuries later, deep below the Undershire and unknown to all, a subterranean population of Deep Ones was being wiped out by evil elves. They fled for their own survival toward the surface. The Deep Ones followed along caves sculpted by a mighty underground river, making underwater redoubts where the evil elves could not pursue. In time, the Deep Ones grew mighty again, and created an unholy stronghold. But the secret to this place is that their river's source was the waterfalls, high above, from the halfling Undershire of old.

Dungeon level 5, therefore, is the uppermost area of the Deep Ones' exploration. This we will call the Blighted Cascade. The Deep One priests use their magic to purify the poisoned water from the surface, dividing it into pure waters for spawning pools and poisoned water to be forced off into a reservoir. (And this reservoir is being dug down to rain poisoned waters upon the evil elves' city far below; but that is a tale for another day.)

Dungeon level 6 is the Temple of Gh'thuul. This is the great unholy fane of the Deep Ones and their blasphemous un-god.

Dungeon level 7 comprises the Verdigris War Chambers, where the Deep Ones still battle with evil elf scouts and the other netherworld horrors that crawl up from below.

Dungeon level 8 is the upper crust of the evil elf netherworld, and the GM sets this area aside to be designed another time.



How deep does the dungeon go? No one knows, but the GM begins designing the levels in such a way that this strange, forgotten story of centuries of warfare and exploration will gradually become known to

intrepid adventurers who dare to seek out the dungeon's secrets.

The Undershire, it is said, is the essence of inexplicable dragon dreams. It beckons in the night to all.

# Generating Random Dungeon Themes

Inevitably, the GM's creativity will run dry at some point, or each level will begin to feel like something that has already done before. When this occurs, the GM is encouraged to create a random dungeon theme. Roll twice on the table below to create a random theme. Over 3,000 potential combinations are provided here.

Be sure to note which combinations seem impossible, or which might be inappropriate to your dungeon's overall flow. Nevertheless it is important to note that some of the author's most memorable dungeon levels have been the result of merging two unexpected themes, and then finding a way to make them work together.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. (An online search can give ideas for theme elaboration. Refer to earlier chapters on cave types and dungeon surrounds as well.)

[01] Aeolian Caves

[02-03] Anchialine Caves

[04] Arena

[05] Assassins' Guild

[06] Bottomless Pits

[07] Boulder Caves

[08-09] Buried Treasure Complex

[10] Canals & Waterwheels

[11] Carved Cave City

[12-13] Catacombs

[14] Cellars

[15] Cisterns & Reservoirs

[16] Cliffside Caves

[17] Collapsing Level

[18] Crypt

[19] Crystal Caves

[20] Delve

[21-22] Dungeon

[23] Elemental Node of Air

[24] Elemental Node of Earth

[25] Elemental Node of Fire

[26] Elemental Node of Water

[27] Erosional Caves

[28] Fiery Caverns

[29] Fracture Caves

[30] Fungal Caverns

[31] Gauntlet

[32] Geyser Caves

[33] Glacier Caves

[34] Hideout

[35] Hive

[36] Infernal Enclave

[37] Inside a Creature

[38] Inside a Mindscape

[39] Jungle Caves

[40-41] Labyrinth

[42] Littoral Caves

[43] Machine Level

[44] Mad Wizard's Domain

[45] Magical Caverns

[46] Magical Gauntlet

[47] Magical Realm

[48] Maze

[49] Mine

[50-51] Monster Burrows

[52] Pirate Gauntlet

[53] Primary Caves

[54] Prison

**[55]** Proving Grounds

**[56]** Sand-Filled Caves

**[57]** Seismic Caverns

**[58]** Shafts and Elevators

**[59]** Solutional Caves

**[60]** Subterranean Stronghold

**[61]** Sunless Sea

**[62]** Swamp Caves

**[63]** Talus Caves

**[64]** Thieves' Guild

**[65-66]** Tomb

**[67]** Undercrofts

**[68]** Underground City

**[69-70]** Underground Temple

**[71]** Underground Waterway

**[72]** Underwater Caves

**[73]** Underwater Ruin

**[74]** Underwater Stronghold

**[75]** Urban Undercity

**[76-77]** Warrens

**[78]** Waterfall Caves

**[79-00]** Roll twice, ignoring results of 79 or higher

## Designing Rooms and Caves

A good dungeon is not just a series of rooms. It features unexpected areas which make somewhat logical sense, while still offering the players unanticipated options and restrictions. Some of the major elements of a good classic dungeon include:

**Winding Passages.** Corridors should not always be straight. There should be collapsed corridors that have been re-excavated to the side, sealed hallways to wall up undead that require unusual workarounds ("Beware, dead in here"), jagged halls in strongholds that give defenders corner fallbacks to fire crossbows from, and the like.

**Irregular Room Shapes.** Square and rectangular rooms are logical, but they imply careful planning by one creature type, a lack of age, and boring spaces which do not encourage exploration. Good dungeons should have rooms filled with lots of columns (holding up a precarious ceiling), strange room shapes caused be underground streams flowing in unanticipated directions, annexes off of main rooms where humanoid tribes have expanded, and old-use rooms which have been repurposed.

**Interrupted Claustrophobia.** Atmospheric effects can be created by having small rooms lead into vast rooms, and vice versa. As examples, a block of tiny prison cells can lead into a huge arena; an underground lake can have dozens of tiny warrens leading off the shores; or a series of small slave tombs could lead down into a huge king's tomb filled with upright sarcophagi. Vast rooms imply foreboding and powerful monsters, as well as the unknown. Small claustrophobic rooms give a maze-like effect, and make the players feel that their heroes could easily become trapped or cornered. Both effects, however, are minimized if they are continuous. The effects should be alternated for maximum effect.

**Multiple Exits.** Most rooms should have more than one exit. A good dungeon entrance room — the first room entered by new adventurers — will have at least *four* exits to explore. The dungeon can be visualized as an abstract flowchart, and any branch which fails to offer multiple paths is a missed opportunity which restricts exploration, survival and player choice. Dead ends have their place, but *most* rooms should offer choices to the players at all times.

**Interesting Furnishings.** Every room should feature something which makes the players curious, doubtful, wary, amused or fearful. Instead of having a mere table in an empty room, have it be a blood-spattered table that has been splintered apart, with a huge butcher's hatchet still lodged in its center. Instead of a pile of nondescript trash, make it a heap of festering soil with fungi growing out of it and phosphorescent millipedes winding their way through the holes piled goblin skulls. Every dungeon element is an opportunity to reinforce the idea that this environment is a dangerous place where choices of life and death can and must occur.

For much more on this topic, refer to the Dungeon Dressing chapters.

## Stonecraft: The Question of 10' Walls vs. 1' Walls

Not all dungeons need to rigidly adhere to the limitations of a piece of graph paper. However, dungeons which fit the paper (while slightly more unrealistic) can be easier to play and plot movement on. Dungeons which strictly adhere to the lines of graph paper, however, force an awkward dilemma upon the designer: the walls will never feel like they are of an appropriate thickness. They will be either 10' thick (the result of filling in entire squares with stone), or paper-thin (drawn lines atop the printed graph paper lines, with rooms to either side of the narrow walls).

Solving this problem is fairly simple.

First, GMs need to remind themselves that the dungeon map is *representational*, not topographic. No architect is going to question your work in preparation for some foundational construction. (At least, I hope not!) In other words, things on the map are *not* the exact size they would be in real life.

Real doors tend to be only 3' or 4' wide, although they may look 7' wide on paper. Not all corridors are 10' wide; many are 7'6", 9' or 11'. And so forth. "Paper-thin" walls, then, represent solid stone walls that are between 1' and 2' thick. Considering the alarming thinness of modern interior wall structures, this is actually a reasonable estimation of block-wall thickness for medieval stonework in a magical world.

For GMs who are still concerned about realism, walls for above-ground structures such as manor houses, outbuildings, and walls between castle chambers should be "thin." Walls for castle exteriors, tower exteriors, palaces and surface tombs should be "thick." Underground, these concerns are negligible. "Realistic" mines feature significant solid stone between coal seams; rooms carved out of solid rock probably have 10' or even thicker walls; and caves of course tend to have significantly vaster areas of solid stone between the hollows.

You should never be concerned with the limitations of the paper constricting your creativity. In the rare situation where players question the dimensions of a place, you can simply remind them that they are dungeoneers and not surveyors, and that it is 100% certain that their *representational* maps have minor errors all over the place. Simply remember to never describe a (non-magical, medieval) dungeon wall as being less than 1' thick, and the needs of verisimilitude should be served.

One foot or ten feet, lines or shaded squares, the ultimate choice is yours. Draw away.

## Charting a Dungeon Level

Many veteran GMs enjoy creating a dungeon map from scratch; they simply start sketching in rooms and walls on a piece of graph paper and then see where their imagination takes them. For a large thematic dungeon, however, a more planned approach is recommended. Improvised sketches on restrictive paper can quickly run into unintended design limitations.

This author prefers to use a thematic and regional "nine sector system," in which the general areas of the dungeon level are themed out prior to the detailed map design. In other words, charting is performed before actual mapping. The sector system can also be helpful to new GMs who are still learning how to create effective maps for their players, as it is much easier to fix mistakes and make additions to a chart.

## The Nine Sector System

In this system, each dungeon level is initially planned as a 3x3 grid of nine sectors, or thematic regions. The regions are: Northwest (NW), North (N), Northeast (NE), West (W), Central (C), East (E), Southwest (SW), South (S) and Southeast (SE). Printing a stack of black sheets with this simple layout is recommended.

Using this quick template, a GM can plan monster types, room types, stairs up and down and other major design decisions for the dungeon in a simple format.

Here is a quick example of the process:

## Dungeon Level 1

| NORTHWEST Mines --> Gnomes Burrows | NORTH <-- More Mines Goblins Gnomes | NORTHEAST Goblin Lairs Stairs Up #2 |
|---|---|---|
| WEST Hidden Tunnels to Mine ^ Spiders Stairs Up #1 | CENTRAL Cisterns Storerooms Ogre, Treasures | EAST Collapsed Rooms Spiders Centipedes Stairs Down #1 |
| SOUTHWEST Wizard's Laboratories Summoned Monsters Magic Circles | SOUTH Guard Halls Rats, Kobolds Prisoners Stairs Down #2 | SOUTHEAST Sealed-Off Rooms Forgotten Temple Undead |

While not nearly as organic as simply drawing a random map on a piece of paper, this planning system makes it very quick and easy to plan out one, ten or twenty dungeon levels with a minimum of effort. Designed levels can even be shuffled into any order before the exact locations of stairs are decided upon. Stairs up and down are simply carried over to the appropriate sectors in the next deepest level, and the design plan continues as the GM fills in the various regions with desired design elements.

## Loremastery of the Deep: Creating Thematic Clusters and Sector Difficulties

Keeping in mind that each sector can be of an entirely different size and shape, the GM should start assigning thematic elements to each room. These elements can include room types, monster types, traps, treasures, or major tricks and features. Stairways and other means of ascent and descent between dungeon levels should be charted as well.

Adjacent sectors are likely to share elements with another given region; in the above nine sector example, note how the northwest sector has a mine, which continues to the east (into the north sector) and which has secret areas leading south (into the west sector). Using gradual thematic transitions, players will begin to develop a "feel" for the overall layout of the dungeon level, while not knowing exactly what to expect. These blending effects help to increase player anticipation and will reward careful exploration and strategizing.

A dungeon level should always include at least two ways up to the next higher level, and two ways down. Paths down should usually, but not always, go down a single level at a time so that players can anticipate the relative danger level that their characters can handle. Not every monster encounter should be balanced or "fair," but players should be able to expect a relative range of encounter difficulties (from trivial to deadly) that will gradually increase the deeper they go. This gradual increase in monster danger and treasure reward, directly proportional to dungeon level, has been a hallmark of fantasy RPGs since their earliest forms in

1972-1974. It is a worthy tradition to uphold.

During this initial conception, a GM may want to avoid naming specific monsters for some sectors. For now, you may wish to simply write in "humanoids" and leave it at that. Humanoids on dungeon level 1 might be goblins or kobolds; orcs and hobgoblins might be on level 2; bugbears on level 3; and so forth. If you later decide to shuffle your level charts into a different order, these details are easily fleshed out once the final configuration is decided upon.

The goal in designing sectors is to plot out the general flow of each level, without committing to constrictions that might slow the flow of good ideas. As an illustration of flow, it helps to consider the dungeon level as being color-coded in relation to access. Sectors with stairs up can be termed "green"; these are the areas that will generally be explored first. Sectors with stairs down are "red," or the most protected, and will typically feature the toughest monsters on the level. Sectors with no stairs up or down (typically the majority) are "yellow," or intermediary, and will feature mid-range monsters and rewards. Most groups exploring a level will explore in the order

green-yellow-red. The GM can predict this typical process while still allowing the adventurers to explore as they will.

Let us say, for example, that the GM has decided that his first dungeon level is filled with rats and kobolds. The green sectors on his level will feature only a few kobold scouts and guards, and some packs of normal rats. The yellow sectors will feature kobold guardrooms, packs of giant rats, trash heaps where both types of monsters thrive, and so forth. The red sectors will include huge plague rats, the kobold chieftain, his bodyguards, a large common warren where the young and females are guarded, and the treasure vaults. The red sectors will also several flights of stairs down to the next dungeon level.

The green-yellow-red approach allows adventurers to "wet their feet" in a dungeon environment without being wiped out right away. As the danger level (and number) of the monsters increases, the PCs can reasonably assume that they are near to one of the ways descending to the next level.

Of course, this system is merely a useful guideline when teaching players how to become more skillful and to engage in classic dungeon play. Once your players become savvy veterans and figure out what you're doing in your dungeon designs, they will react by seeking out the treasure-rich red sectors as quickly as possible. It is then time to turn the system on its head. There are many ways to do this; perhaps the stairs down from the surface to level one will lead straight into the kobold chieftain's lair, and swarms of defenders will come in at the very beginning, turning the entire dungeon level into a desperate running battle when the stairs up are blocked and the adventurers seek another escape route by going down. While such surprising twists are fun for the GM and for veteran players, they are not recommended for players who are still learning how to engage and react in classic dungeon games.

Remember that in designing a challenging dungeon, you are offering the adventurers a wide array of choices which can lead to low-risk and low-reward, high-risk and high-

reward, as well as disproportionate incentives on occasion and even places of potential ruin. The players will need to learn how to assess each encounter for lethality and potential payoff. The purpose is not to kill the heroes, but rather to engage them in ever-more-challenging life-or-death scenarios at a reasonable pace so that they learn how to assess, react and adapt, and to become better players as they go.

The green-yellow-red system facilitates this learning process. The GM is to be reminded that a good classic dungeon level is not a linear gauntlet, featuring only a single path to a single goal. Each level should instead be a branching flow, a maze with multiple solutions. Mapping sectors to color difficulties in the early going will help to acclimate the players to the hostile environment without coddling them.

## The Passage Less Traveled

In every dungeon level, you should include at least one secret, hidden, almost-inaccessible or simply out-of-the-way region which will reward only the most intrepid adventurers with additional treasure, beneficial magics or strategic information. In the previous dungeon level sector grid example, the southeast sector had no stairs up, no stairs down, and was listed as "sealed-off rooms, forgotten temple, undead." This is an ideal secret region.

These rarer sectors can be termed "orange." They should have difficult monsters, traps, and powerful treasures which might be otherwise overlooked. Such areas are difficult to navigate, with higher risk and higher reward, as well as more limited navigation options. (If the place is hard to find, it stands to reason that there are fewer passages in and out of it.) The optional status of orange sectors serves to entice daring players without frustrating them by being mandatory to adventurer progression through the dungeon. In other words, a dungeon level in which a secret area features the sole stairway down is arguably a poor

design. If the adventurers never make their way into the depths, the rest of the GM's design work has been wasted. Secret stairs can exist, but in placing them the GM is taking a risky gamble that the players will find their way to one specific hidden room where secrecy or discovery may be dependent on random rolls. This is not a desirable design ideal.

On the other hand, a GM should occasionally use *unexpected* ways down into the deeper levels. A sector can feature both stairs up *and* down in the same immediate region. These might be adjacent staircases, or perhaps an elevator room which is capable of traveling in both directions. Such "dual vertical use" sectors should be rare, because they tempt players to completely ignore a well-designed level with zero exploration.

A devious GM might consider tempting skilled players into over-extending themselves, however. As an example, dungeon level 1 has several stairs down to level 2. The stairs down from level 2 to 3 are very easily found, and the nasty monsters on level 2 with poor treasure hoards convince the players to send their PCs down to level 3, bypassing the second level. The design of level 3 then can consist of many locked and magically sealed treasure vaults, where the keys, passwords or magics required to open them are actually all hidden away on level two. Such a design would involve lots of exploration on level 3, denied access, clues pointing to keys on level 2, retreats to level 2 for keys, and re-descents to level 3 to open the doors. Until the players finally figure out that their "rush to the bottom" is causing the party's difficulties, the GM can amuse himself with monster pursuits, level 3 dead ends and desperate fights, and running vertical battles up and down the stairs as the greedy heroes make the worst of things.

# Dragon and Beast: Plotting the Major Monster Populations

Monster types, difficulties, strategies, lairs and populations are inexhaustible topics in the realm of dungeon design. There are hundreds of different monster types in each FRPG, and the power level of the monsters can vary dramatically between games and even between editions of the same game. Because of these technicalities, the subject of placing monsters in the dungeon is significantly more complex than it might seem on first consideration.

A further supplement in this series, of over 200 pages, will go into elaborate detail on all of these monster-derived topics and much more besides. For now, however, it is beneficial for the GM to start considering what general types of monsters might inhabit each sector of each dungeon level. As a rule of thumb it is recommended that each dungeon level should include four or more different types of monsters (humanoids, undead, slimes, etc.). Further, the monsters should fit the theme of the dungeon level. Water caves should have freshwater monsters; fungal caves should have insects, plants and slimes; tombs should have undead; strongholds should have humans, evil demi-humans, humanoids or giants; and so forth.

In planning general monster populations, the GM should first decide which types are appropriate for each level. The major monster types in most fantasy RPGs are as follows:

**[1] Amphibians:** Deep Ones, Frogmen, Giant Frogs, Giant Toads

**[2] Aquatic Humanoids:** Mermen, Nixies, Tritons

**[3] Arachnids:** Giant Pedipalps, Giant Scorpions, Giant Solifugids, Giant Spiders, Giant Ticks, Spider Swarms

**[4] Avians:** Bats, Cockatrices, Feathered Serpents, Giant Bats, Harpies, Perytons, Stryxes, Stymphalides



**[5] Characters:** Assassins, Barbarians, Cavaliers, Clerics, Druids, Fighters, Hunters, Illusionists, Jesters, Magic-Users, Mountebanks, Mystics, Paladins, Rangers, Savants, Thieves

**[6] Daemons:** Daemon Lords, Elemental Daemons, Netherworld Daemons, Plague Daemons

**[7] Demons:** Demon Lords, Demon Princes, Greater Demons, Lesser Demons, Sub-Demons, Greater Demons

**[8] Devils:** Arch-Devils, Infernal Dukes, Least Devils, Lesser Devils, Greater Devils, Pit Fiends

**[9] Dragons:** Metallic Dragons (Brass, Bronze, Copper, Gold, Silver), Prismatic Dragons (Black, Blue, Green, Red, White)

**[10] Dungeon Horrors:** Badgerbears, Crocuta, Devourers, Gorgons, Hags, Hydras, Mantichorae, Polar Worms, Rakshasas, Sphinxes, Tentacled Horrors

**[11] Elementals and Primals:** Elementals, Gargoyles, Genies, Nixies, Salamandrae, Stone Spirits, Water Vipers, Wind Spirits

**[12] Evil Demi-Humans:** Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, Hags; Evil NPCs of the Underworld (Corrupted Dwarf Lords, etc.)

**[13] Faeries & Spirits:** Banshees, Brownies, Changelings, Leprechauns, Pixies, Satyrs, Sylphs, Will-o'-Wisps

**[14] Freshwater Monsters:** Catoblepons, Crocodiles, Giant Crabs, Giant Crayfish, Giant Fish, Giant Leeches, Giant Snapping Turtles, Lampreys

**[15] Giants and Giant-Kin:** Cyclopes, Cloud Giants, Fire Giants, Frost Giants, Hecatons, Laestrygonians, Minotaurs, Mountain Giants, Ogres, Ogre Magi, Stone Giants, Titans, Trolls

**[16] Golems & Automatons:** Animated Weapons, Animated Suits of Armor, Automatons, Colossi, Golems, Juggernauts, Living Statues, Scarecrows

**[17] Good Demi-Humans:** Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, Halflings, NPC Adventurers or Leaders (Fighters, Clerics, etc.); Multi-Classed NPCs



**[18] Heraldic Beasts:** Allocameli, Basilisks, Chimaerae, Dragonnes, Enfields, Griffons, Mantichorae, Monstrous Wolves, Perytons, Unicorns, Wyverns

**[19] Humanoids:** Bugbears, Cave Apes, Gnoles, Goblins, Hobgoblins, Kobolds, Lizard Men, Orcs, Troglodytes, Yeti

**[20] Humans:** Bandits, Berserkers, Brigands, Cannibals, Cultists, Martial Artists, Mercenaries (Men-at-Arms), NPC Personages (Clerics, Fighters, etc.), Reavers, Savages, Slaves / Thralls (Normal Humans), Tribesmen

**[21] Insects & Insectoids:** Ant Swarms, Apshai, Giant Ants, Giant Bees, Giant Beetles, Giant Mantises, Giant Wasps, Scarab Swarms

**[22] Lords of the Underworld:** Deep Ones, Evil Elves, Eyes of Azathoth, Lovecraftian Horrors, Shoggoths, Spawn of Cthulhu

**[23] Lycanthropes:** Sons of Anbus (Jackal Priests), Werebears, Wereboars, Wererats, Werewolves, Wereboars, Wolfweres

**[24] Plants & Fungi:** Creepers, Molds, Purple Fungi, Shamblers, Shrieking Fungi, Slime Molds, Spore Orbs

**[25] Predators:** Boars, Cave Bears, Giant Weasels, Giant Wolverines, Great Cats, Guard Dogs, Hounds of Cerberus, Phase Cats, War Dogs, Wolves, Wolverines

**[26] Reptiles:** Basilisks, Crocodiles, Giant Lizards, Giant Snakes, Giant Turtles, Nagas, Reptile People, Snakes, Giant Lizards

**[27] Saltwater Monsters:** Eels, Krakens, Octopi, Sea Hags, Sea Lions, Sharks, Squid

**[28] Slimes:** Blobs, Jellies, Molds, Oozes, Puddings, Slimes

**[29] "Surprise" Monsters:** Dimensional Shamblers, Doppelgangers, Dungeon Mimics, Lurking Ceilings, Piercing Stalactites, Slithering Hunters, Stun-Walls, Trapping Floors

**[30] Undead:** Barrow Wights, Ghasts, Ghosts, Ghouls, Haunts, Mummies, Poltergeists, Shadows, Skeletons, Specters, Vampires, Wraiths, Zombies

**[31] Vermin:** Centipedes, Dungeon Worms, Flesh Maggots, Giant Rats, Giant Slugs, Rats, Scorpions

brave adventurers from the surface. Minor bases of operation can exist which allow the adventurers to heal and resupply without venturing all the way back to the surface.

Keep in mind that airless environments should only include undead, golems and similar creatures. Similarly, narrows passages would favor insects and slimes, but dragons and giants would not be found there.

Keep in mind also that dungeon populations are very aware of one another. In a claustrophobic setting, contact between factions is frequent and often brutal. Allied monsters will probably lair in adjacent sectors, while monsters that everyone avoids will typically be far away from any alliances. Powerful monsters will enslave the weak, or the weak will do the work in return for protection from the strong. "Good" monsters underground (in the early dungeon sector map example, the gnomes holed up in the mines) will probably be hard-pressed, few in number and eager to forge an alliance with

# CHAPTER 7:
# FLESH ON THE BONES

"Alas, a valorous attempt. He searched the chest for traps, as I commanded him. The chest remains now locked and sealed, and there lies our beloved burglar, dead and gone before us. Woe. Woe! And oh, his dying gasp, did he say 'Poison'? Eh? What do you mean, we should give him the honor of a proper burial? Nay. Too much time and the hobgoblins behind us. Let us *truly* honor him as he deserved. I say, we should grab his pack, and empty its meager contents over his body, for the better to carry treasure in."

— *An Unknown and Merciless Dwarf Warrior (Attributed)*

## Dungeon Atmosphere

When a dungeon is being explored, most players rely on sight — what their characters see. However, the atmosphere of the dungeon can be greatly heightened by giving each area not only unusual things to look at, but also foreboding and intriguing light sources, a lack of light, air conditions, odors and unexpected sounds.

The conditions on each dungeon level should correspond with the climate the dungeon is situated in, the theme of that level, its depth and its relative degree of danger. All too often, every quickly-conceived dungeon has the same atmosphere — dark with a few torches, a skull or spider here and there, and maybe a little dripping water. But the true atmosphere given to a unique setting offers the GM's finest chance to make the dungeon an omnipresent character, a sinister presence intensifying the play experience with its foreboding. This chance for heightened tension should not be wasted.

When designing a dungeon's atmosphere you can use random rolls, but above all, make sure the results make sense within the overall dungeon. For example, in magma caves floating cinders and the smell of brimstone would prevail; having cold fog and burning incense there would be nonsensical. (Although the incense *could* work, with some specific design choices.) Most of the reasonable atmosphere options follow logically from other choices already made about the dungeon environment. Note that magical movement (a gate, teleport trap, etc.) may lead to sudden and unexpected changes in environment, however.

## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions

Once a dungeon's general climate, themes, surface terrain and water conditions are known, the GM should work out the dungeon's prevailing conditions (of light, air, plant life, odors and sounds) as the first step in defining the atmosphere. Each room may have unique conditions dependent on its type and location, but the *prevailing* conditions are understood to exist everywhere that the GM does not specify otherwise. Prevailing conditions can range from the ideal (well-lit with smokeless magic, clean air and overall silence) to nightmarish (utter darkness, the reek of the dead upon the air, wet smoky mist, and dying screams echoing through the corridors).

Random rolls are offered here for each condition type, but logic must reign. Ice caves are very unlikely to be warm, although they *can* be (dependent on magical conditions or glacial and volcanic activity); and the air is almost certainly misty there as well. If a strange result is rolled and desired, the GM should specifically design that

dungeon region around explaining and justifying the unexpected environment.



## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions I: Overall Light

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-05]** Blindingly Bright (30' sight range unless wearing some form of eye protection, such as a visored great helm)

**[06-10]** Bright (technically limitless sight range underground)

**[11-20]** Well-Lit (180' sight range)

**[21-40]** Dim / Shadows (60' sight range)

**[41-70]** Near Dark (30' sight range, unless using a light source or magic)

**[71-90]** Darkness (10' sight range, unless using a light source or magic)

**[91-00]** Utter Darkness (0' sight range, unless using a light source or magic)

## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions II: Light Sources

Keep in mind the needs for frequent refueling or replacement for mundane light sources such as torches and braziers. See the Light in the Dungeon section for more details.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-04]** *Asbestinon* Lamps

**[05-08]** Braziers

**[09-13]** Candles / Candelabras

**[14-18]** Fire Cauldrons

**[19-23]** Fire Pits

**[24-28]** Fireplaces
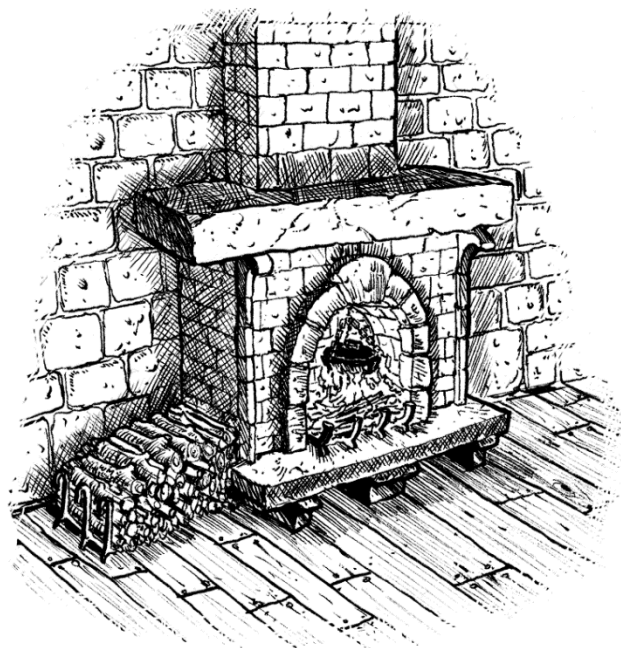


**[29-33]** Fires & Reflecting Mirrors

**[34-38]** Lanterns & Hanging Lanthorns

**[39-43]** Magical Crystals

**[44-50]** Magical Light & Reflecting Mirrors

**[51-55]** Magical Light (Continual Light etc.)

**[56-57]** Natural Gas Jets (Volcanic Vents etc.)

**[58-65]** None (or GM's Concept)

**[66-72]** Oil Lamps

**[73-80]** Phosphorescent Fungi

**[81-84]** Phosphorescent Pools

**[85]** Phosphorescent Spheres (Hanging from Chains)

**[86]** Phosphorescent Vapor

**[87-88]** Sunlight & Reflecting Mirrors

**[89-90]** Sunlight (or Magical Light) Shafts

**[91-00]** Torches

## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions III: Air Clarity

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-08]** Clear

**[09-16]** Floating Ash

**[17-24]** Floating Cinders

**[25-32]** Floating Dust

**[33-40]** Floating Pollen or Spores

**[41-48]** Fog (to the Ceiling)

**[49-56]** Mist or Haze (Ankle-Level)

**[57-64]** Mist or Haze (Neck-Level)

**[65-72]** Mist or Haze (Waist-Level)

**[73-80]** Shimmering (Moisture)

**[81-88]** Smoke (at the Ceiling)

**[89-00]** Smoke (Drifting Plumes)

## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions IV: Air Currents

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-07]** Breeze, Intermittent

**[08-14]** Breeze, Slight

**[15-21]** Breeze, Slight and Damp

**[22-28]** Cold Current

**[29-35]** Downdraft, Slight

**[36-42]** Downdraft, Strong

**[43-60]** Still Air

**[61-65]** Still Air, Cold(er)

**[66-70]** Still Air, Cool(er)

**[71-75]** Still Air, Hot(ter)

**[76-80]** Still Air, Warm(er)

**[81-85]** Updraft, Slight

**[86-90]** Updraft, Strong

**[91-95]** Wind, Strong and Constant

**[96-98]** Wind, Strong and Gusting

**[99-00]** Wind, Strong and Moaning

## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions V: Plant and Other Minor Life

Note that this table does not consider mobile life forms (which can include spiders, beetles, centipedes, maggots, slugs, rats, worms, etc.).

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-10]** Algae

**[11-20]** Fungus

**[21-30]** Lichen

**[31-40]** Mold

**[41-50]** Moss

**[51-60]** None

**[61-65]** Plants (Netherworld or Magical)

**[66-70]** Slime

**[71-80]** Thorns / Thorny Growths

**[81-90]** Tree Roots

**[91-00]** Vines / Creepers / Tanglers



## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions VI: Odors

Odors should not be sourceless, unless the entire dungeon level is magical. One or more regions of the dungeon, in conjunction with air currents, should be designed to explain the source of the smell.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Acrid

**[02]** Alcohol (Spilled)

**[03]** Ammonia

**[04]** Baking Bread

**[05]** Blood / Boiling Blood

**[06]** Brewing Potions / Chemicals



**[07]** Brimstone (Sulfurous)

**[08-09]** Burning Flesh

**[10-12]** Burning Torches or Firewood

**[13-15]** Burning Wood

**[16-18]** Chlorine

**[19-21]** Cooking Food

**[22-24]** Damp Fur

**[25-27]** Dank and Moldy

**[28-30]** Death and Decay

**[31-33]** Decaying Flesh

**[34-36]** Dust

**[37-39]** Earth

**[40-42]** Enticing and Indescribable

**[43-45]** Fetid

**[46]** Fish

**[47]** Flowers or Herbs

**[48]** Foetor (Lovecraftian)

**[49-50]** Fragrant / Incense

**[51]** Fresh Food

**[52-54]** Garbage and Refuse

**[55-57]** Manure / Dung / Offal

**[58-60]** Metallic

**[61-63]** Methane

**[64-66]** Mildew

**[67-69]** Mold

**[70-72]** Musk / Musky Beasts

**[73-75]** Ozone / Discharged Magic

**[76-78]** Rotting Meat

**[79-81]** Rotting Vegetation

**[82-84]** Salty and Wet

**[85-87]** Smoke

**[88-90]** Spices

**[91-94]** Stale and Fetid

**[95-97]** Urine

**[98-00]** Vinegar

## Prevailing Dungeon Conditions VII: Intermittent Sounds

Please note that this system is primarily suggestive, not authoritative. Sounds should change throughout the dungeon depending on recent circumstances, adventurer- and monster-made alterations to the environment, and nearby/mobile encounters.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. If two results are listed, pick the one that seems most appropriate.

**[01]** Banging or Barking

**[02]** Beast Noises or Beating of Wings

**[03]** Bellowing

**[04]** Bells or Birdsong

**[05]** Bong

**[06]** Bubbling

**[07]** Buzzing (Insects?)

**[08]** Cackling

**[09]** Chains Rattling

**[10]** Chanting

**[11]** Chiming

**[12]** Chirping

**[13]** Chittering or Chopped Wood

**[14]** Clanging

**[15]** Clanking

**[16]** Clashing Metal

**[17]** Clicking or Clockwork

**[18]** Collapsing Rubble / Falling Stones

**[19]** Combat (Distant)

**[20]** Conversation (Language Dependent upon Denizens)

**[21]** Coughing or Crackling

**[22]** Creaking Doors or Croaking (Frogs?)

**[23]** Crunching or Crying

**[24]** Door Closing or Slamming

**[25]** Dripping

**[26]** Drums Beating

**[27]** Earth Tremors

**[28]** Echoes

**[29]** Explosion (Distant) and Rumbling

**[30]** Faint Footsteps and Whispers or Fire Crackling

**[31-32]** Flapping Wings or Footsteps (Random Directions)

**[33]** Footsteps Ahead

**[34]** Footsteps Approaching

**[35]** Footsteps Behind

**[36]** Footsteps Receding

**[37]** Footsteps to One Side

**[38]** Giggling

**[39]** Glass Shattering

**[40]** Gong

**[41]** Grating

**[42]** Grinding Stone

**[43]** Groaning

**[44]** Growling

**[45]** Grunting

**[46]** Gurgling

**[47]** Hammering or Heavy Dragged Object

**[48]** Hinges Squeaking

**[49]** Hissing

**[50]** Hooting or Hooves Clattering

**[51]** Horn Sounding
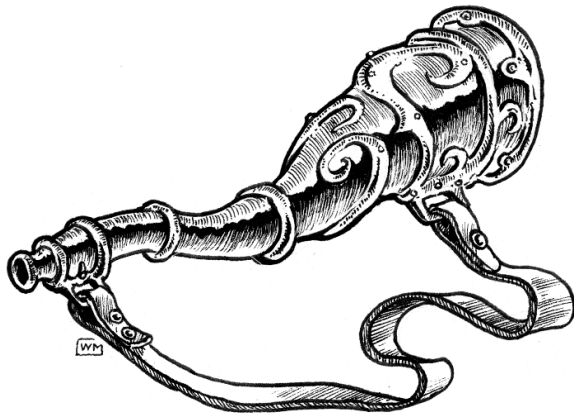


**[52]** Howling

**[53]** Humming

**[54]** Jingling

**[55]** Knocking

**[56]** Laughter or Leaves Rustling

**[57]** Machinery or Marching Feet

**[58]** Moaning or Monster Noises

**[59]** Murmuring

**[60]** Music or Musical Instrument

**[61]** Nothing, Dead Silence

**[62]** Popping (Electricity?) or Pounding

**[63]** Purring

**[64]** Rainfall or Rats Squeaking

**[65]** Rattling

**[66]** Ringing or Ripping Paper

**[67]** Roaring

**[68]** Rustling

**[69]** Scrabbling

**[70]** Scraping

**[71]** Scratching

**[72]** Screaming

**[73]** Scuffling or Scuttling

**[74]** Shouting / Yelling

**[75]** Shrieking

**[76]** Shuffling

**[77]** Singing

**[78]** Slamming Doors (Repeatedly, Distant)

**[79]** Slithering

**[80]** Snapping or Sneezing

**[81]** Snoring or Snorting

**[82]** Sobbing or Someone / Something Choking

**[83]** Something Dropped (Repeatedly?)

**[84]** Splashing

**[85]** Splintering

**[86]** Squeaking or Squealing

**[87]** Stone Grating or Sliding

**[88]** Tapping

**[89]** Thud or Thumping

**[90]** Thunder (or Similar Reverberation)

**[91]** Ticking

**[92]** Tinkling

**[93]** Trickling

**[94]** Twanging

**[95]** Waterfall

**[96]** Whining

**[97]** Whispering

**[98]** Whistling

**[99]** Wind

**[00]** Wood Splintering

## The Lure of an Empty Room

A good classic dungeon will feature *many* empty rooms. Too many novice GMs make sure there is something exciting, immediate and visceral in every room — a monster, a trap, a trick, or perhaps multiples of each. The problems with this approach, besides mere lack of realism, are many. An excess of monsters makes the dungeon too deadly for the adventurers, and drastically limit escape routes, tactical planning, and options for explorations. If any one roomful of monsters overwhelms the PCs, and all adjacent-room monsters are alerted and called to assist, the result is a nasty and uncalled for Total Party Kill (TPK) … and a lot of angry players.
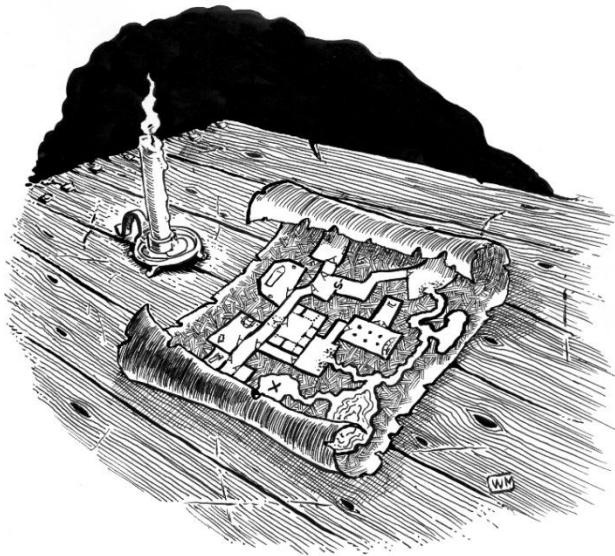


Quality dungeons feature empty rooms for many reasons: they build foreboding and atmosphere; they give potential camping and rest spots; they encourage players to engage in slower and more careful modes of play (mapping, searching for secret doors and treasure, scouting, planning, etc.); and they enhance the verisimilitude of the overall environment, thereby making the more action-based encounters seem more vivid

and exciting. After all, a never-ending desert of chocolate is only enjoyable for a brief after a while; after that, it's nauseating! Do not serve too much chocolate at your dungeon bar.

It is important to remember that "empty" does *not* mean "featureless." It simply means devoid of monsters, traps and tricks. And what qualities does an empty room exhibit which can enhance the play experience? They are as follows:

**Interesting Room Types:** Any room type can be made interesting if its furnishings and atmosphere are specifically designed encourage doubt, fear, caution or experimentation. Libraries can be filled with books and scrolls; torture chambers can have grisly remains and implements; cells and prisons can feature secret escape tunnels, locking doors, bones and inscriptions from madmen dug out of the stonework with bloody claw-marks. If your room type is merely "Empty Room," you are implored (nay, obligated) to use this Guide and the hundreds of room types listed to inspire something worthier of exploration!

**Evocative Furnishings:** Furnishings can include tables, chairs, chests and so forth. But any furnishing should call attention to itself in some way. Instead of a plain table, consider a table with a map on it and blood dripping onto it from the ceiling. Instead of plain chairs, make them upturned chairs with burnt legs, and one has an elf's broken skeleton strapped to its frame. Instead of a mere chest, describe a partially-opened chest wreathed in spider webs with something glittering inside of it.

**Curiosities:** Any dungeon should be filled with random objects which cause the players to ask questions, and to want to learn more about the environment. Curiosities are items which present mysteries. Consider the following: A moldy book with three occult-scrawled pages torn out and beetles crawling over them; a boot stuck in a crack in the wall, lodged 8' above the floor; a stoppered potion bottle with a husk in the shape of a tiny humanoid trapped inside of it. The bottle is labeled (in ancient gnomish) "Just add water."

**Foreboding Presence:** Sometimes, a room can seem more sinister simply because it is unoccupied. Give the players the idea that *something* was recently there; or that something used to live there and then was killed; or that something is watching the adventurers; or that the room was abandoned in a panic, and for a very good reason.

Every empty room should feature at least one of these elements, and many should include all four. The GM should also consider that any room that is empty the *first* time it is explored may well be occupied when the adventurers casually return to it, particularly if they are being watched or hunted!

For more on designing interesting "empty" rooms, refer to supplement CDDG2: *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide II,* Section 3-15, Designing an Unusual Evocative Room.

# CHAPTER 8: THE CYCLOPEDIA OF DUNGEON ROOMS

"Grog to the grognard,

Ale to the ailing! Aye,

From torture chamber to antechamber,

Rusted portcullis to dungeon door!

Turn the bedding, flip the chest,

For gold and gold galore!"

— *Ransacking and Reaverdom, One of the Three Hundred and Twenty Verses of* Kal-a-Koll Gul'trool, *The Half-Orc's Chant of Immaculate Fellowship*

## Classic and Unusual Room Types

A good classic dungeon should include a mix of iconic rooms (such as treasure vaults, guardrooms, storerooms and tombs), and bizarre places which adventurers have never before experienced. To facilitate these seemingly opposing ideals, this section lists over 530 hundred different types of classic rooms, caves and other underground locations. A second system is also provided which can generate nearly 10,000 more rooms of far more unusual nature.

Very generally, these room lists have been clustered into the following setting types: caverns, dungeons, manor houses, strongholds, temples and tombs. This design

is intended to avoid the unwanted effects of completely random results, such as a closet leading into an arena, or a torture chamber giving way to an art gallery. Judicious and logical use of these offered and semi-random results will be of paramount importance. As always, these designation systems are provided merely to supplement the GM's creativity, never to replace it!

Most dungeon levels will include at least two of the very general settings type. Illogical combinations can be made reasonable through good design. An underground lair for high-level and wealthy assassins, for example, might indeed combine a stronghold with the elements of a manor house. Similarly, caverns might be adjacent to a developed area, such as an underground temple. Note also that the definition of "dungeon" provided here is fairly strict, meaning a subterranean prison with torture facilities, cells and partial excavations. Very few dungeons will feature only dungeon rooms with no variety. Try mixing environments in such a way that your level themes are accentuated, yet reasonable.

At times, of course, the GM will need a *completely* random roll. The adventurers might wander off the map, step through a magical gate, use wild magic, or somehow find and explore a deep dungeon level that has not yet been created. It is all too common for a simple lack of ideas to strike the overworked and harried GM at the worst of times. To assist with these unpredictable situations, d100 results are offered below for *all* of these settings.

Note that due to the number of room types provided, when there are over 100 types, the lists have been split into two random tables (for example, Caverns I and Caverns II). When using these tables for a purely random result, the GM should decide that there is a 50% chance of either applicable table being used.

These tables are neither all-inclusive, nor are they exclusive to one another. A guardroom can be found in a non-stronghold area, and a single parlor can be found in a cave system. (An example of the latter would be a strange ethereal cave which serves as the home to an imprisoned genie.) Above all, use these tables to enhance your vision of the overall dungeon design, and use your imagination.

If you are unsure of the definition for any type of room ("What is an Ambulatory? A Vestibule? An Oubliette?"), a dictionary can provide a quick explanation. Happy rolling, and enjoy!

(Please note also that you can refer to *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide, Volume III*, if you want an even more elaborate room generation system. This one is simpler, quicker, and should fill the needs for more enterprising dungeon designers.)

## A Purely Random Room Generator

This table, while typically unnecessary, can be used when creating a purely random area that comprises *many* different types of chaotically-layered regions. (A living dungeon, an incarnation of Chaos which endlessly restructures itself, is one example.) Reasonable mixed themes can be supported here as well; for example, if the GM has decided that the dungeon level consists of caverns and dungeons, but not manor house, stronghold, temple or tomb areas, then rolls of 41 or higher on the table below would be disregarded and redone.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-12]** Consult table Cavern Areas (I)

**[13-24]** Consult table Cavern Areas (II)

**[25-40]** Consult table Dungeon Areas

**[41-52]** Consult table Manor House Areas (I)

**[53-64]** Consult table Manor House Areas (II)

**[65-76]** Consult table Stronghold Areas

**[77-88]** Consult table Temple Areas

**[89-00]** Consult table Tomb Areas

# Rooms for Cavern Areas (I)

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01-02] Acidic Cave, [03] Adamantite Delve, [04] Aerie, [05-06] Antecavern, [07-08] Arachnid Cave, [09-10] Arena Cavern

[11-12] Blocked Cavern, [13] Bone-Filled Cavern, [14] Boulder Cave, [15] Burrow, [16-17] Cave [18] Cave of Ancestors, [19-20] Cave of Ashes

[21-22] Cave of Bones, [23-24] Cave of Columns, [25-26] Cave of Husks, [27-28] Cave of Paintings, [29-30] Cave of Pools

[31-32] Cave of Skulls, [33-34] Cave of the Dead, [35-36] Cavern, [37-38] Cavern Temple, [39-40] Cavern Tomb

[41-42] Cavity, [43-44] Cesspit Cavern, [45-46] Chasm, [47-48] Chiming Cave, [49-50] Clay Cave

[51-52] Coal Cavern, [53-54] Collapsed Cavern, [55] Colony, [56] Copper Cave, [57-58] Crevice, [59-60] Crumbling Cave

[61-62] Crystal Cave, [63-64] Crystal Garden, [65-66] Cul-de-Sac, [67-68] Cyst, [69-70] Den

[71] Echo Chamber, [72] Egg Chamber, [73-74] Elemental Vortex, [75-76] Enchanted Grotto, [77-78] Excavation, [79-80] Fissure

[81-82] Flooded Cave, [83-84] Food Cave, [85-86] Fungal Garden, [87-88] Gallery (Cave), [89-90] Gas-Filled Cavern

[91] Gem Lode, [92] Gemstone Cave, [93-94] Geothermal Cave, [95-96] Geyser Cave, [97-98] Glittering Cave, [99] Gold Cave, [00] Grand Cavern

# Rooms for Cavern Areas (II)

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01-02] Grotto, [03-04] Guano Cave, [05] Gypsum Cave, [06] Hatchery, [07] Hive, [08-09] Hollow, [10] Ice Cave

[11] Idol Grotto, [12] Infested Cave, [13] Insect Cave, [14] Iron Cave, [15] Jewel Cavern, [16] Kennel Cave, [17] Labyrinthine Cavern, [18-19] Lair, [20] Lava Cave

[21-22] Limestone Cavern, [23] Littered Cave, [24] Low-Ceilinged Cave, [25] Magma Cave, [26] Metal Lode, [27-28] Mined Cavern, [29-30] Mineral Lode

[31] Misty Cavern, [32] Mithril Delve, [33] Mold-Filled Cavern, [34] Moss-Filled Cave, [35] Mud Cave, [36] Nest, [37-38] Niched Cavern, [39] Oracular Cave, [40] Painted Cave

[41-42] Phosphorescent Cavern, [43-44] Pool, [45] Puffball Cave, [46-47] Quarry, [48-49] Refused-Filled Cavern, [50] Reservoir

[51] Roost, [52] Sacred Cavern, [53-54] Salt Cave, [55-56] Sandstone Cave, [57] Secret Grotto, [58] Shunned Cavern, [59] Silver Cave, [60] Sinkhole

[61-62] Slime Cavern, [63-64] Sloping Cave, [65-66] Spur Cavern, [67-68] Stalactite Cavern, [69-70] Stalagmite Cavern

[71-72] Steam Cave, [73-74] Storage Cave, [75-76] Stream Cavern, [77-78] Submerged Cave, [79] Tin Cave, [80] Treasure Cave

[81-82] Underground Lake, [83-84] Underground River, [85-86] Underground Swamp, [87-88] Underwater Cave, [89] Unstable Cavern, [90] Vaulted Cavern

[91-92] Verdigris Cavern, [93-94] Warren, [94-95] Water Cave, [96] Waterfall Cavern, [97-98] Webbed Cave, [99] Wharf Cavern, [00] Whirlpool Cave

## Rooms for Dungeon Areas

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01] Abattoir, [02] Annex, [03] Arena, [04] Ash Pit, [05] Auxiliary Room, [06] Beast Pit, [07] Bone Pit, [08] Cell, [09] Cell Block, [10] Cesspit

[11] Cesspool, [12] Cistern, [13] Cistern Room, [14] Collapsed Room, [15] Combat Pit, [16] Control Room, [17] Cubicle, [18] Dead End, [19] Delve, [20] Dueling Pit

[21] Enclave, [22] Enclosure, [23] Excavation Chamber, [24] Experimentation Chamber, [25] False Treasure Vault, [26] Fire Pit, [27] Flooded Room, [28] Gaol, [29] Gauntlet, [30] Gladiatorial Pit

[31] Hall of Doors, [32] Haunt, [33] Hideout, [34] Hiding Place, [35] Holding Tank, [36] Illusory Room, [37] Inquisition Chamber, [38] Interrogation Chamber, [39] Jail, [40] Junk Room

[41] Labyrinth, [42-43] Lair, [44] Maze, [45] Mechanical Room, [46] Mine, [47] Monster Pit, [48] Mud-Filled Room, [49] Mud Pit, [50] Oubliette

[51] Pen, [52] Priest Hole, [53] Prison, [54] Prison Cell, [55] Prison Chamber, [56] Proving Ground, [57] Pump Room, [58] Refuse Pit, [59] Revolving Chamber, [60] Room of Pools

[61] Room of Slaughter, [62] Room of Unknown Purpose, [63] Rubble-Filled Room, [64] Scrapheap, [65] Secret Lair, [66] Secret Room, [67] Sewer, [68] Slave Chamber, [69] Slave Pit, [70] Sludge Pit

[71] Spawning Pool, [72] Storeroom (Alchemical), [73] Storeroom (Construction), [74] Storeroom (Failed Experiments), [75] Storeroom (Potion Bottles), [76] Storeroom (Reagents), [77-78] Strongroom, [79] Submerged Room, [80] Summoning Chamber

[81] Tar Pit, [82] Teleportation Chamber, [83] Terminus, [84] Torture Chamber, [85] Treasure Chamber, [86] Treasure Vault, [87] Undervault, [88-89] Unfinished Chamber, [90] Vault

[91-92] Walled-Up Chamber, [93] Warning Chamber, [94] Well, [95-96] Well Room, [97] Workpit, [98-00] Dual Function (roll twice)
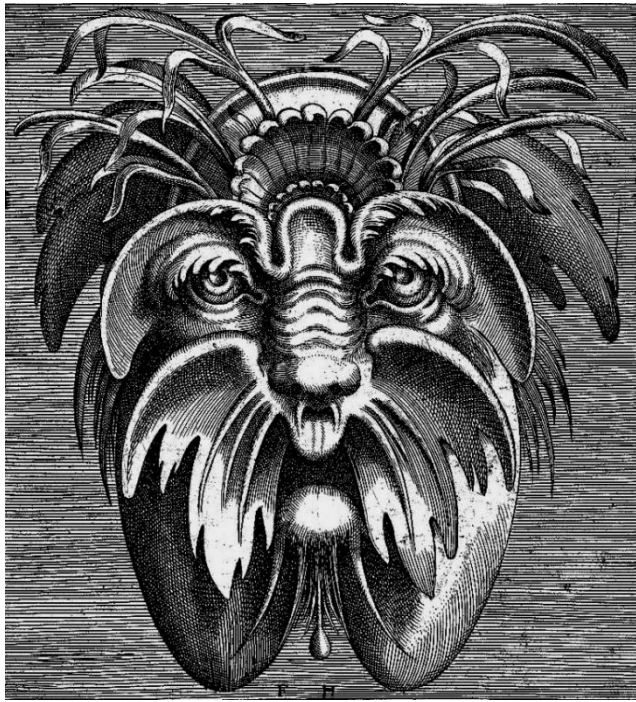
## Rooms for Manor House Areas (I)

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-02]** Alcove, **[03-04]** Ale Cellar, **[05-06]** Apartment, **[07-08]** Apothecary, **[09-10]** Aquarium

**[11-12]** Arboretum, **[13-14]** Art Gallery, **[15-16]** Artisan's Chamber, **[17-18]** Atrium, **[19-20]** Attic

**[21-22]** Aviary, **[23-24]** Bakery, **[25-26]** Ballroom, **[27-28]** Banquet Hall, **[29-30]** Basement

**[31-32]** Bath (or Bathroom), **[33-34]** Bedchamber, **[35-36]** Bedroom, **[37-38]** Bestiary, **[39-40]** Bottlery

**[41-42]** Boudoir, **[43-44]** Buttery, **[45-46]** Cellar, **[47-48]** Cheese Cellar, **[49-50]** Classroom

**[51-52]** Cloak Room, **[53-54]** Closet, **[55-56]** Coal Room, **[57-58]** Crafter's Room, **[59-60]** Crawlspace

**[61-62]** Dayroom, **[63-64]** Dining Hall, **[65-66]** Dining Room, **[67-68]** Domed Room, **[69-70]** Drawing Room

**[71-72]** Dressing Room, **[73-74]** Enclosed Loggia, **[75-76]** Foyer, **[77-78]** Fresco Room, **[79-80]** Gallery (Display)

**[81-82]** Gambling Hall, **[83-84]** Game Room, **[85-86]** Garden, **[87-88]** Great Room, **[89-90]** Greenhouse

**[91-92]** Guest Chamber, **[93-94]** Hall, **[95-96]** Hall of Mirrors, **[97-98]** Harem, **[99-00]** Herbarium

## Rooms for Manor House Areas (II)

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Hostel, **[02-03]** Hunters' Hall, **[04-05]** Kitchen, **[06-07]** Laboratory, **[08-09]** Landing, **[10-11]** Larder

**[12]** Launderer's Room, **[13-14]** Library, **[15]** Light Well, **[16-17]** Living Room, **[18-19]** Lounge, **[20]** Menagerie

**[21-22]** Museum, **[23-24]** Mushroom Cellar, **[25-26]** Music Room, **[27-28]** Nursery, **[29-30]** Observatory

[31-32] Office, [33] Oil Cellar, [34] Oil-Press Room, [35-36] Overlook, [37-38] Pantry, [39-40] Parlor

[41] Planetarium, [42] Poison Garden, [43] Potionry, [44-45] Privy, [46-47] Receiving Room, [48-49] Reception Chamber, [50-51] Retreat

[52-53] Root Cellar, [54-55] Salon, [56-57] Salt Room, [58-59] Sick Room, [60-61] Sitting Room

[62-63] Solarium, [64-65] Statuary, [66-67] Storeroom (Alcohol / Wine), [68] Storeroom (Butchered Meat), [69-70] Storeroom (Char Cellar)

[71-72] Storeroom (Cheese), [73-74] Storeroom (Dry Goods), [75-76] Storeroom (Herbs and Spices), [77] Storeroom (Ice), [78-79] Study, [80-81] Sub-Basement

[82-83] Suite, [84] Theater, [85-86] Trophy Room, [87-88] Waiting Room, [89-90] Wardrobe Room

[91-92] Warming Room, [93-94] Wine Cellar, [95] Wine-Press Room, [96-97] Withdrawing Room, [98-99] Workroom, [00] Zoo

## Rooms for Stronghold Areas

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01] Access Chamber, [02-03] Antechamber, [04] Armorial Hall, [05-06] Armory, [07] Arsenal, [08] Audience Chamber, [09] Audience Hall, [10] Bailey

[11] Barbican, [12-13] Barracks, [14] Bastion, [15] Cache Chamber, [16] Clinic, [17-18] Common Room, [19] Council Chamber, [20] Court

[21-22] Courtyard, [23] Depository, [24] Domicile, [25] Donjon, [26] Dormitory, [27] Drill Hall, [28] Entry Chamber, [29] Entry Hall, [30] Exercise Room

[31] Feast Hall, [32] Forecourt, [33] Forge, [34] Garrison, [35] Gatehouse, [36] Goods Hall, [37-38] Granary, [39] Great Hall, [40] Guard Hall

[41] Guard Post, [42-43] Guardroom, [44] Gymnasium, [45] Hall of Challenge, [46] Hall of Honor, [47] Hall of Tapestries, [48] Icehouse, [49] Keep, [50] Kennel

[51] Knights' Hall, [52] Map Room, [53] Meeting Room, [54] Mess Hall, [55] Mews and Stable, [56] Moat (or Motte), [57] Outpost, [58] Portcullis Chamber, [59] Protective Ditch, [60] Quarters

[61] Redoubt, [62] Royal Chamber, [63] Scullery, [64] Secret Guardroom, [65] Seraglio, [66] Smelter, [67-68] Smithy, [69] Squires' Hall, [70] Stable

[71] State Chamber, [72] Stockpile Room, [73] Storage Chamber, [74-75] Storeroom (Armor), [76-77] Storeroom (Food), [78] Storeroom (Lumber), [79] Storeroom (Masonry), [80] Storeroom (Oil)

[81] Storeroom (Salt), [82] Storeroom (Smoked Meats], [83] Storeroom (Textiles), [84-85] Storeroom (Tools), [86-87] Storeroom (Water), [88-89] Storeroom (Weapons), [90] Throne Room

[91] Training Room, [92] Treasury, [93] Trophy Hall, [94] Turret, [95] Utility Room, [96] Vaulted Hall, [97] Ward, [98] Watchroom, [99] Winch Room, [00] Workshop

## Rooms for Temple Areas

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01] Amphitheater, [02-03] Ambulatory, [04] Apse, [05-06] Archive, [07]

Assemblage, **[08-09]** Atrium, **[10]** Augury Chamber

**[11]** Belfry, **[12]** Cascade Hall, **[13]** Celestial Hall, **[14-15]** Ceremonial Chamber, **[16]** Chamber of Revelation, **[17]** Chancel, **[18-19]** Chantry, **[20-21]** Chapel

**[22]** Chapter House, **[23]** Choir, **[24]** Cloister, **[25-26]** Communal Quarters, **[27]** Confessional, **[28-29]** Conjuring Chamber, **[30]** Convocation Room

**[31-32]** Divination Chamber, **[33-34]** Fane, **[35-36]** Forbidden Chamber, **[37-38]** Fountain Room, **[39]** Hall of Assembly, **[40]** Hall of Contemplation

**[41]** Hall of Healing, **[42]** Hall of Offerings, **[43]** Hall of Repentance, **[44]** Hall of Runes, **[45-46]** Hall of Statuary, **[47]** Hypostyle Hall, **[48]** Infirmary, **[49-50]** Inner Chamber

**[51]** Inner Ward, **[52-53]** Inscription Chamber, **[54-55]** Meditation Chamber, **[56]** Memorial Chamber, **[57]** Monument Chamber, **[58]** Nave, **[59]** Niched Room, **[60]** Novitiate

**[61]** Obelisk Chamber, **[62]** Observation Chamber, **[63-64]** Offering Chamber, **[65]** Oracular Chamber, **[66]** Purification Chamber, **[67-68]** Refectory, **[69]** Reflecting Pool, **[70]** Reflecting Room

**[71]** Reliquary, **[72-73]** Ritual Hall, **[74]** Robing Room, **[75]** Room of Revelation, **[76]** Runic Chamber, **[77-78]** Sacrificial Chamber, **[79]** Sacrificial Pool, **[80]** Sacristy

**[81-82]** Sanctuary, **[83]** Sanctum, **[84]** Sanctum Sanctorum, **[85]** Scriptorium, **[86]** Seminary, **[87-88]** Shrine, **[89-90]** Storeroom (Ceremonial)

**[91-92]** Temple, **[93]** Transept, **[94-95]** Undercroft, **[96]** Vestiary, **[97-98]** Vestibule, **[99-00]** Vestry

# Rooms for Tomb Areas

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01-02]** Ancestral Chamber, **[03-04]** Barrow, **[05-06]** Beast Crypt, **[07-08]** Bone Pit, **[09-10]** Burial Chamber

**[11]** Buried Longship, **[12-15]** Catacombs, **[16-17]** Chamber of Biers, **[18-19]** Charnel House, **[20]** Crematorium

**[21-23]** Crypt, **[24-25]** Defiled Tomb, **[26-27]** Delve, **[28-29]** Drowning Pool, **[30-31]** Dry Well



**[32-33]** Embalming Chamber, **[34-36]** False Tomb, **[37]** False Treasure Room, **[38-40]** Forbidden Chamber

**[41-42]** Hall of Bones, **[43-44]** Hall of Immortal Judgment, **[45-46]** Hall of Mourners, **[47-48]** Hall of Resurrection, **[49-50]** Hall of Reverence

[51-52] Hall of Souls, [53-54] Hall of the Dead, [55-57] Internment Chamber, [58-59] Mass Grave, [60-61] Mausoleum

[62-63] Morgue, [64-66] Offerings Chamber, [67-68] Ossuary, [69-72] Plundered Tomb, [73-74] Pyre Chamber, [75-76] Repository, [77-78] Royal Tomb, [79-80] Sacred Crypt

[81-82] Sacred Tomb, [83-84] Sacrificial Vault, [85-86] Sarcophagus Chamber, [87-88] Sealed Tomb, [89-90] Secret Crypt

[91-92] Sepulcher, [93-94] Slaves' Tomb, [95-96] Storeroom (Embalming), [97-00] Tomb

# Thematic Sub-Regions for Dungeon Levels

After you generate the first random room, you have a few options to consider as you decide how you want to generate the subsequent rooms:

**Uniform Dungeon Region:** If you want your dungeon region to be uniform (all tomb rooms, all stronghold rooms, etc.), you can simply continue rolling on the same table. For caves and manor houses (where there are two tables), you can roll on Table 1 50% of the time, and Table 2 50% of the time.

**Random Dungeon Region:** If you want your dungeon region to be completely random (e.g., a cave might lead to a stronghold room that might lead to a temple room and so forth), you can return to section 8-2 and randomly roll the room type every time.

**Themed and Sub-Themed Dungeon Region:** If you want your dungeon region to be fairly uniform (e.g., mostly caves but not all), and you want to create some special sub-regions with different themes, you can

roll on the following tables to determine how to proceed.

**Sub-Themes for Cave and Cavern Levels**

If you first rolled on the Cavern Areas tables, continue to roll on either Cavern Areas Table 1 (50% of the time) or Cavern Areas Table 2 (50% of the time) for the first 2D6+1 rooms. Then, roll 1D100 to determine if the dungeon theme temporarily changes, as follows:

[01-05] **Burial Caverns.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

[06-30] **Cave and Cavern** theme continues. Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

[31-55] **Cave and Cavern** theme continues. Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

[56-60] **Dungeon Vaults.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

[61-65] **Enigmatic Region.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

[66-67] **Excavated Tombs.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

[68-69] **Extensive Dungeon Vaults.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

[70-74] **Fortified Caverns.** Roll on the Stronghold Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

[75-77] **Furnished Cavern Lair.** Roll on Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 1D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[78-80] Furnished Cavern Lair.** Roll on Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 1D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[81-82] Monster Stronghold.** Roll on the Stronghold Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[83-87] Sacred Caverns.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[88-96] Strange Cavern.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next room, and then return to this table.

**[97-98] Subterranean Temple.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[99] Underground Manor.** Roll on Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[00] Underground Manor.** Roll on Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.


**Sub-Themes for Dungeon Levels**


If you first rolled on the Dungeon Areas table, continue to roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the first 2D6+1 rooms. Then, roll 1D100 to determine if the dungeon theme temporarily changes, as follows:


**[01] Cabal's Secret Manor.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[02] Cabal's Secret Manor.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[03-52] Dungeon Area** theme continues. Roll on the Dungeon Areas Table for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[53-57] Dungeon Crypt.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[58-60] Dungeon Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[61-63] Dungeon Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[64-66] Dungeon Stronghold.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[67-70] Eldritch Vaults.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[71] Excavated Caves.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[72] Excavated Caves.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[73-74] Extensive Dungeon Tombs.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[75-79] Guard Halls.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[80-81] Secret Furnished Rooms.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[82-83] Secret Furnished Rooms.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[84-92] Strange Room.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next room, and then return to this table.

**[93-97] Underground Fane.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[98-00] Underground Temple.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

## Sub-Themes for Manor House Levels

If you first rolled on the Manor House Areas tables, continue to roll on either Manor House Areas Table 1 (50% of the time) or Manor House Areas Table 2 (50% of the time) for the first 2D6+1 rooms. Then, roll 1D100 to determine if the dungeon theme temporarily changes, as follows:

**[01-03] Ancestral Fane.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[04-05] Ancestral Mausoleum.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[06-07] Artificial Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[08-09] Artificial Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[10] Collapsed Understructure, or Elaborate Artificial Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[11] Collapsed Understructure, or Elaborate Artificial Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[12-20] Eerie Room.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next room, and then return to this table.

**[21-25] Family Crypt.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[26-30] Halls of Madness.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[31-32] Haunted Dungeon Vaults.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[33-57] Manor House** theme continues. Roll on Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[58-82] Manor House** theme continues. Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[83-85] Manorial Donjon.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[86-90] Sacred Chambers.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[91-95] Secure Rooms.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[96-00] Walled-Up Vaults.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

## Sub-Themes for Stronghold Levels

If you first rolled on the Stronghold Areas table, continue to roll on the Stronghold Areas table for the first 2D6+1 rooms. Then, roll 1D100 to determine if the dungeon theme temporarily changes, as follows:

**[01-04] Champion's Crypts.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[05-09] Chaplain Chambers.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[10-11] Donjon Keep.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[12-16] Donjon Vaults.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[17-25] Enigmatic Vault.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next room, and then return to this table.

**[26] Fortified Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[27] Fortified Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[28-30] Furnished Chambers.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[31-33] Furnished Chambers.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[34] Hidden Cave Fortress.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[35] Hidden Cave Fortress.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[36-37] Noble Abodes.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[38-39] Noble Abodes.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[40-42] Noble Crypts.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[43-45] Ruler's Sacred Temple.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[46-50] Secret Ancestral Bastion.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[51-00] Stronghold** theme continues. Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

## Sub-Themes for Temple Levels

If you first rolled on the Temple Areas table, continue to roll on the Temple Areas table for the first 2D6+1 rooms. Then, roll 1D100 to determine if the dungeon theme temporarily changes, as follows:

**[01-02] Forbidden Caverns.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[03-04] Forbidden Caverns.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[05-07] Forbidden Chambers.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[08-10] Guardian Halls.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[11-16] Halls of the Mysteries.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[17-18] High Priest's Sanctums.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[19-20] High Priest's Sanctums.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[21-28] Ornate Hall.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next room, and then return to this table.

**[29-31] Priests' Chambers.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[32-34] Priests' Chambers.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[35-38] Protected Chambers.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[39-42] Sacred Crypts.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[43-44] Sacred Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[45-46] Sacred Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[47-48] Sacred Underhalls.** Roll on the Tomb Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[49-98] Temple** theme continues. Roll on Temple Areas Table for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[99-00] Vaults of the Damned.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

### Sub-Themes for Tomb Levels

If you first rolled on the Tomb Areas table, continue to roll on the Tomb Areas table for the first 2D6+1 rooms. Then, roll 1D100 to determine if the dungeon theme temporarily changes, as follows:

**[01-02] Cavern Crypts.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[03-04] Cavern Crypts.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[05] Death Priests' Vaults.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[06] Death Priests' Vaults.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[07-11] Enigmatic Ancestral Tombs.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[12-20] Enigmatic Crypt.** Roll on the Evocative Random Rooms tables (hereafter) for the next room, and then return to this table.

**[21-23] Funerary Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[24-26] Funerary Grottoes.** Roll on Cavern Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[27] Gravekeepers' Chambers.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 1 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[28] Gravekeepers' Chambers.** Roll on the Manor House Areas Table 2 for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[29-31] Great Funerary Temple.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[32-36] Sacred Undervaults.** Roll on the Temple Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[37-41] Slave Chambers.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[42-44] Slave Vaults.** Roll on the Dungeon Areas table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[45-94] Tomb** theme continues. Roll on Tomb Areas Table for the next 2D6 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[95-98] Tomb Guardians' Chambers.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D4 rooms, and then return to this table.

**[99-00] Tomb Guardians' Vaults.** Roll on Stronghold Areas Table for the next 2D6+1 rooms, and then return to this table.

# Evocative Random Rooms and Chaotic Descriptors

If you want an unusual and evocative room name to build a description around, you can come up with intriguing results with just two d100 rolls, first for an adjective and then for a noun, using the system below. A very few combinations are redundant ("Labyrinthine Labyrinth," etc.) or nonsensical ("Endless Dead End," etc.), but the vast majority should prove useful in creating a special and memorable location.

Please note that if you enjoy this system, you can find an even more massive system of similar nature in the Wonderland Imprints expansion supplement *The Chaotic Descriptor Table*, which allows for adjective rolls of D10,000 (yes, that's 10,000 random results).

## Adjectives

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. As more than one option appears, you should pick your favorite or the one that seems most appropriate to the setting. (If you're in a hurry for some reason, you can either always pick the first option, or just

randomly flip through the pages until something catches your attention.)

**[01]** Abandoned, Aberrant, Abhorrent, Abjuration, Abominable, Abomination's, Abyssal, Accursed, Acephalus, Acid, Acolytes', Adamantine, Adept's, Airless, Alabaster, Alarum, Alchemical

**[02]** Alchemist's, Alcoved, Alien, Altar, Amber, Amethyst, Amphisbaena, Ancestors', Ancestral, Ancient, Androsphinx, Angelic, Animated, Animating, Antediluvian, Arachnid

**[03]** Arcane, Arcanist's, Archival, Archmage's, Archon's, Argent, Armorial, Armsmen's, Ashen, Assassin's, Astral, Augur's, Augury, Avenger's

**[04]** Azure, Baffling, Baleful, Barbarian's, Bardic, Baron's, Baronial, Barrier, Basalt, Basilisk, Beast, Beast Master's, Beastmen's, Beetle



**[05]** Beguiler's, Behemoth, Beholder's, Beithir, Benighted, Berserkers', Besieged, Betrayer's, Bewildering, Bewitching, Bizarre, Black, Blackguard's, Bladed, Blasphemers'

**[06]** Blasphemous, Bleak, Bleeding, Blessed, Blighted, Blinding, Blocked, Bloodletter's, Bloodstained, Boar, Bodyguard's, Boiling, Bone, Bridged, Boreal

**[07]** Bottomless, Boulder, Brazen, Breached, Bridged, Brimstone, Bronze, Bugbear,

Burial, Buried, Burning, Butcher's, Cabalistic, Cage, Cairn, Cambion's

**[08]** Cannibals', Captain's, Carrion, Carved, Cascade, Cavalier's, Celestial, Centaur, Centipede, Centurion's, Ceremonial, Champion's, Chaos, Chaotic, Charlatan's, Charnel

**[09]** Chieftain's, Chimaera, Chiming, Chronicler's, Chthonic, Cimmerian, Cleric's, Clerical, Clock, Clockwork, Cloud Giant's, Clouded, Cobalt, Cobra, Cockatrice, Coffin, Coffin-Filled, Collapsed

**[10]** Collapsing, Colossal, Colossus, Commander's, Concealed, Conclave's, Confining, Confounding, Conjurer's, Conjuring, Constricted, Constricting, Contemplator's, Copper, Coral, Corpse, Corpse-Filled, Corroded

**[11]** Corrosive, Corrupted, Corrupting, Corruptor's, Council, Count's, Coven's, Crimson, Criosphinx, Croaking, Crocodile, Crone's, Crooked, Crows', Cruel, Crumbling, Crushing, Crystal

**[12]** Crystalline, Cult, Cultic, Cultists', Cursed, Cutthroats', Cyclopean, Cyclopes', Dagonian, Dank, Dark, Dark Elven, Darkening, Darkling, Daunting, Dead, Deadly, Death

**[13]** Deathless, Deathly, Deathtrap, Decadent, Decayed, Decaying, Deceiving, Deceptive, Decrepit, Deep, Deep Ones', Deeping, Defended, Defenders', Defiled, Defilers', Delvers'

**[14]** Demigod's, Demolished, Demon, Demon Slayer's, Demon Spawns', Demoniac, Demonic, Depthless, Deserted, Deserters', Desolate, Destiny, Destroyed, Destroyer's, Deva, Devastated, Devastator's

**[15]** Devil, Devil Slayer's, Devil Spawns', Diabolical, Diamond, Dim, Dimensional, Dire, Disciples', Disenchanter's, Disenchanting, Disintegrating, Dismal, Displacer, Distorted, Divination, Diviner's, Djinn, Dolmen, Dolorous

**[16]** Domed, Doom, Doom Bringer's, Doomed One's, Doppelganger, Draconian, Dragon's, Dragon Slayer's, Dragon Spawns', Drain, Drawbridge, Dread, Dream, Dream Eater's, Dreamland, Dreamlanders', Dripping, Drowned Ones', Drowning, Druid's



**[17]** Druidic, Duelist's, Duke's, Dusk, Dusky, Dust, Dust-Filled, Dusty, Dvergar, Dwarf Lord's, Dwarven, Dweomer Crafter's, Dweomered, Dwimmerlaik, Dystopian

**[18]** Earthen, Ebon, Ebony, Echo, Echoing, Eerie, Egg, Eidolon, Elaborate, Eld, Elder's, Elder Thing's, Eldjotnar, Eldritch, Elemental

**[19]** Elementalist's, Elevator, Elf Lord's, Elven, Elysian, Emerald, Emperor's, Empyrean, Enchanted, Enchanter's, Enchanting, Enclosed, Encrusted, Endless, Enigmatic, Enshrouded, Ensnaring, Enthralling, Entropic

**[20]** Entropy, Erinyes, Eternal, Ethereal, Etin, Evil, Evocation, Evoker's, Exaltation, Exarch's, Excavated, Execution, Executioner's, Exemplar's, Exiles', Exorcism, Exorcist's, Extra-Dimensional, Extra-Planar

**[21]** Eyebiter's, Fabled, Fading, Faerie, Fanatics', Fanged, Fate, Fated, Fathomless, Fearful, Fearsome, Feast, Fell, Festooned, Fetid, Fey, Fiend's

**[22]** Fiend-Wrought, Fiendish, Fiery, Fighter's, Fighting Men's, Filthy, Fire, Fire Giant's, Flesh, Foetid, Flooded, Flooding, Fog, Foggy, Fool's, Forbidden, Forgotten

**[23]** Forsaken, Foul, Fountain, Fresco, Fresco-Painted, Freezing, Frigid, Frog, Frogmen's, Frost Giant's, Frozen, Funereal, Funerary, Fungal, Fungoid, Fungus, Fury's

**[24]** Gambling, Game, Gaoler's, Garbage, Garbage-Filled, Garden, Gargoyle, Gas-Filled, Gated, Gemstone, General's, Geomancer's, Geomantic, Geyser, Ghast, Ghastly, Ghost
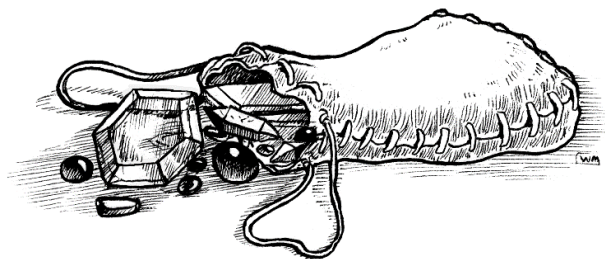


**[25]** Ghostly, Ghoul, Ghoulish, Ghul, Giant, Giant's, Giant Killer's, Gibbering, Gilded, Gilt, Glacial, Glacier, Gladiatorial, Gladiators', Glimmering, Glittering, Gloaming

**[26]** Gloom, Gloomy, Glorious, Glory, Glowing, Glyph, Glyphed, Gnole, Gnome, Gnome Laird's, Gnomish, Goblin, God, Godling's, Gold, Golden, Golem

**[27]** Golem Maker's, Gorgon, Gorgonian, Gossamered, Gothic, Grail, Grand, Grand Master's, Granite, Grated, Grave, Grave Robbers', Graven, Gray, Great, Great Old One's, Greater, Green, Greenstone

**[28]** Grey, Greyacke, Grievers', Grieving, Griffon, Griffon Rider's, Grim, Grimalkin, Grimoire, Grinder, Grinding, Grisly, Groaning, Groaning Spirit's, Grotesque, Grue, Gruesome, Guarded, Guardian

**[29]** Guards', Guardsmen's, Guild, Guild Master's, Gynosphinx, Gypsum, Hades', Hag's, Hallowed, Hallucinatory, Harbinger's, Harlequin's, Harpy, Harrowing, Harvest, Harvester's, Hatchetman's, Hatching, Hated

**[30]** Hated One's, Hateful, Haunted, Haunter's, Hawk, Hawkmen's, Headhunters', Headsman's, Healer's, Healing, Heavenly, Hecatomb, Heir's, Hell, Hell Hound, Hell Spawns', Hellish, Henchmen's, Herald's

**[31]** Heraldic, Heresiarch's, Heretical, Heretics', Hermit's, Hero's, Heroic, Herzog's, Hetman's, Hewn, Hexagonal, Hexed, Hexer's, Hexing, Hidden, Hideous, Hieracosphinx, Hierarch's

**[32]** Hierophant's, Hill Giant's, Hippogriff, Hobgoblin, Holy, Hollow, Homunculus, Honor, Hope's, Hopeless, Horde's, Horde Bringer's, Horned God's, Horned One's, Horrible, Horrific, Howling, Hrimthursar

**[33]** Hungering, Hungering One's, Hunter's, Huntmaster's, Huntsmen's, Husk-Filled, Hydra, Hyena, Hyper-Geometrical, Hyperborean, Ice, Ichorous, Icon, Iconoclasts's, Idol, Idolaters', Idolatrous

**[34]** Icy, Idyllic, Ifrit, Ill-Fated, Ill-Omened, Illusion's, Illusionary, Illusionist's, Illusory, Immaculate, Immemorial, Immense, Immolating, Immolator's, Immortal, Immortal's, Imp

**[35]** Impaler's, Impaling, Impenetrable, Imperial, Imperious, Impious, Imprisoner's, Imprisoning, Impure, Incantation, Incantatrix's, Incubus, Indomitable, Inescapable, Inexorable, Infernal

**[36]** Inferno, Infestation, Infested, Infester's, Infidels', Infinite, Inquisition, Inquisitor's, Iniquitous, Insect, Insect Men's, Insectile, Interrogation, Interrogator's, Inundated, Inundating

**[37]** Invisible, Invisible Monster's, Invocation, Invoker's, Iridescent, Iron, Iron

Golem, Ivory, Jabberwock's, Jabberwocky, Jacinth, Jackals', Jade, Jarl's, Jasper, Jellies', Jester's, Jewel

**[38]** Jeweled, Jotunn, Judgment, Juggernaut, Justiciar's, Keeper's, Keeping, Killer's, Killing, King's, Kismet, Knife, Knifing, Knight's, Knightly, Kobold, Kraken, Labyrinth

**[39]** Labyrinthine, Lady's, Lamentation, Lamenters', Lamia, Lamprey, Lancer's, Lantern-Illuminated, Lanthorn, Lapis, Larva, Larval, Lava, Lazar's, Lead, Leech, Leeching, Legendary, Leviathan's

**[40]** Legion's, Lemure, Lemurian, Leper's, Lesser, Lethean, Libram, Lich's, Lichen-Covered, Lifeless, Light, Lighted, Lightless, Lightning, Lignite, Limestone, Lion, Living, Lizard

**[41]** Lizard King's, Lizard Men's, Lizardfolk's, Loathed, Loathed One's, Loathsome, Locked, Locking, Locksmith's, Locust, Lofty, Lone, Looming, Lord's, Lost, Lost Ones', Lotus, Lotus Eaters', Louring

**[42]** Luminescent, Luck, Luckless, Lucky, Lunar, Lunatic's, Lurkers', Lurking Ones', Lycanthropes', Lycanthropic, Macabre,

Machine, Mad One's, Maddening, Madman's, Maelstrom, Mage's, Mage Slayer's, Maggot

**[43]** Maggot-Infested, Magic-User's, Magical, Magician's, Magister's, Magisterial, Magma, Majestic, Malachite, Malevolent, Malign, Malignant, Malleus, Manes, Manticore

**[44]** Map, Marauders', Marble, Marmoreal, Marquis's, Marshal's, Maskers', Masons', Masonic, Master's, Mastiffs', Matriarch's, Matriarchal, Maulers', Mauling

**[45]** Mausolean, Mauve, Mechanical, Medusa, Medusan, Melancholic, Memorial, Memory, Mephit, Mephitic, Merciless, Mercurial, Merciful, Merciless, Mercy

**[46]** Merrow, Mesmerist's, Mesmerizing, Miasma, Miasmal, Midnight, Mildew, Mildewed, Mimic, Mimic's, Minotaur's, Mirage, Mirage-Filled, Mirror, Mirrored

**[47]** Mist, Mist-Filled, Mist Weaver's, Misty, Mithril, Moaning, Moebius, Mold, Moldering, Moldy, Monastic, Monk's, Monolith, Monolithic, Monster

**[48]** Monstrous, Moon, Moonbeast, Moonstone, Moss-Filled, Mossy, Mountebank's, Mourners', Mourning, Muck, Muck-Filled, Mud, Muddy, Mudstone, Mummification

**[49]** Mummy's, Mummy Lord's, Murder, Murderer's, Murderous, Murk-Filled, Murky, Murmuring, Mushroom, Mushroom-Filled, Musty, Mutants', Mutating, Mutation, Myrmidon's, Mysterious, Mystery

**[50]** Mystic's, Mystical, Mythic, Mythical, Naga, Nameless, Narrow, Nauseating, Nebulous, Necromancer's, Necromantic, Nefarious, Nemesis, Nepenthe, Nephilim, Nether, Never

**[51]** Never-When, Night, Nighted, Nightgaunt, Nightmare, Nightmarish, Noble's, Non-Euclidean, Nonesuch, Noxious, Oath, Oath Breaker's, Oath Keeper's, Obelisk, Obliterated, Obliterating

**[52]** Oblivion, Observation, Observed, Obsidian, Ochre, Octopus, Odious, Offering, Ogre, Ogre Mage, Oil, Olympian, Omen, Ominous, Oni, Onyx

**[53]** Oolite, Ooze, Oozing, Opal, Opalescent, Opulent, Oracle's, Oracular, Orc, Orcish, Ore, Ore-Filled, Orichalcum, Ornate, Ossuary, Overking's, Overlord's

**[54]** Paladin's, Pale, Panther, Paradisaic, Parasite, Patriarch's, Pegasus, Pearl, Perfidious, Perilous, Perpetual, Peryton, Pestilent, Phantasm's, Phantasmal, Phantasmagoric, Phantom's

**[55]** Pharaoh's, Pharaonic, Phasing, Phoenix, Phosphorescent, Piled, Pillaged, Pillagers', Pirate, Pit, Pixie, Plague, Planar, Platinum, Plundered

**[56]** Plunderers', Plutonian, Poisoner's, Poisoning, Poisonous, Pool, Porphyry, Portal, Portent, Portentous, Possessing, Priests', Primal, Primeval, Prince's

**[57]** Prisoners', Procrustean, Profane, Prophet's, Prophesied, Prophetic, Protected, Protector's, Puffball, Puppet, Puppet Master's, Pure, Purified, Purple, Putrefacting

**[58]** Putrid, Pyre, Pyric, Pyrologist's, Pyromancer's, Pyromantic, Quagmire,

Quaking, Quartz, Queen's, Quest, Questing Beast's, Quicksand, Quicksilver, Quintessence

**[59]** Quintessential, Radiant, Raided, Raiders', Rainbow, Rainbowed, Rakes', Rakehells', Rakshasa, Ranger's, Ransacked, Ransackers', Rat, Rat-Things', Reanimating

**[60]** Reanimator's, Ravens', Reaper's, Reaping, Reavers', Redeemer's, Reeking, Reflecting, Regent's, Repentance, Reptile, Reptilian, Repulsive, Resplendent, Resurrection

**[61]** Revelation, Revenant, Revered, Revolving, Riddle, Riddling, Rising, Ritual, Rogue's, Rotting, Royal, Rubble, Rubble-Filled, Ruby, Ruined

**[62]** Ruinous, Rune, Runic, Rusting, Sacred, Sacrificial, Sacrosanct, Sage's, Salamandra, Salt, Salt-Encrusted, Sand, Sand-Filled, Sandstone, Sapphire



**[63]** Sarcophagus, Satyr, Savages', Savant's, Scapegrace's, Scarab, Scarecrow, Scarlet, Scavengers', Scintillating, Scion's, Scorched, Scorching, Scorpion, Scourge, Scourging

**[64]** Screaming, Scythe, Scything, Sealed, Secret, Sect's, Seekers', Seer's, Seething, Seneschal's, Sepulchral, Serene, Serpent, Serpent Folk's, Serpentine, Servitors'

**[65]** Shadow, Shadow Lord's, Shadowed, Shaking, Shallow, Shaman's, Shamanic, Shambler, Shambling, Shark, Sharper's,

Shattered, Shattering, Shedu, Shield Bearers'

**[66]** Shielded, Shifting, Shimmering, Shoggoth, Shrieker, Shrieking, Shrine, Shriveling, Shroud, Shrouded, Shunned, Sibyl's, Sibylline, Sicarii's, Siege

**[67]** Siege Master's, Silent, Silt, Silted, Siltstone, Silver, Simulacrum's, Sinister, Sinking, Skeletal, Skeleton, Skeleton Lord's, Skull, Skull-Filled, Slaughter, Slaughterers', Slave, Slaves', Slave Lord's
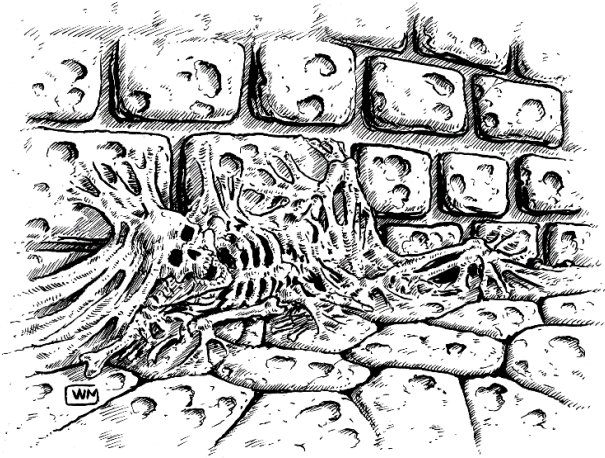


**[68]** Slavers', Slayer's, Slaying, Sleeping, Slime, Slime-Filled, Slime Mold, Slimy, Slithering, Slithering One's, Sludge, Sludge-Filled, Slug, Smoke, Smoke-Filled, Smoky, Snake, Snare, Solar

**[69]** Sonorous, Soot-Encrusted, Soothsayer's, Sorcerer's, Sorcerous, Soul, Soul Eater's, Soulless, Soundless, Spawn, Spawning, Spectral, Spectre, Sphinx, Spice, Spice Harvesters', Spider, Spy's

**[70]** Spirit's, Spore-Infested, Spriggan, Sprite, Stalactite, Stalagmite, Stalker's, Starless, Starry, Statue, Steam, Steam-Filled, Steel, Stinking, Stench-Ridden, Stone, Stonecutters', Stony

**[71]** Storm, Storm Bringer's, Storm Giant's, Strange, Strangler's, Strega's, Stryx, Stygian, Submerged, Subterranean, Succubus, Suffocating

**[72]** Sulfur, Sulfurous, Summoner's, Summoning, Sundered, Sunderer's, Sundering, Sunken, Sunless, Swarm, Swarm-Infested, Sword

**[73]** Sword Master's, Swordsmen's, Taboo, Talismanic, Tar Pit, Tarasque, Teleporter, Teleporting, Templars', Tempter's, Tenebrous, Tentacled
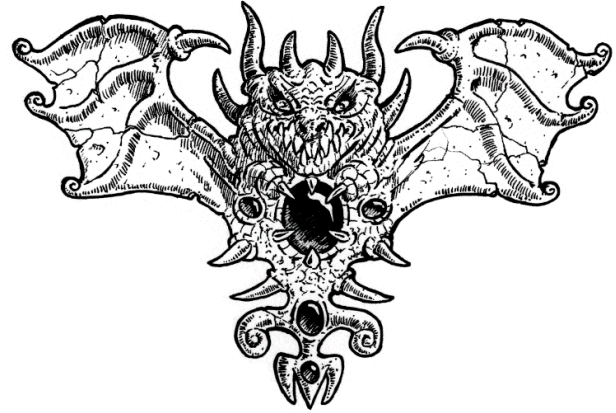


**[74]** Terrifying, Thane's, Thaumaturge's, Thalassic, Theurgist's, Thieves', Thralls', Throne, Thugs', Thuggee, Thunder, Thundering

**[75]** Tick, Tiger, Time-Altering, Timeless, Timeworn, Titan's, Toad, Topaz, Tormenting, Tormentor's, Torture, Torturer's

**[76]** Traitor's, Tranquil, Trap, Trapped, Treacherous, Treasure, Treasure-Filled, Treasure Hunters', Trembling, Tribal, Trick, Trickster's

**[77]** Triumphator's, Troglodyte, Trolghul, Troll, Troll Crusher's, Trophy, Trophy Taker's, Tumultuous, Twilight, Twilit, Twisted, Tyrant's, Umber

**[78]** Umbral, Unbeheld, Unbelievers', Unborn One's, Uncanny, Unconquerable, Undead, Undefended, Undefiled, Underground, Underwater, Undiscovered, Undying

**[79]** Unearthed, Unearthly, Unexcavated, Unexplored, Unfathomable, Unguarded, Unhallowed, Unholy

**[80]** Unicorn, Unknowable, Unknown, Unlit, Unnamable, Unreachable, Unreflecting, Unspeakable

**[81]** Unstable, Unthinkable, Untouchable, Usurper's, Utopian, Vampire, Vampire Hunter's

**[82]** Vampire King's, Vampire Spawns', Vampiric, Vanguards', Vanished, Vanishing, Vanquisher's

**[83]** Vanquishing, Vaporous, Vast, Vaulted, Veiled, Vengeful, Venom

**[84]** Venomous, Verdigris-Encrusted, Vermin, Vermin-Infested, Vertiginous, Vestals', Vexing

**[85]** Victor's, Violet, Viper, Viperous, Viridian, Virtuous, Viscount's

**[86]** Void, Volcanic, Volcano, Vorpal, Vulture, Wailing, Walled-Up

**[87]** Wand Maker's, Wanderers', War, Warded, Warden's, Warders', Warlock's

**[88]** Warlord's, Warmongers', Warped, Warping, Warriors', Wasp, Waste

**[89]** Waste-Filled, Watchers', Water, Waterfall, Watery, Web-Covered, Webbed

**[90]** Weeping, Weird, Weirding, Wendigo, Werebear, Wereboar, Wererat

**[91]** Weretiger, Werewolf, Whirling, Whirlpool, Whispering, Whited, Wicker Man

**[92]** Widow's, Widow Maker's, Widower's, Wight, Wild Hunt's, Will-o'-Wisp, Wind

**[93]** Wind Treader's, Winding, Windy, Winter, Winter Wolf, Witch's, Witch Doctor's

**[94]** Witch Hunter's, Withered Ones', Withering, Wizard's, Wizardly, Woeful, Wolf

**[95]** Wolverine, Wonder, Wondrous, Worm, Worm-Infested, Wraith, Wretched

**[96]** Wretched Ones', Writhing, Writhing Ones', Wulfen, Wyrm, Wyvern, Xoron

**[97]** Yellow, Yellow King's, Yeti, Yith

**[98]** Yithian, Yuggoth, Yuggothian, Zealots'

**[99]** Zombie, Zombie Master's

**[00]** Zombification

## Nouns

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. This table uses many obscure room names from history (and architectural dictionaries) for the sake of variety, so you may need to do a bit of research to define the true (former?) purpose of a discovered dungeon room from time to time.

**[01]** Abattoir, Abreuvoir, Abyss, Accommodation(s), Adyton

**[02]** Aerarium, Aerary, Aerie, Agiasterium, Alcove(s)

**[03]** Alhacena, Alipterion, Almonry, Altar, Ambry

**[04]** Ambulatory, Amphitheater, Andron, Annex, Antecabinet

**[05]** Antecavern, Antechamber, Anteroom, Antrum, Apodyterium

**[06]** Apothecarium, Apothecary, Approach, Apse, Aquarium

**[07]** Aqueduct, Arboretum, Arch(es), Archive, Arcosolium

**[08]** Area, Arena, Armory, Arsenal, Ascension

**[09]** Assemblage, Asylum, Atelier, Atrium, Attic

[10] Auditorium, Aula, Aviary, Bailey, Bakery

[11] Ballroom, Balnea, Balnearium, Barbican, Barracks

[12] Barrier, Barrow, Basement, Bastion, Bath

[13] Bawm, Bay, Bedchamber, Bedroom

[14] Belfry, Bema, Bestiary, Bodega

[15] Bone House, Boudoir, Bouleterion, Bourse

[16] Bower, Breezeway, Brewery, Bridge

[17] Burrow, Buttery, Cabinet(s), Cage(s)

[18] Calefactorium, Calefactory, Calidarium, Camp

[19] Carcer, Cascade, Catacombs, Catacumba, Catwalk

[20] Cavaedium, Cave, Cavea, Cavelet, Cavern

[21] Cavity, Ceiling Gap, Cell(s), Cell Block, Cella

[22] Cellar, Cellarage, Cenaculum, Ceroma, Cesspit

[23] Cesspool, Chamber, Chancel, Chandlery

[24] Chantier, Chantry, Chapel, Chartophylacium

[25] Chasm, Chimney, Choir, Chute

[26] Cimeliarch, Cinearium, Cistern, Cistvaen

[27] Classroom, Cleft, Clinic, Cloaca

[28] Cloister, Coldroom, Colony, Columbarium

[29] Column(s), Commandery, Common Room, Conclave

[30] Conclavium, Conditivum, Conduit, Confessional

[31] Conservatory, Control Room, Conundrum, Corridor

[32] Court(yard), Crawlspace, Crawlway, Crematorium

[33] Crevice, Crossing, Crowde, Crypt

[34] Cube, Cubicle(s), Cul-de-Sac, Cylinder

[35] Cyst, Darkroom, Dayroom, Dead End

[36] Deathtrap, Defile, Delubrum, Delve

[37] Demise, Den, Depository, Diaconia

[38] Diaconicon, Distillery, Ditch, Domain

[39] Dome, Domicile, Dominion, Donjon

[40] Doom, Door(s), Doorway(s), Dormitory

[41] Dorter, Drawbridge, Drying Room, Dumbwaiter

[42] Dungeon, Elevator, Encampment, Enclave

[43] Enclosure, End, Enigma, Entry



[44] Ewery, Excavation, Excubitorium, Fane

[45] Fastness, Fate, Favissa, Fire Pit

[46] Fissure, Floor(s), Forecourt, Forge

[47] Formicary, Foundry, Fountain, Foyer

**[48]** Frater, Frigidarium, Fungarium, Galleria

**[49]** Gallery, Gaol, Garden, Garderobe

**[50]** Garret, Garrison, Gate(s), Gatehouse

**[51]** Gauntlet, Granary, Grapery, Grave

**[52]** Great Hall, Great Room, Grot, Grotto

**[53]** Guard Post, Guardroom, Gymnasium, Gynaeceum

**[54]** Hall, Hallway, Harem, Harrow

**[55]** Hatch(es), Hatchery, Hatchway, Haunt

**[56]** Haven, Heap, Hearth, Helieum

**[57]** Herbarium, Hermitage, Heroum, Hideout

**[58]** Hiding Place, Hieron, Hive, Hold

**[59]** Holdfast, Hole(s), Hollow(s), Horologium

**[60]** Hospitalium, Hospitium, Hostel, Hypocaust

**[61]** Hypogaeum, Icehouse, Inferno, Infirmary

**[62]** Intersection, Jail, Juncture, Keep

**[63]** Kennel, Kitchen, Laboratory, Labyrinth

**[64]** Laconicum, Ladder(s), Lair, Lake

**[65]** Landing, Larder, Latrine, Lavatory

**[66]** Lazarette, Leap, Library, Lightwell

**[67]** Lobby, Locker(s), Lockup, Locutorium

**[68]** Lode, Loft, Loggia, Lookout

**[69]** Lounge, Lyceum, Madness, Manufactory

**[70]** Martyrium, Mausoleum, Maw, Maze

**[71]** Megaron, Menagerie, Metroon, Mezzanine

**[72]** Mindscape, Mine(s), Mineshaft, Misericord

**[73]** Moat, Morgue, Motte, Museum

**[74]** Mushroom Forest, Narthex, Natatorium, Nave

**[75]** Necropolis, Nether, Netherworld, Nest

**[76]** Nexus, Niche(s), Nook(s), Novitiate

**[77]** Nursery, Nymphaeum, Observatory, Obsctruction, Opisthodomos, Oratory

**[78]** Ossuary / Ossuaries, Oubliette(s), Outlet(s), Outpost, Overlook, Palace

**[79]** Pantry, Parlor, Passage(s), Passageway(s), Pen(s), Peristyle, Pillar(s)

**[80]** Pipe(s), Pit(s), Planetarium, Playroom, Plunge, Pool, Portcullis

**[81]** Potionry, Priest Hole, Prison, Privy, Processional, Promenade, Proving Ground

**[82]** Psychomanteum, Puzzle, Pyre, Quarry, Quarters, Ramp, Reach(es)

**[83]** Recess, Redoubt, Refectorium, Refectory, Refuge, Reliquary, Repository

**[84]** Reredorter, Reservoir, Retreat, River, Rivulet, Room, Roomlet

**[85]** Roost, Rotunda, Rubble Heap, Sacrarium, Sacristy, Salon, Sanctuary

**[86]** Sanctum, Sanctum Sanctorum, Sandpit, Sarcophagus, Sauna, Scrapheap, Scriptorium

**[87]** Scullery, Seam, Seminary, Sepulcher, Seraglio, Servery, Sewer

**[88]** Shaft, Shanty / Shanties, Shop, Shrine, Sinkhole, Slaughterhouse, Slide

**[89]** Slope, Smelter, Smithy, Smoke Hole, Solar, Solarium, Sphere

**[90]** Spiral, Stable, Stair(s), Staircase, Stairway, Statuary, Statue(s) (Hall)

**[91]** Stockpile, Storage Chamber, Storeroom, Stream, Stricture, Strongroom, Studio

**[92]** Study, Sub-Basement, Sub-Cellar, Sudatorium, Suite(s), Sunroom, Swamp

**[93]** Tablinum, Tank, Teleporter, Temple, Templum, Tepidarium, Terminus

**[94]** Theater, Therma, Threshold, Throne Room, Tomb, Toolroom, Tower

**[95]** Transept, Trap, Trash Heap, Treasure (Room), Treasure Vault, Treasury, Trench

**[96]** Trick, Triclinium, Tunnel, Turret, Undercroft, Underhall, Undervault

**[97]** Underworld, Vault, Vein(s), Vent, Vestiary, Vestibule, Vestry

**[98]** Vigil, Vinery, Void, Vortex, Walkway, Wall(s), Ward

**[99]** Wardrobe, Warren(s), Watchroom, Waterfall, Waterway, Well, Whirlpool

**[00]** Workpit(s), Workroom, Workshop, Ziggurat, Zigzag, Zone, Zoo

# CHAPTER 9: DETAILS AND DUNGEON DRESSING

"Nay! By the split in my beard, we are *not* departing this chamber until we solve the riddle of whatever this half-bent copper coin may be!"

— *Gutlad Barrelhauser, the Abandoned One*

## Dungeon Dressing I: Furnishings and Major Features

Dungeon dressing is the process of adding specific detail to individual rooms. It is an art, not a science. For this particular process, the author recommends that GMs should write down their own ideas about a room's contents, based on past or present occupants, *before* resorting to random generation. However, random results can lead to surprising lines of thought, turning boring rooms into truly memorable encounters.

## Selecting Furnishings

Furnishings are major inanimate features in a room, typically created and utilized by humans, demi-humans or humanoids. They

should make logical sense whenever possible. Caves will have no furnishings if intelligent monsters are not present; barracks will not have thrones or sculptures; and a trash pit converted into a prison would not have an armor rack. But dungeons are ancient things, and it is entirely possible for any room with a significant older purpose to be filled with furnishings that the current inhabitants have no use for.

In general, an empty room should probably include between one and four types of the following furnishings, as appropriate to the setting. GMs should probably consider very basic furnishings (tables, chairs, some kind of bedding, water source(s), etc.) to be present by default if the room inhabited.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Alcoves, **[02]** Altar, **[03]** Amphoras (Wine Storage Vessels), **[04]** Armoire(s), **[05]** Armor Rack(s), **[06]** Armorial Banners, **[07]** Balcony (or Raised Platform), **[08]** Barrel Rack, **[09]** Barrel(s), **[10]** Baskets

**[11]** Beast Hides on the Walls, **[12]** Bed(s), **[13]** Bedrolls, **[14]** Bench(es), **[15]** Bookcases, **[16]** Books and Papers, **[17]** Bookshelves, **[18]** Bottles, **[19]** Braziers, **[20]** Broken Furniture

**[21]** Cabinet(s), **[22]** Candles (or Candelabras), **[23]** Catwalk, **[24]** Cauldron, **[25]** Cesspit or Cesspool **[26]** Chains
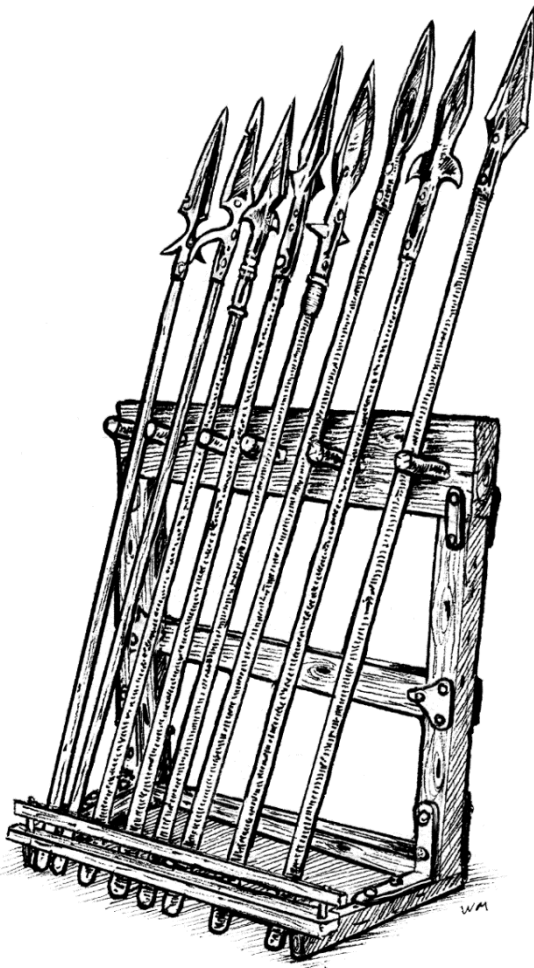


**[27]** Chair(s) **[28]** Chest(s)

**[29]** Crate(s) **[30]** Crockery

**[31]** Cupboards **[32]** Curiosity Cabinet

**[33]** Curtains **[34]** Dais

**[35]** Desk(s) **[36]** Dishes and Platters

**[37]** Divan(s) **[38]** Dome

**[39]** Drawings and Sketches **[40]** Fire Pit

**[41]** Fireplace **[42]** Forge (extensiveness depending on the locale)

**[43]** Fountain **[44]** Furs and Skins

[45] Hammocks [46] Hanging Lamps

[47] Heraldic Shields [48] Holy Water Font

[49] Idols and Statuettes [50] Implements of Torture

[51] Jugs [52] Laboratory Equipment

[53] Latrine [54] Map(s)

[55] Mirrors [56] Niches

[57] Nooks and Crannies [58] Ornamental Flagstones or Wall Plaques

[59] Painting(s) [60] Pallets

[61] Pool [62] Potion Font (or Brewing Equipment)

[63] Pulleys [64] Rafters

[65] Religious (or Unholy) Trappings [66] Reliquary

[67] Roasting Spit (and Fireplace or Fire Pit) [68] Rugs or Wall Hangings

[69] Sacks of Food [70] Sacks of Textiles

[71] Sacks or Boxes of Tools [72] Scrolls and Writing Implements

[73] Sculpture(s) [74] Sleeping Furs

[75] Slop Bucket(s) [76] Specimen Jars

[77] Statue(s) [78] Stone Blocks

[79] Stool(s) [80] Straw-Stuffed Mattress(es)

[81] Stream (or Artificial Water Channel) [82] Table(s)

[83] Tablets and Chisels [84] Tapestries

[85] Targets and Dummies [86] Taxidermy

[87] Timber(s) [88] Tool Rack(s)

[89] Torches / Cressets [90] Trophies (Monster Heads, Skins, etc.)

[91] Trunk(s) [92] Unholy Water Font

[93] Wall Sconces [94] Wardrobe(s)

[95] Washing Tub(s) [96] Water Barrel(s)



[97] Weapon Rack(s) [98] Well

[99-00] Roll twice, ignoring results higher than 98

## Dungeon Dressing II: Features of Curiosity (I)

For a multitude of options, three tables of features have been provided. GMs are encouraged to use Table 1 40% of the time, Table 2 40% of the time and Table 3 20% of the time.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

[01] Air Current Change (Reroll Air Current)

[02] Air Quality Change (Reroll Air Quality)

[03] Animal Corpse

[04] Animal Skeleton

[05] Ants

[06] Anvil

[07] Arrowhead

[08] Artificial Limb, Rotted (Hand Hook, Lead Claws, Peg Leg, etc.)

[09] Backpack (Rotted)

[10] Backpack (Spilled)

[11] Balance and Weights

[12] Ball and Chain, Rusted

[13] Bandages, Soiled

[14] Beetles

[15] Birdcage

**[16]** Blade (Bent)

**[17]** Blade (Rusted)

**[18]** Blade Hilt

**[19]** Blobs of Once-Melted Metal

**[20]** Bloodstain

**[21]** Bones (Moldering)

**[22]** Bones (Splintered)

**[23]** Bones (Stacked)

**[24]** Broken Arrow

**[25]** Broken Bottle

**[26]** Broom, Sodden

**[27]** Bucket (Empty?)

**[28]** Bucket of Lard

**[29]** Buckle

**[30]** Cairn of Skulls

**[31]** Cane or Crutch, Splintered

**[32]** Ceiling Damage

**[33]** Chamber Pot

**[34]** Chandelier (Hanging Precariously)

**[35]** Chandelier (Shattered and Fallen)

**[36]** Change in Lighting (Reroll Lighting)

**[37]** Change in Smell (Reroll Odor)

**[38]** Chimes, Swaying

**[39]** Claw Marks

**[40]** Clepsydra (Water Clock)

**[41]** Cloaks on Pegs

**[42]** Clockwork (Moving)

**[43]** Clockwork (Rusted)

**[44]** Clothing (Random)

**[45]** Coal Chute (Very Narrow)

**[46]** Cobwebs (Dusty)

**[47]** Cobwebs (Thick)

**[48]** Dais

**[49]** Damaged Armor

**[50]** Damaged Book (Random Language and Content)

**[51]** Damaged Headwear (Ceremonial Headdress, Coif, Leather Hood, etc.)

**[52]** Damaged Weapon

**[53]** Dead / Stomped Vermin (Beetles, Centipedes, Maggots, Spiders, etc.)

**[54]** Demi-Human Corpse

**[55]** Demi-Human Skeleton

**[56]** Dented Helmet

**[57]** Destroyed Ritual Weapon (Bipennis Axe, Sacrificial Dagger, Scourge, etc.)

**[58]** Discarded Food / Rations

**[59]** Divination Object (Augury Bones, Dried Entrails, Toss-Sticks, etc.)

**[60]** Dried Fish

**[61]** Drinking Horn (Sealed)

**[62]** Drinking Horn (Splintered)

**[63]** Drinking Vessel, Damaged (Flagon, Goblet, Mug, Pitcher, Tankard, etc.)

**[64]** Dripping Water

**[65]** Drum

**[66]** Dung

**[67]** Dust (Falling from Ceiling)

**[68]** Dust (Piled)

**[69]** Ear Trumpet

**[70]** Echoing Sound (Reroll Sound)

**[71]** Eggshells

**[72]** Empty Wasp Nest

**[73]** Feathers

**[74]** Fish (or Monster) Scales

**[75]** Flagstone, Loose

**[76]** Floor Damage

**[77]** Footprints (in Dust, Mud, Blood, etc.)

**[78]** Fungus (on Ceiling)

**[79]** Fungus (on Floor)

**[80]** Fungus (on Wall)

**[81]** Gambling Stones (or Dice)

**[82]** Garbage

**[83]** Graffiti (Random Language and Content)

**[84]** Grave, Shallow (Occupied)

**[85]** Grave, Shallow (Unfilled)

**[86]** Grindstone

**[87]** Guano

**[88]** Handkerchief, Filthy

**[89]** Hanging Baskets

**[90]** Hanging Cage

**[91]** Hanging Nets

**[92]** Hardtack Biscuit

**[93]** Healing Herbs, Scattered

**[94]** Hole in the Ceiling

**[95]** Hole in the Floor

**[96]** Hole in the Wall

**[97]** Horn (Animal or Monster)

**[98]** Horn (Musical)
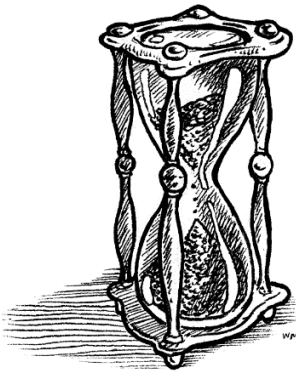
**[99]** Hourglass (Intact)

**[00]** Hourglass (Shattered)

# Dungeon Dressing II: Features of Curiosity (II)

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Human Corpse

**[02]** Human Skeleton

**[03]** Humanoid Corpse

**[04]** Humanoid Skeleton

**[05]** Ice (or Ice Tongs if not appropriate to environment)

**[06]** Idol

**[07]** Implement of Torture (Gouge, Razor, Thumbscrews, Whip, etc.)

**[08]** Incense Censer

**[09]** Incomplete Construction

**[10]** Inscription (Random Language and Content)

**[11]** Insect / Monster / Spider Eggs

**[12]** Iron Bar

**[13]** Ivory Plaques (Cards)

**[14]** Jar Full of Eyes

**[15]** Knucklebones

**[16]** Ladle or Spoon, Caked / Corroded

**[17]** Leather Scraps

**[18]** Length of Rope
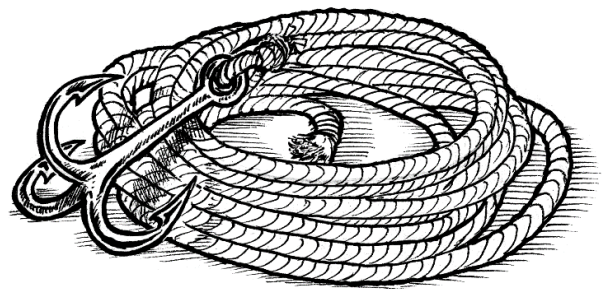
**[19]** Lever, Functional (Cage, Door, Trap, etc.)

**[20]** Lever, Non-Functional

**[21]** Loom

**[22]** Lute (Damaged)

**[23]** Lyre (Unstrung)

**[24]** Maggots

**[25]** Magic Circle (Smeared/Broken)

**[26]** Manacles (Bolted to Ceiling)

**[27]** Manacles (Bolted to Floor)

**[28]** Manacles (Bolted to Wall)

**[29]** Map (Partial / Damaged)

**[30]** Mask

**[31]** Material Spell Component (Random)

**[32]** Miniature Furnishing (Chest, Table, etc.)

**[33]** Mold

**[34]** Molted Skin

**[35]** Monocle (Fractured)

**[36]** Monster Corpse

**[37]** Monster Egg(s)

**[38]** Monster Skeleton

**[39]** Mud

**[40]** Mushrooms, Edible

**[41]** Mushrooms, Sickening

**[42]** Nails, Bent / Rusted

**[43]** Offering Bowl (Stained)

**[44]** Oil Funnel, Tarnished

**[45]** Oil Lamp

**[46]** Pail (Empty?)

**[47]** Pail of Murky Water

**[48]** Pail of Turpentine

**[49]** Paintbrush, Chewed

**[50]** Piece(s) of Armor

**[51]** Pile of Coal

**[52]** Pile of Rags

**[53]** Pillory, Shattered

**[54]** Plants (Cultivated)

**[55]** Plants (Dead)

**[56]** Plants (Natural, if appropriate to environment)

**[57]** Plants (Preserved)

**[58]** Pottery Shards

**[59]** Puddle(s) of Water

**[60]** Rags (Scattered)

**[61]** Rags (Stuffed into Wall)

**[62]** Rat Skeletons

**[63]** Rat Trap (with Dead Rat)

**[64]** Rat Traps (Empty)

**[65]** Roots

**[66]** Rubble

**[67]** Runes (Random Content and Language)

**[68]** Runic Symbol, Stricken

**[69]** Rusted Chain

**[70]** Rusted Spike

**[71]** Sacks of Food / Grain

**[72]** Sacks of Rotting Grain

**[73]** Sand, Piled

**[74]** Sand, Trickling from Wall or Ceiling

**[75]** Scattered Leaves and Twigs

**[76]** Scattered Straw

**[77]** Scrap of Parchment

**[78]** Scroll Case (Empty)

**[79]** Seashell, Fractured

**[80]** Sensed Presence (Real or Imagined)

**[81]** Sewage

**[82]** Shadow (Moving)

**[83]** Shadow (Strange)

**[84]** Shed Snakeskin

**[85]** Shelf, Broken

**[86]** Shelf, Tilted

**[87]** Shield, Sundered

**[88]** Skeleton Key, Bent

**[89]** Skull (Preserved)

**[90]** Skull (Shattered)

**[91]** Slime Trail

**[92]** Slugs

**[93]** Smoking Pipe, Snapped

**[94]** Snails

**[95]** Snuff Box, Damaged

**[96]** Specimen Jar, Fungus

**[97]** Specimen Jar, Herb

**[98]** Specimen Jar, Monster Spoor

**[99]** Spiders (Relatively Harmless)

**[00]** Spinning Wheel

# Dungeon Dressing II: Features of Curiosity (III and Potential Expansion)

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Splintered Club, Pole or Stick(s)

**[02]** Statue

**[03]** Statue (Damaged)

**[04]** Statue or Idol Head

**[05]** Statuette(s)

**[06]** Steps (Partially Constructed)

**[07]** Steps (Within Room)

**[08]** Stone Calendar (Random Language)

**[09]** Stone Disc (Fractured)

**[10]** Stones, Piled

**[11]** Stones, Scattered

**[12]** Strainer, Dented

**[13]** Sudden Sound (Nearby, Reroll Sound)

**[14]** Tabard, Torn

**[15]** Tablet

**[16]** Tablet (Shattered)

**[17]** Temperature Change (As Appropriate)

**[18]** Thread, Unspooled

**[19]** Tinderbox, Spilled

**[20]** Tool (Crowbar, Hammer, Pole, etc.)

**[21]** Tool, Damaged

**[22]** Tool Handle, Wooden

**[23]** Translucent Crystal (Fractured)

**[24]** Trail of Breadcrumbs / Coins / Pebbles

**[25]** Tub (Empty?)

**[26]** Tub of Grease

**[27]** Urine Stains

**[28]** Vines / Creepers

**[29]** Wall Damage

**[30]** Waterskin (Partially Full)

**[31]** Whetstone

**[32]** Wineskin (Dregs)

**[33]** Wineskin (Empty)

**[34]** Yarn (Sodden and Tangled)

**[35-54]** Roll Twice on Table I

**[55-70]** Roll Once on Table 1 and Once on Table 2

**[71-90]** Roll Twice on Table 2

**[91-00]** Unique Object (GM's Choice or Concept)

Note that Table 3 can be easily expanded (35-90) to accommodate a GM's unique ideas for dungeon dressing. For even more information and suggestions involving dungeon dressing, refer to supplement CDDG2: *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide*

*II*, Section 3-5, Designing Unique and Random Dungeon Dressing.

# **Doors and Apertures**

Some, but not all, doors in a dungeon should be "normal"; that is, simple thick wooden doors which can be spiked open or closed, and are typically found closed unless wandering monsters have recently passed through. At least half of a dungeon's doors, however, should be unusual in some way.

When creating an unusual door, the GM should stop thinking in terms of plain old *doors*, and start thinking in terms of connectors and *apertures* between rooms; strange variations; how connections can be hidden or dangerous or somehow temporary; and how openings can become an interesting part of the exploration in and of themselves. The basic adjectives — locked, stuck, hidden — can be elaborated upon with infinite variety. Here are 90 or so examples.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Archway

**[02]** Archway, Covered (by Curtain or Tapestry)

**[03]** Bookcase, Pivoting

**[04]** Bookcase, Sliding

**[05]** Burrow Opening

**[06]** Cave Mouth

**[07]** Cave-In, Cleared

**[08]** Cave-In, Partially Cleared

**[09]** Cave-In, Uncleared

**[10]** Crawlway

**[11]** Door, with Alarm

**[12]** Door, Barred

**[13]** Door, with Barred Window

[14] Door, Bifold

[15] Door, Blocked

[16] Door, Bronze

[17] Door, Concealed

[18] Door, Concealed, One-Way

[19] Door, Cyclopean (for Giants, Titans, etc.)

[20] Door, Double

[21] Door, Glyph-Engraved

[22] Door, Inscribed

[23] Door, Inside Furnishing (Armoire, Wardrobe, etc.)

[24] Door, Iron

[25] Door, Iron, Rusted

[26] Door, Ironbound

[27-28] Door, Locked

[29] Door, Locked, with Hagoday Knocker

[30] Door, with Magic Mouth

[31] Door, One-Way

[32] Door, One-Way, Secret

[33] Door, One-Way, Vanishing

[34] Door, with Peephole

[35] Door, Reinforced

[36] Door, Rotted

[37] Door, Sealed (with Lead)

[38] Door, Sealed (with Silver)

[39] Door, Secret

[40] Door, Secret (Chain-Activated)

[41] Door, Secret (Lever-Activated)

[42] Door, Secret, One-Way

[43] Door, Spiked Open

[44] Door, Splintered

[45] Door, Spring

[46] Door, Stone

[47] Door, Stone, Pivoting

[48] Door, Stuck

[49] Door, Tiny (Alice in Wonderland)

[50] Door, Trapped

[51] Door, Trick (Magical)

[52] Door, with No Handle

[53] Door, with Tripwire

[54] Door, Walled-Over

[55] Door, Wizard Locked

[56] Door, Wooden (Unusual)

[57] Door Panel, Rotating

[58] Gate, Iron

[59] Gate, Magical

[60] Gate, Rusted

[61] Grate, Closed

[62] Grate, Raised

[63] Great Demonic Face

[64] Hole in Collapsed Wall

[65] Hollow Obelisk

[66] Illusionary Wall

[67] Lowering Wall

[68] Lychgate

[69] Membrane, Crystalline

[70] Membrane, Flesh

[71] Membrane, Fungal

[72] Mouth of the Colossus

[73] Opening, Behind Waterfall

[74] Opening, Hidden

[75] Opening, Ice-Covered (or Misty)

[76] Opening, Moss-Veiled

[77] Opening, Slime-Covered

[78] Opening, Triangular

**[79]** Opening, Vine-Covered

**[80]** Opening, Web-Covered

**[81]** Pipe Mouth, Dry

**[82]** Pipe Mouth, Flowing

**[83]** Pipe Mouth, Slimy



**[84]** Pipe Mouth, Sludge-Filled

**[85]** Portcullis, Closed

**[86]** Portcullis, Raised

**[87]** Portcullis, Rusted Open

**[88]** Portcullis, Rusted Shut

**[89]** Rising Wall

**[90]** Seam, Narrow (Coal)

**[91]** Seam, Twisting (Coal)

**[92]** Sliding Wall

**[93]** Throne, Revolving

**[94]** Turnstile, Iron

**[95]** Turnstile, One-Way

**[96]** Turnstile, Rusted

**[97]** Valve, Iron

**[98]** Valve, Iron, Rusted

**[99]** Valve, Steam-Powered

**[00]** Wall, Crumbling

For much more detailed door options, refer to supplement CDDG2: *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide II*, Section 3-4, Designing a Noteworthy Dungeon Door.

# Corridors and Connections Between Rooms
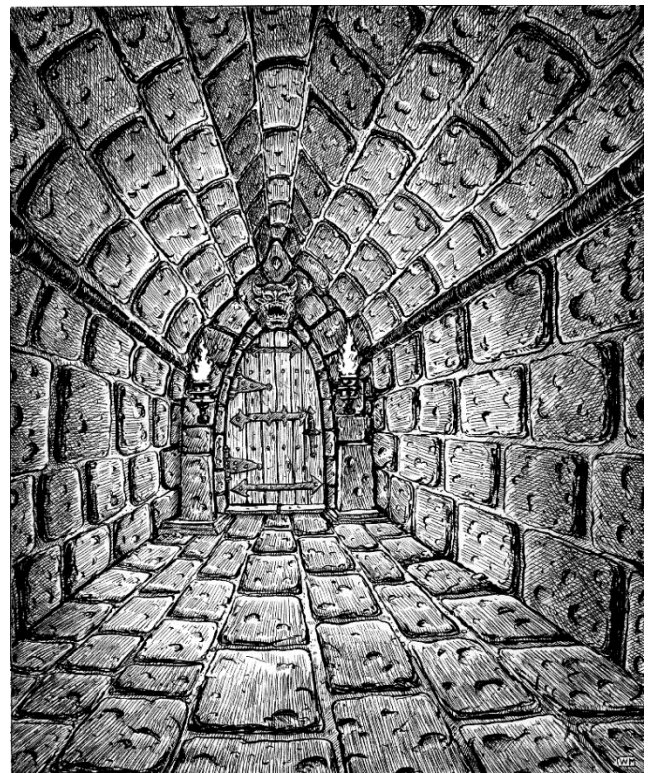


Corridors are often overlooked as places of interest; in most dungeons, they are simply featureless connectors between dungeon chambers where wandering monster encounters might occur. However, the dungeon can be given a much more threatening and evocative feel if at least 50%

of the dungeon's corridor are somehow unique in size, shape, function and description. The GM should also consider adding dungeon dressing ideas to a corridor for heightened intrigue.

The following table can provide inspiration when creating a memorable corridor. As always, results which do not fit the dungeon type or setting should be rerolled.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table. If the corridor is not appropriate to the setting, reroll or select an appropriate result.

**[01]** Aqueduct

**[02]** Bridge

**[03]** Burrow

**[04]** Catwalk

**[05]** Channel

**[06]** Cleft

**[07]** Coal Seam (Mined)

**[08-10]** Collapsed Tunnel

**[11]** Conduit

**[12-14]** Corridor

**[15]** Corridor, Blocked (by Monster Burrow)

**[16]** Corridor, Blocked (by Monster Corpse)

**[17]** Crawlway

**[18]** Crystal Vein (Mined)

**[19]** Diagonal Corridor

**[20]** Drawbridge

**[21-23]** Escape Tunnel

**[24]** False Dead End

**[25]** Fissure

**[26]** Flooded Tunnel

**[27]** Fungi-Filled Corridor

**[28]** Gemstone Vein (Mined)

**[29-32]** Hall

**[33-36]** Hallway

**[37]** Ice Fissure

**[38-41]** Intersection

**[42-43]** Juncture

**[44]** Lava Tube

**[45]** Mine Tunnel

**[46]** Mine Tunnel, with Track

**[47]** Mine Tunnel, with Track and Cart

**[48]** Mineral Vein (Mined)

**[49-50]** Narrow

**[51]** Natural Corridor

**[52]** Natural Corridor, Narrowing

**[53-54]** Outlet

**[55-57]** Partially-Cleared Passage

**[58-62]** Passage

**[63-65]** Passageway

**[66]** Primary Passage, Natural (30' Wide)

**[67]** Processional

**[68]** Promenade

**[69]** Revolving Corridor

**[70]** River

**[71]** Root Tunnel

**[72]** Rope Bridge

**[73]** Rotating Cylinder

**[74]** Secondary Passage, Natural (20' Wide)

**[75-78]** Secret Tunnel

**[79]** Slope

**[80]** Spiral Corridor

**[81]** Stream

**[82]** Stricture

**[83]** Submerged Tunnel

**[84]** Suspension Bridge

**[85]** Tertiary Passage, Natural (10' Wide)

**[86-88]** Tunnel

**[89]** Underwater Tunnel

**[90-91]** Unfinished Excavation

**[92]** Walkway

**[93-95]** Walled-Up Passage

**[96]** Water Channel

**[97-98]** Water-Filled Passageway

**[99]** Wind Tunnel

**[00]** Zigzag Corridor
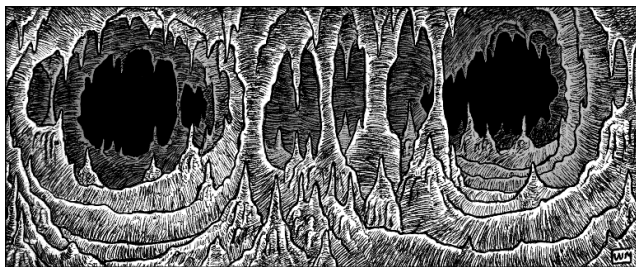


## Stairs and Connections Between Dungeon Levels

Some dungeons just have one stairway per level, going down one level at a time. In this conventional layout, the players are prone to get in the mode of "clear the level, find the stairs, descend." This is lazy design, and a GM who resorts to this is missing a great deal of potential fear, dread, mystery and atmosphere inherent in creating lots of ascents and descents of different types, some which go down for more than one level.

Finding a stairway should not be procedural, it should be a cause for intense player debate — "Are we lost?", "Where does this go?", "How deep does this go?", "Can we control the descent?", "Is there an easier way?", "Are we being pursued?", "Can we hear anything coming up to us?", and so forth. The following system is designed to maximize this potential.

Perhaps 50% of ascents and descents should be simple stairwells. But for overall dungeon, consider the concept of the *vertical maze*, a classic design element which is no longer used frequently enough. Players should not just have their adventurers slog through level after level, going "Where's the stairs?" as if they were wandering through a skyscraper or a mall! Instead, there should be multiple vertical connectors per level, of different types, some secret and some not. Some "stairs," such as an ice-filled pit, might not even be identifiable as paths for descent at all. Deciding whether or not to descend should be a serious decision, and a surprise or trap descent to a more dangerous place should indicate real peril for the adventurers.

As always, reroll results which do not make sense. If your dungeon is designed so that the only logical direction for a stairway is up or down, then that is the sole direction. Otherwise, there is a 30% chance of up and a 70% chance of down when creating a truly random level connection.

Roll 1d100 and consult the following table.

**[01]** Abyss

**[02-03]** Air Shaft

**[04-05]** Bottomless (?) Pit

**[06-07]** Chain, Pulley and Corfe (Mine Basket)

**[08-09]** Chain, Pulley and Mine Cage

**[10]** Chasm

**[11-12]** Chimney

**[13-14]** Chute

**[15-16]** Cistern

**[17-18]** Climbing Wall (with Handholds and Footholds)

**[19-20]** Climbing Wall (with Rope)

**[21-22]** Climbing Wall (with Spikes or Pitons)

**[23-24]** Collapsed Floor

**[25-26]** Elevator Room, Controlled

**[27-28]** Elevator Room, Non-Interactive

**[29]** Escape Shaft

**[30]** Fissure

**[31]** Floor, Cantilevered

**[32]** Hatchway

**[33]** Hole

**[34]** Hollowed Column

**[35-36]** Ladder

**[37-38]** Narrow Shaft

**[39]** Narrow Shaft with Grating

**[40]** Pipe

**[41-42]** Pit Shaft
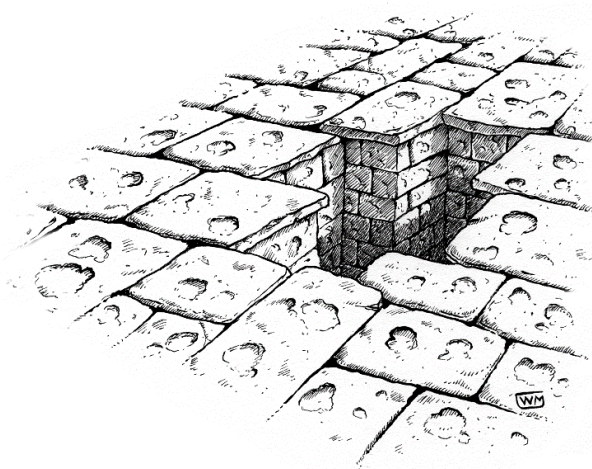


**[43-44]** Pit Shaft with Chain

**[45-46]** Pit Shaft with Rope

**[47]** Pit with Illusionary Floor

**[48-49]** Plunge (with Small Waterfall)

**[50-51]** Ramp, Gradual

**[52-53]** Ramp, Steep

**[54]** Roots

**[55]** Salt Slide

**[56-57]** Sinkhole

**[58-59]** Sluiceway

**[60-61]** Smoke Hole

**[62]** Stair Slide Trap

**[63-64]** Staircase, Rubble-Filled

**[65-66]** Staircase, Spiral

**[67]** Stairs, Collapsing

**[68-69]** Stairway, Straight

**[70-71]** Stairway, with Landings

**[72]** Steam Vent

**[73-74]** Teleporter

**[75-76]** Tiers (Natural Staircase)

**[77-78]** Trap Door to Chute

**[79-80]** Trap Door to Handholds

**[81-83]** Trap Door to Ladder

**[84-86]** Trap Door to Rope

**[87-88]** Trap Door to Spikes and Pitons

**[89-90]** Vines

**[91-92]** Waterfall

**[93]** Waterwheel

**[94-95]** Well Shaft (No Chain or Rope)

**[96-97]** Well with Chain

**[98-99]** Well with Rope

**[00]** Wind Pipe

# CHAPTER 10:
# THE DUNGEON CAMPAIGN

"The halflings and gnome will form the first rank, so that they might see. Our doughty and stalwart fighting men shall stand behind them, and behind them in turn our priest, our magus and our weaver of illusions. Being a master of stealth intended for the shadows, I of course shall guard the rear."

— *The Glib Words Which Fated Ebony Doogal, Burglar Extraordinary, to Become the Forward Scout of the Thirteenth Company*

## The Reveal of the Dungeon

When the adventurers finally make their way to the dungeon for the first time, the GM should not simply say, "Okay, you've arrived. You find stairs leading down." Rather, the initial discovery is a perfect time for "the reveal," a cinematic setting of the stage which fills the players with doubt, eagerness and a sense of the unknown.

The reveal should be written by the GM in such a way that it can be conveyed as a quick, evocative story. The description should end with implied player options, either to pick up objects, search the terrain, or to follow one of several paths into the dungeon itself.

A quality reveal should include nearly all of the following elements:

**[1] Drama.** The moment of the reveal (the moon peels out from behind the clouds, the bend in the rain-pelted path reveals the ruin, the thorny vines are hacked away, the fog finally begins to break, etc.).

**[2] Visceral Sensation.** Use of sight, smell and sound (with smell or sound preceding).

**[3] Magnitude.** A sense of scale; either claustrophobic or vast, with implications of vertigo.

**[4] Foreboding.** A sense of danger (a feeling of being watched, flitting shadows, howls, skulls on stakes, bloodstains, piles of gnawed bones, drag marks, etc.).

**[5] Lures.** A sense of nearby incidental treasure (a few silver coins, a suit of ravaged and dented plate mail with bones jutting out of it, a potion bottle half-filled with clotted golden fluid gripped by a skeleton's dead claws, etc.).

**[6] Mystique.** A sense of wonder (beautiful crystals carved to make sounds in the wind, marble ruins towering up the cliff-sides, soaring trees with vines hanging from them and birds wheeling through the branches, rainbows shimmering in waterfall mist, enormous toadstools crawling slowly over the mud, etc.).

**[7] Harbingers of Ill Omen.** The ominous presence of incidental creatures which define the environment (crows, vultures, rats, large slugs, cave beetles, spiders, etc.).

**[8] The Uncanny Thing.** One odd and eerie detail which an overly-cautious player might obsess over (an indecipherable map is pinned to a tree with a dagger, a hollow stump is surrounded by mounds of upturned earth, six bones have been carefully arrayed in the shape of a hexagon surrounding a black translucent stone, etc.).

**[9] The One Way.** The expected path (a staircase, a ruined castle, a cave mouth, a mountain pass up to the tower, etc.).

**[10] The Many.** At least one unexpected path (a line of colored shards of glass

pressed into the clay, tilted flagstones leading down into a pool, fresh tracks from some kind of clawed creature, etc.)

## The Learning Adventure

One of the most difficult adventures your players will ever send their PCs along will be the very first one. Even if your players are veterans, they will need to come to terms with your new (classic!) design style once you present them with your freshly minted mega-dungeon. Regardless of player experience, from novice to expert, the first adventure is almost certain to get at least one of the PCs killed. It is also the likeliest time for player resentment, as the GM will often discover that *his* preferences, themes and design decisions do not always coincide with the preconceptions of the *players*.

The easiest way to deal with the first adventure in a new dungeon is to provide plenty of warnings. Instead of having a cave filled with 20 "surprise" kobolds, put the kobolds warren in the center of your map. The four rooms adjacent to the warren are

filled with stench, dead bodies and echoes of guttural whispers. Even before the adventurers explore the area, a prisoner, inscription or rumor could well warn them off from the entire region.

Despite placing these warnings (to be heeded or ignored), it is not the GM's job to save the characters, to coddle the players, or to reward poor play. If you are fearful of a Total Party Kill (TPK), you may want to give your players' party the benefit of a "mouthpiece" NPC.

A mouthpiece is an ally who accompanies the PCs, providing advice which is actually coming from the GM himself. In the above example the mouthpiece would certainly be saying "Don't do anything stupid, there's kobolds about!" or something similar. Some of the best advice that the mouthpiece can give the players includes: "Slow down." "Let's think about this." "What's the plan?" "Is a frontal assault the best way?" And most importantly, "Run!"

Once the players begin exhibiting intelligent play, you should seriously consider incapacitating the mouthpiece, having him be kidnapped, or simply killing him off. The game is meant to be an exercise in virtual danger, a simulation of deadly exploration of the underworld. At some point the cord will need to be cut and the PCs will need to fend for themselves.

Inevitably, one of the PCs will die as a direct result of a bad decision. A kind-hearted GM will call a timeout, ask the players if they want to call it a night or regroup, and so forth. It might also be wise to ask the players if they wish to have their characters retreat out of the dungeon to seek resurrection for their fallen comrade. In most campaigns, this is a fair (yet costly) possibility.

More hard-edged GMs can have the survivors discover nearby prisoners (including a newly-rolled PC who is perhaps one or two experience levels behind the rest of the group and ready to play), or can help

to reconfigure a henchman NPC to become a new PC to replace the one who died. The most hardcore GMs will simply shrug and tell the player to reroll.

Regardless of approach, it is beneficial to praise clever players at the end of the session, and to caution players who played poorly (especially those whose rash decisions endangered the entire group). The GM will need to be careful not to divulge the dungeon's secrets outside of play, but some guiding influence will help the players to improve. Open-minded GMs will also find that these after-session discussions will also reveal more of the players' expectations toward the game, which may result in some modifications to the GM's dungeon design and the challenges to be found therein.

Player behavior that *should* be rewarded includes: intelligent planning; wise but not excessive caution; bravery (defending one another's PCs); adaptive play; intuitive deduction; tactical intelligence (hiring men-at-arms, scouting, planning ambushes, etc.); and clever interaction (prodding floors with poles, searching occasionally for secret doors, trying to carefully manipulate levers and gadgets, and so forth).

Player behavior which is rightly punished by traps, tricks and monsters includes: stupid behavior; a complete lack of (or complete obsession with) caution; foolhardiness ("I charge and attack" as a response to every encounter); stubborn play (repeatedly being surprised when opening doors and refusing to listen at them); random behavior (trying dangerous stunts just to see what happens); tactical stupidity (refusing to flee, leaving allies to die, splitting the party over differences of opinion instead of concocting a viable scouting strategy); and a complete lack of interaction with the environment.

Once players have an idea of what constitutes classic adaptive play, they will enjoy the dungeon and its offered adventures all the more. "Entitled" players (those who expect special treatment because they are special, or their characters are) should be reminded through repeated example that the GM is in control of the game. At the same time, however, the GM should intuit player happiness and disappointment that results from randomness, off-the-cuff rulings, or the perception of unfairness. As the players improve their techniques, the excellent GM will simultaneously make certain to learn from the players, their triumphs, and from their disasters as well.

# Changing the Dungeon in Play

As the game sessions being conducted in the dungeon continue, the dungeon will be irrevocably changed by the adventurers, their actions, triggered traps, monster responses to adventurer incursions, and "restocking" (the process by which new netherworld denizens take the place of monsters which have slain or have fled).

At the end of each session, the GM should take a few minutes to consider how the dungeon will have changed for the next time the PCs explore it. This is best done as soon as possible, or else many of the idea-generating details that resulted from that session's play are likely to be lost.

# Changes in the Environment

**Used Doors:** Doors that were spiked open by the PCs will be shut, and perhaps locked, barred or simply blocked with furniture. Secret doors that were discovered may be blockaded or have crude traps constructed behind them. Sundered doors will be repaired, but such work is slow and will probably take more than one session's intermission to fully repair. Door-like apertures which are designed for defense (portcullises, gratings, cage doors, etc.) will be set and ready when the adventurers return.

**Fire and Spells:** Powerful spells and magic items can have major effects on the dungeon environment. Casting a fireball will leave the room and adjacent corridors scorched and ashy, likely for years. Catastrophic spell effects such as transmute rock to mud, earthquake or flooding may compel intelligent monsters to create a new haphazard passageway around the affected area. Once-solid rooms may become precarious, and if intelligent monsters are forced to abandon such areas they will surely create a trap from the wreckage (a collapsing ceiling, a crude pit dug beneath shattered flagstones, a damaged door turned into a falling door, etc.).
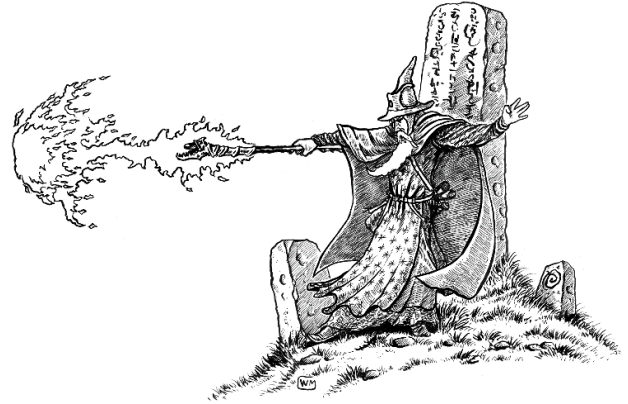


**Doused Lights:** Most monsters have heat-dependent "infra-vision" or the ability to see in partial darkness. Knowing that surface dwellers are vulnerable to lack of light, the monsters will (if intelligent) respond with greatly reduced light within the dungeon. Torches may be replaced with shuttered lanterns, fire pits may be screened, and guards may even have an emergency order to douse all lights when intruders are seen, forcing all involved to battle in total darkness.

**Industrious Blockades:** If any surviving intelligent monsters are especially magical or are skilled stonemasons (such as dwarves, elementals, magic-users, stone giants and the like), returning adventurers may be rudely surprised by newly walled-up corridors turned into dead ends, rooms partitioned into murder zones and defensive areas, and even crude stonework heights such as redoubts, "pillboxes" or cover for archers. These newer features will be rudimentary and relatively easy to destroy.

# Changes in Monster Lairs

**Replaced Losses:** At the GM's option, intelligent monsters who have the ability to replace their losses will increase their numbers by up to 10% (rounded up) between play sessions. An example would be a clan of 19 bugbears who are in contact with others of their kind on the surface. After the PCs kill 5 of the bugbears, the humanoids will offer gold bribes to their surface kin to join them. 10% of 14 survivors is 1.4, rounded up to 2; this indicates that 2 new bugbears will have taken the places of the 5 who were killed. Monsters who are cut off from their own kind cannot replace losses in this fashion, but they might coax nearby allies within the dungeon to dwell with them as guards (at the same 10% conversion rate).

**Monster Response:** Intelligent monsters will take significant steps to protect themselves from further incursions. Patrols will be increased, makeshift blockades (overturned tables, piled crates, spiked doors, etc.) will be set in choke points, and any alliances between monster types will be enhanced in the name of mutual protection. Very cunning monster types, such as assassins, greater demons, Eyes of Azathoth and so forth might even spend lavishly on bodyguards of some kind. If repeatedly faced with extinction, however, intelligent monsters will vacate the dungeon and take their treasure with them.

**Cleared Monster Lairs:** Rooms that are cleared of monsters will, if habitable, be repopulated over time. The fantasy world is filled with species which prefer underground environments, and livable combinations of food, air, light, temperature and shelter are at a premium. As a rule of thumb, shallow dungeon levels will typically be repopulated from the surface; mid-level dungeon levels will be repopulated by nearby monsters spreading out into the new territory; and deep levels will be repopulated by horrors creeping up through undiscovered passages into the netherworld. A guideline that can prove helpful: for each week the adventurers are away, each cleared room has a 10% chance of being repopulated; minimum chance 10%, maximum chance 70%. The details and specific monster type will need to be decided by the GM, perhaps through random generation.

**Triggered Traps:** Traps that have been triggered may or may not be reset or replaced. Unintelligent monsters cannot set magical or mechanical traps. Intelligent monsters *without* powerful magical abilities will reset mechanical traps if they can. Sometimes, they will even replace a triggered magical trap with a crude mechanical one. As an example, let us say that a small tribe of hobgoblins was aware of a magical lightning bolt trap guarding one of the doors into their lair complex. Further, the hobgoblins knew full well not to trigger it accidentally. The invading adventurers, however, triggered the bolt, suffered two deaths, and killed many hobgoblins in reprisal. The hobgoblin chief will then command that a tripwire and spear trap be placed in the same vicinity as the lightning bolt trap, so that the vulnerable door remains protected.

**The Grim Return:** As a particularly nasty surprise — especially in lower dungeon levels — returning adventurers may discover that their fallen comrades have been repurposed by the more powerful monsters in the dungeon. A henchman killed by a barrow wight will be found as a risen undead thrall; unrecovered allies might be turned into recognizable zombies; or a wicked wizard might even stitch the remains of fallen heroes into the body of his flesh golem. NPCs witnessing such a horrible sight as an identifiable lost friend will need to make an

immediate morale check on first discovery, or flee in terror.

## Going Too Deep

Inevitably, at some point the players will send their characters too deep into the dungeon. The monsters and traps will become too difficult for the group to survive, and the adventure will quickly turn into a desperate strategic retreat as they try to escape back to the surface. Most GMs will let the group fend for themselves, and chalk the experience up as a brutal lesson in skilled and creative play. At times, however, the GM should consider what caused the misadventure, and perhaps even offer a possible solution before all of the PCs are killed.

Usually an adventuring party will go too deep because of greed, foolishness, reckless behavior or a perceived need for vengeance on fleeing monsters. Such actions should probably be punished simply by playing the dungeon as it has been designed and letting the dice fall where they may. If the PCs are slogging through dungeon level 4 and they decide to run all the way down to level 6 in search of a fabled treasure, they then deserve all of the bloody hardships (and lucky rewards?) they will receive.

Newer groups, however, may be unfamiliar with the power hierarchies implied by classic dungeon monsters. Players do intuitively understand the law of the dungeon monster: the bigger the monster the more dangerous it is, and the deeper it resides the tougher it must be. Not all adventurers know, however, that a spider or a centipede can kill with a single bite, or that a few ghouls can quickly decimate a low-level group with paralyzing claws.

When teaching the players about the relative lethality of each monster type, the GM should consider given clear and ominous warning signs when a too-powerful monster is near. If the players have figured out that gnoles are fairly tough, for example, the GM could place a ghastly pile of dismembered gnoles and entrails at the mouth of a mantichora's lair. Build the players' understanding of monster mythology by compounding the subconscious knowledge which they already possess.

Other warnings can be more plain. When a party's henchmen and men-at-arms lay down their weapons and insist that they will not explore any deeper, the adventurers will know for certain that they are out of their element. Similar effects can be created by a freed prisoner, a good monster or a magical spirit who warns the PCs that they are simply too weak to press on into the depths. Any such warnings that are ignored should simply be played out; if one or more PCs are killed as a result of not heeding the ally's words, that is well and good. That is part of the learning curve of the game.

More troubling situations can be created by the *dungeon* forcing the adventurers to explore too deeply on an involuntary basis. A pit on level 1 might plunge an adventurer down alone to level 3, and the group might well resolve to go after him. Teleport traps can lead from minor dungeon levels to very deep and sinister ones as well. Perhaps the most serious case of involuntary exploration is abduction; if orcs overwhelm the party on level 2 and take them down to their ogre masters on level 5, it is very doubtful that the adventurers will survive for very long. If the "too deep" challenge was caused (a) by involuntary exploration and (b) through no reasonable fault of the players, any but the hardest of GMs should strongly consider saving the party in some way.

## Deus ex Machina

Considering that the dungeon is never fully explored, it is relatively easy for a GM to help

a trapped party return to the surface. Possibilities include: NPCs in service to the party's benefactor, sent into the dungeon on a rescue mission; a magic ring with one limited wish spell; a teleport scroll; a secret escape tunnel pointed to by a newly discovered map; or a lost shrine of good which, when purified, gates the adventurers back to the surface.

Be mindful, however, that the party should not always be saved. If the players become heedless of warnings and reckless, "Because the GM will save, just us like last time," such behavior is a clear indication that the GM has gone too far away from measured neutrality. At the very least, any group that insists on being saved from themselves on every adventure should suffer one or more PC deaths on every single escape attempt. Play the dungeon out, let the dice kill. Players will very quickly get the message that their quality of play needs to improve, and that the GM is there to challenge them, not to pamper them, "wish fulfill" them or protect them from becoming better players.

## The Final Slaughter

A well-designed classic dungeon is always challenging, potentially deadly, and basically unconquerable. Given these grim precepts, it is foreseeable that at some point in the campaign, the entire group of PCs may be wiped out.

Total Party Kills fall into three major categories: player-caused, GM-caused, and chaos-caused (victimization through randomness).

## Player-Caused TPKs

The main causes of these TPKs are as follows:

**[1] In Over Their Heads.** Going too deep into the dungeon.

**[2] Loner Hero Syndrome.** Adventuring without sufficient backup or "cannon fodder" (henchmen, hirelings, men-at-arms, NPC allies, summoned monsters, war dogs, and so forth).

**[3] Heedless and Headlong.** Careless play; adventuring without listening at doors, searching rooms, preparing for combat and contingency, ambushing monsters, etc.

**[4] The Worse Part of Valor.** Refusing to run away from deadly encounters.

**[5] Myopic "Kaboomitis."** Spell misfire; using lightning bolts in dead-end corridors, fireballs in 20'x20' rooms, casting wall of fire at point blank range, etc.

**[6] Obstinate Overconfidence.** Over-extending; refusing to leave the dungeon to heal, relearn spells and recuperate.

**[7] Camping on a Jaunt.** Poor encampment; either not posting sentries, camping in major dungeon thoroughfares, or camping in partially-explored areas when monsters are known to be near.

**[8] Turning Every Stone.** Moving too slowly and suffering constant attrition through wandering monster encounters and denizen reprisal raids.

**[9] Bashing Head into Rock.** Attacking intelligent, powerful monsters in a repeated and predictable fashion over many game sessions.

**[10] Making Exciting New Enemies.** Angering NPCs, rival adventurers, benefactors, local lords or kings, etc.

**[11] General Stupidity.** Drinking from bottles marked poison, shouting out constant challenges to Hastur the Unspeakable, defiling a shrine surrounded by blinking demonic statues, etc.

When a TPK is caused by player error, the GM should stop the game and explain to the players how their behavior caused everyone to die. A merciful GM might consider — *once* — having the PCs' bodies be found by a powerful NPC who uses wishes and/or resurrections to "restart" the group, and demanding a great quest in payment of a debt that can never be fully repaid.

# Game Master-Caused TPKs

Many GMs blame randomness or player stupidity when a TPK results from play, but fully- or partially- *GM* influenced TPKs are surprisingly common. The most common GM mistakes which lead to a kill are as follows:

**[1] Adversarial Syndrome.** The GM not only has all of the power in the game, but he is also out to kill the adventurers. Neutral arbitration, informed by occasional mercy for smart players, is usually a better approach to a long-term campaign. If the players are not happy and know the GM is out to get them, the game will fail.

**[2] Gauntlet Linearity.** If the dungeon is filled with monsters and does not have enough branching corridor paths, a single surprise encounter against powerful foes may well wipe out the group even if they try to retreat.

**[3] Killer Dungeons.** Monsters that are too strong for the PCs to defeat (yet) are a fine and needed element of any truly dangerous classic dungeon. However, if the entire dungeon is populated in this manner, the players have been set up for failure.

**[4] Lack of Warnings.** GMs should use smells, sounds and sights not only to describe the dungeon, but also to give the players subtle warnings so that they will (usually) know when powerful traps, tricks or monsters are nearby.

**[5] Deathtraps.** Unavoidable killer traps that are difficult to detect or deactivate are amusing to design, but they make for a poor game.

**[6] Lack of Magical Healing.** Most players and GMs enjoy a fast-paced game, in which many encounters are experienced before the PCs return to the surface. Classic game systems, however, are not always designed

to accommodate this play style The GM should consider either warning the players to slow down, so that they can heal on the surface for several weeks between short adventures; or, stocking the dungeon with minor magical healing (such as potions, scrolls of wound curing and healing herbs).
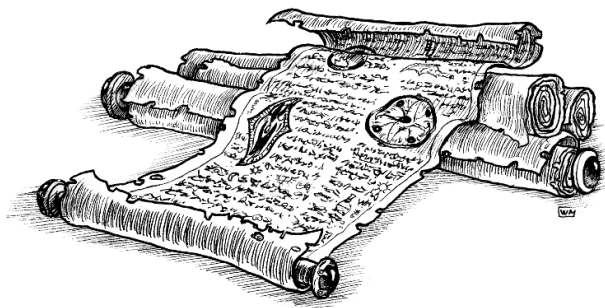


*Note Bene:* This is one of the more controversial suggestions in this Guide, but I maintain that a lack of magical healing can give players the expectation that they are *meant* to over-extend themselves in order to "finish the dungeon" in a reasonable number of sessions. If the GM wants a fast-paced yet old school game, minor magical healing treasures should be fairly prevalent. (This strange condition may be a byproduct of the fact that we all lead busier lives than we did when we were kids, leading to fewer play sessions and the expectation of cramming each session with non-stop action, but that is a social topic for another day.)

**[7] Mandatory Secret Rooms.** If a critical secret room contains the only means of escape / of slaying the dragon / the riddle that deactivates all killer traps or what-have-you, the dungeon has been poorly designed and should be reconsidered.

**[8] Paltry Magic Treasure.** Especially at high levels, the game is designed so that character power is supplemented by powerful magic items. If a GM is too stingy with handing out hard-won treasures, then spell-casters will dominate the game while the fighters and thieves will face constant death on the front line. Such situations usually lead to an eventual TPK through simple attrition.

**[9] Railroading to Oblivion.** Classic play is sometimes "sandbox," which means that the players are given vague missions (or no mission at all) and are left to their own devices. Some GMs prefer a more scripted approach in which every adventure begins with clear-set goals explained to the adventurers by NPCs. Either approach is fine, and the choice depends mostly on the temperament and expectations of the players. But GMs must nevertheless be mindful of fatal "railroading." Railroading occurs when the GM forces specific actions instead of allowing player choice to determine the outcome of events. If the pushed and railroaded goal is too dangerous (a dragon that can only be slain in a head-on confrontation), a TPK is very likely.

## Chaos-Induced TPKs

Given that the game's mechanics are based on probabilities and random outcomes, a TPK can occasionally be caused by the pure randomness of the dice. Examples of Chaos TPKs include:

**[1] GM on a Roll.** The GM is simply rolling extremely well when determining monster attacks and damage. Or, wandering monsters are coming up every other turn, or trap damage is unexpectedly high.



**[2] One-Shot Random Kills.** The GM rolls well and has an overabundance of "save-or-die" monsters — assassins using poison, banshees, basilisks, spiders, and so forth.

Powerful monsters should always be used, but if the play group is small or the deadly monsters are unavoidable, one-shots are very possible.

**[3] The Gambler's Den of Death.** The dungeon itself features tricks or traps that demand random resolution and do not reward creative play. For example, let us say that there is a bottomless chasm in front of the final door to the great treasure vault. PCs can leap over the chasm with a Dexterity roll, or fall to their deaths. If the chasm has some rotted lumber nearby, a frayed rope bridge, and an invisible staircase which can be revealed by slowing down and seeing the reflections of torches, then the danger can be thwarted by intelligent risk-taking. However, if the chasm can only be discovered while being pursued by twenty minotaurs and there is a dispel magic zone permanently in place over the entire region, the GM has consigned his group to death by random roll.

## Grimmest Valor:
## Soldiering on After a TPK

When a TPK occurs, the GM should consider allowing the players to roll new characters with significant advantages. A more beneficial attribute rolling method can be used; or new PCs can begin the game at experience level 2, 3 or even 4. Henchmen can become PCs, or heirlooms (perhaps magical) can be passed on to relatives. There can even be an unusual afterlife scenario, designed to give the adventurers a chance to re-synch their bodies and wandering spirits.

It is the GM's responsibility to ensure that the TPK does not destroy the campaign. A player-caused TPK requires only some sympathy, some guidance and a little lenience, while a random or GM-caused TPK is probably a good indicator that the players deserve a break and possibly even a magical "reset" or full resurrection.

Whatever occurs, just remember that the game should be fun, and not just a lesson in skill. The GM can reroll an entirely new set of characters if the players are comfortable with the idea, but if they are not, an alternative solution should be striven for so that the dungeon campaign can go on.

A TPK may be the end of one interactive story, but it is not the end of the trilogy!

## The Bottomless Dungeon

Your players should *never* be certain they have reached the bottom of your dungeon. Ruins should give way to cellars, cellars to dungeons, dungeons to cells and tombs, cells to catacombs, tombs to treasure vaults, and so forth. In a greater and more metaphysical sense, the dungeon should become something more ancient, mystical and far more vast — an underground city, the netherworld, a sunless sea, or perhaps a gateway to another plane of existence; perhaps even to Hell itself. If your players like (or love to hate) your dungeon, make it a mega-dungeon. If they get bored, create a wilderness adventure, or give them entirely new dungeons to explore.

They should never feel that your dungeon has been 100% cleared, with nothing else to be found. The dungeon is always deeper. It cannot be conquered or tamed, it is limitless. The most sinister dungeons may even be sentient …

GMs may also consider the idea of a Castle of Chaos, a planar node which has achieved sentience in some way. Such a dungeon would be an incarnate, intelligent being whose "body" is made of ever-changing rooms, doors and traps. The dungeon is then a mystical avatar of Chaos itself, a manifestation of unpredictability. Many haunted house stories and movies use this approach.
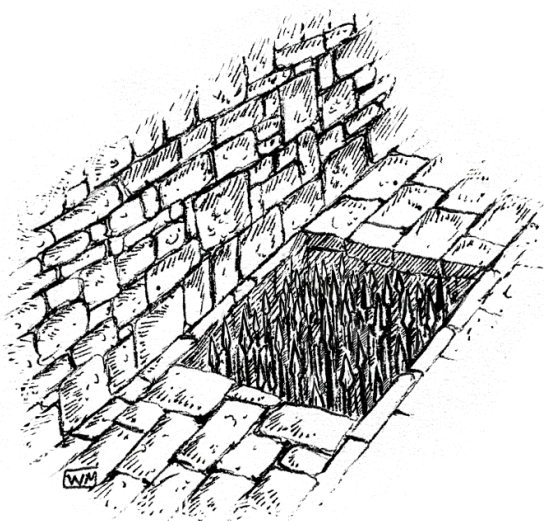
Other ideas can lead to surprising dungeon designs as well. A GM should also consider connecting multiple mega-dungeons at a very deep level, through either portals, rivers, seas, fissures, or paths of subterranean migration.

You can even make dungeons the entirety of a campaign by turning them into unexpected showpieces of different play styles. For example, wilderness adventures: there can be a subterranean wilderness beneath the dungeon; a fungal forest, a geyser swamp, or even a range of mountains. Or what of urban adventures? There can be an immense secret dwarven city underneath the heroes' feet.

The style of play can also change significantly as the PCs increase in power. As they become lords and desire to build strongholds, a local baron or warlord might offer the adventurers baronies or lordships in the underworld. The liege would tell the adventurers that if they can clear a dungeon level, he will then provide them with men-at-arms and subjects to live there while the deep is explored. A mining community could grow. Even a full war campaign could be designed if an underworld barony of thousands of subjects is invaded by an army from below. And classically, a mega-dungeon can be used as a planar nexus, leading to the elemental planes, abyss, hells, heavens, limbo, alternate primes, and so forth.

The dungeon is immortal, and it is endless.

You are now ready for supplement CDDG2, *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide II*, which has many more options that will assist you in room generation and design. I hope you are enjoying the Classic Dungeon series so far!

But wait, in the true tradition of the endless dungeon, there's more …

# CHAPTER 11:
# GOBLIN HEAD

"Learn of the dungeon? Very well, we have a few sands yet in the hourglass before our orders of mead are here. Let us ask that sage in the corner for one brief example of executed dwarven architecture."

— *Words Fated to Presage the Night of Never-End, Unknown*

In this section, I provide a detailed example of using this Guide's entire system to create the first draft of a random mega-dungeon. This section was written entirely using random rolls and with no preconception of the dungeon type. However, I also indicate at which points I rerolled or overruled random results, and my rationale for doing so.

In this example, I am creating an initial rough draft of a full mega-dungeon of 13 levels, intended to begin a campaign with novice and veteran players all adventuring together with new level 1 characters. This means that the upper ruins will feature a few traps, empty areas and minor encounters, and that the challenges will grow progressively more dangerous as the deeper levels are explored. The purpose of this drafting process will be to create a full thematic dungeon design in preparation for the drawing of detailed dungeon maps.

# The Methodology of Dungeon Design

The first 27 recommended steps in dungeon design, following the contents of this Guide's initial 140+ pages, are detailed in this supplemental appendix.

This is *not* a complete example of mega-dungeon creation, as such a work would require hundreds if not thousands of pages. (And would put any reader to sleep.) However, it *is* an extensive treatise on the concept of random and directed dungeon design, which the GM is encouraged to build upon to create a mega-dungeon campaign of his or her very own.
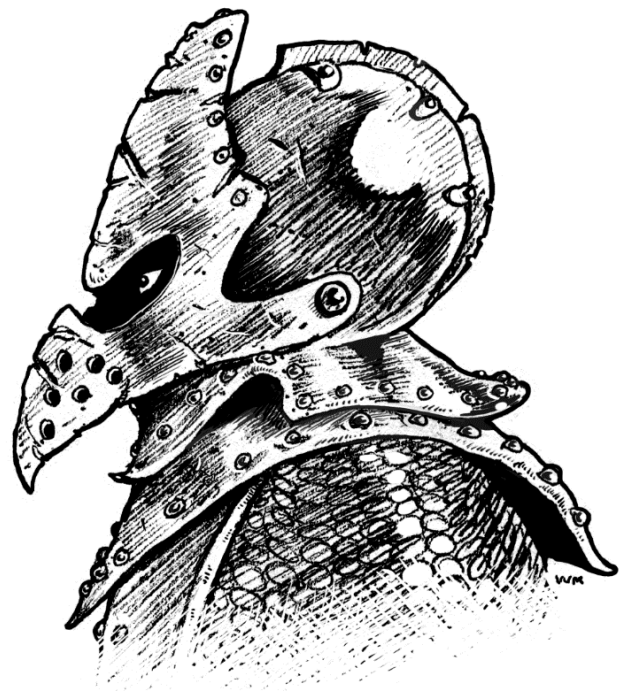
# Step 1:
# The Starting Scenario

First, I determine the initial adventure scenario, the "hook" that will be provided to the players once they roll their new characters. This mega-dungeon will be used

for many sessions and hopefully over several years of play, but the first adventure will need to be relatively simple. It will serve to draw the players in, to excite them and frighten them, and to make them eager to learn the deeper mysteries of the dungeon as a whole.

I roll my first percentile dice, indicating a **Hack and Slash** scenario. This is a good, classic scenario, but it is not ideal for starting characters because it encourages them to kill the enemy non-stop (and likely die as well) without developing any adventuring or problem solving skills. So I retain this result as a *secondary* theme, but I roll again to determine what the main scenario hook will be.

The second roll result is **Saving the Scion**. This is a perfect scenario for the group, for several reasons: (1) it gives them a ready and able group of NPCs for assistance (demi-humans hoping to rescue a good monster deeper in the dungeon); (2) it gives the group a concrete goal to strive for (finding the good monster and escorting it back to the surface); and (3) it provides a potential future benefactor, once the good monster is saved. This unknown good monster, trapped in the deep, is certain to have an extensive understanding of many of the dungeon's monsters, traps, treasures and secrets.

I do not yet know who the NPCs are, or which exact type of good monster is going to be in need of rescue. Nevertheless I will design the ruins and the upper two levels of the dungeon specifically for this type of adventure scenario.

## Step 2:
## The Adventure Twist

I then roll for the adventure twist, and roll a result indicating **Imbalance of Power**. This means that when the major enemy monster of this adventure is slain, the rest of the

monsters on the upper levels will focus on stealing the monster's treasure before the adventurers take it away.

This is an interesting twist, because the initial scenario only involves a relatively simple goal — saving the good monster. Now, the rolls are indicating that a major *evil* monster is present as well, and that it has a tempting treasure. At first I consider using a good dragon imprisoned by an evil dragon, because dragons are legendary for their treasure hoards. But then I decide that these monsters are too strong for a level 1 group to contend with.



Instead, I consider a different type of good monster. Looking over the good-aligned monsters in my monster books, I decide that the good monster is a guardian naga, because they are unusual, intriguing and associated with treasure. This is a very strong monster, but its presence will provide an incentive for the adventurers. Once the naga has been freed and is accompanying the group, its strength will allow the PCs to slaughter most of the upper level monsters on their way back up to the surface. The naga will not be a permanent group member, and the slaughter will give the players some visceral satisfaction as their reward for good play.

The naga will possess a lot of treasure, but I can make another adventure twist by making some of this treasure *sacred*. In other words, if the adventurers take all of the treasure, they will face the wrath of some good divine being (perhaps a demigod who will force a curse or a quest of atonement upon them).

I do not yet know what evil monster has trapped the guardian naga, but I will let later

rolls indicate who the "big bad" of the adventure will be. Keep in mind that I am designing the first adventure to only cover the upper two dungeon levels, so the evil monster will be powerful for a level 1 group but still relatively minor in scope.

## Step 3:
## The Benefactor

I then decide that this adventure will have an unusual benefactor, so I roll on that table to determine which type of NPC will ask the adventurers to attempt to free the naga. This roll will probably indicate what kind of friendly NPCs are on the surface as well. My roll indicates "A high priest, circled by the giant snow owls from his temple."

Working with this, I decide that the upper surface around the dungeon is cold and snowy. I start thinking about the types of humans or demi-humans that might like cold regions and snow owls. I decide the friendly NPCs will be either gnomes or mountain dwarves. Unable to choose between them, I decide to use both. The benefactor becomes an elderly dwarven rune priest, the last of his kind, housed in a defiled temple of good.

Thinking about the guardian naga, I decide that the dwarves worship a netherworld serpent god. I make up a new monstrous demigod for this purpose: Tolshuthra, the Winder of Ways. Let's give him some color and mystery. Tolshuthra is the demigod of treasures hidden in the deep, the Coiler of Jewels. He is the patron of dwarven miners who seek treasure and who slaughter the serpent's evil enemies in the underworld. This is a little unusual, as dwarves do not usually worship snakes, but I will develop it some more so that it makes more sense later on.

## Step 4:
## The Surface Area and Base of Operations

Next, I decide that I want the surface area around the snow temple to be an unusual base of operations, so I roll on that table. My roll indicates "A floating city of rafts and lashed-together pirate ships." While certainly interesting, this makes no sense within the context of this environment and I can't think of a way to modify it and make it work. So I decide to reroll.

The next roll indicates "A log fortress beside the geysers in the mountains." This seems perfect, so I start working out the details.
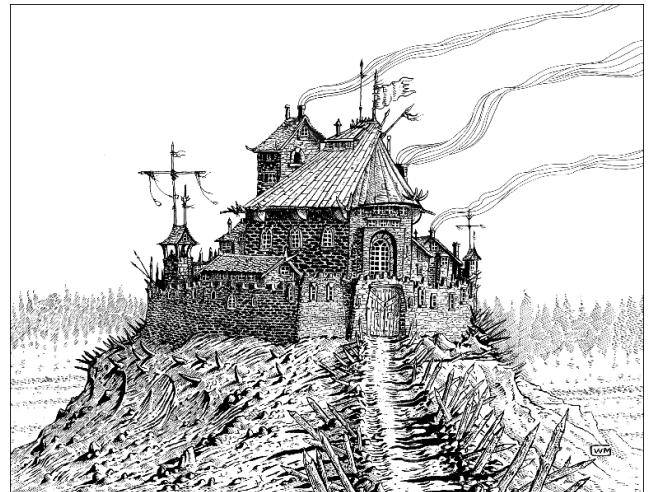


Why a log fortress? We know that the serpent temple of the dwarves was defiled and plundered, and no longer has any sacred treasure. The remaining treasure is in the dungeon itself. Suppose the entire area, a dwarven surface stronghold, was wiped out long ago by evil forces. A new expedition of dwarves and gnomes has arrived to reclaim the underworld from evil, and to bring the temple back to its former glory. There is a log fortress because the dwarves have not yet had time to rebuild the entire stronghold that was razed. We now

have an interesting environment for the surface, a once-proud dwarven ruin piled over with ramshackle wooden huts and cabins, all closed in to make one giant log fortress surmounting the stonework. The serpent temple, or what's left of it, is the center of this makeshift village.

# Step 5:
# The Rumors About the Dungeon

Next I decide that I will create a table of 20 rumors for the group to hear in the gnomish inns and dwarven alehouses. These rumors will focus mostly on dungeon levels 1 and 2, as well as the overall history of the area.

I have no idea what the specifics of these rumors will be yet, because a lot of them will refer to specific monsters, rooms and treasures that do not exist. But I can rough out the table for future use. I decide to roll 10 times on the rumor type table, and another 10 times on the sampling from the rumormongers table. My first 10 rolls give me these results: 27, 08, 21, 44, 93, 76, 88, 59, 81 and 37. This means that my first ten rumor templates are as follows:

**Rumor #1:** *A secret dungeon exit.* I decide this secret exit might be known to the guardian naga.

**Rumor #2:** *A single powerful monster.* I decide this rumor concerns the evil monster that is keeping the naga imprisoned.

**Rumor #3:** *A secret dungeon entrance.* I am not sure what this will entail as of yet.

**Rumor #4:** *A specific and very important room.* Maybe this rumor will be about the naga's treasure vault.

**Rumor #5:** *A patrol route, secret passage or undiscovered chamber.* Possibly pertaining to treasure vaults. I'll figure out what to do with this later.

**Rumor #6:** *The last adventurers to enter and claim a treasure.* This will probably be about a vanguard of dwarven and gnomish explorers, which was mostly wiped out.

**Rumor #7:** *A password, command word, map or key.* A key to a vault? Is it magical? This will be a mystery for now.
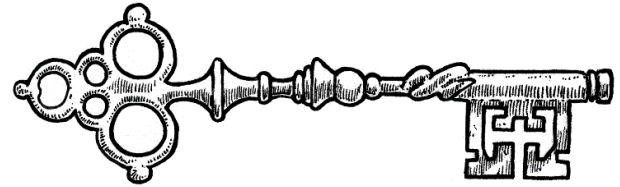


**Rumor #8:** *The history of the dungeon's builders.* This rumor will be about the earlier worshippers of the serpent demigod. Tolshuthra might not be as nice as I think he is.

**Rumor #9:** *The last adventurers to enter and never leave.* Perhaps there will have been another group of adventurers that tried to free the naga and failed. These people might still be prisoners in the dungeon as well.

**Rumor #10:** *One of the dungeon's levels.* This rumor will probably be about level 1, and might help the adventurers in early play.

For the next ten rolls, I roll as follows: 02, 29, 38, 88, 70, 25, 22, 49, 18, 27. These I will leave very vague for now, but will consider them as I continue developing the dungeon.

**Rumor #11:** *The name of the dungeon is (X).*

**Rumor #12:** *Down in the dungeon, the fearsome (monster X) wage war against the (monster Y).*

**Rumor #13:** *An enchanted (trick) in the dungeon, should it ever be rediscovered, shall bequeath (trick power) on the first bold adventurer to find it. Cowards, however, will suffer the (trick negative power).*

**Rumor #14:** *A great treasure is hidden in (dungeon area), but is guarded by (trap or trick).*

**Rumor #15:** *Everyone knows that (monster A) built the (dungeon level B), but few realize that (monster C), the true powers, are burrowing the (dungeon level D).*

**Rumor #16:** *The last group to enter the dungeon and return alive was the (NPC party name). They recovered (treasure) and swore that there was much more to be had, but the (monsters) were to fierce for them to ever return.*

**Rumor #17:** *The dungeon is yet unfinished, and construction is still continued by the (monsters).*

**Rumor #18:** *Despite all the others of its kind being thoroughly evil, a strange (monster type) is said to help adventurers in need.*

**Rumor #19:** *The dungeon has a secret (entrance to / exit from) level (X). It is said to be a (chute / elevator / ramp / teleporter).*

**Rumor #20:** *In the last expedition, the (NPC party name) cleared much of level (X). It is said that (monster type) has been seen repopulating the dungeon recently, likely lairing in the caverns the adventurers had cleared.*

These rumors have a lot of potential, and I start to think about potential subplots and dungeon lairs that they might relate to. For now, they are idea hooks for me to fall back on if I get stuck during the process.

## Step 6:
## The Way to the Dungeon

The dungeon I am designing so far is a bit unusual, in that the base of operations is directly on top of the dungeon itself. Because of this, the "way" to the dungeon is simple: the adventurers simply descend within the village itself and reach dungeon level one. However, I want my players to learn to work together *before* they reach the dungeon, so I

decide that there will be a mini-adventure on the way to the log fortress of the snow owls.

I roll and get a result of 70, which indicates **Planar Travel**. This is far too complex a plot device for a level 1 campaign, so I roll again and get 89, which means **Underwater Travel**. This again is not appropriate. I decide to roll one more time, and if the roll is not useful I will decide on a basic minor wilderness adventure of some kind. The roll is 39, **Flight**. I decide that this is a fairly promising idea and I will use it ... partially.



I decide that the PCs will begin the game in a very boring farming community. They all grew up there and decide to band together in search of adventure. At the sole local tavern, they meet an intriguing personage, a battle-scarred dwarf with a small owl on his shoulder. This dwarf offers to accompany the adventurers through the wilderness to a giant snow owl roost, where they will

complete their journey to the log fortress on owl-back. (Giant owls in most FRPGs are not quite large enough to accomplish this feat, but I like the atmosphere of this idea and decide to create a rare race of *enormous* snow owls expressly for this purpose.)

Before reaching the roost, the adventurers will have perhaps between 2 and 5 encounters (depending on which of 3 paths they take). I decide to develop 15 unusual minor encounters that they might experience on the way. I make 15 rolls, as follows: 57, 75, 43, 50, 45, 21, 02, 36, 87, 06, 32, 25, 35, 15, and 86.

I decide that there will be three paths between the owl aerie and the log fortress: A low path through forest that is long but relatively safe, a high path through snowy hills that is short and dangerous, and a middle river path that winds through chilly forest and is of moderate length and difficulty. The dwarf NPC will let the PCs decide which path to take. I put 5 potential encounters on each trail, using the dice rolls indicated.

## Step 7A:
## The Low Path (Forest)

**Encounter #1:** *"A burned building is discovered in the middle of nowhere; the cellar is intact, sobbing is heard."* I decide this will be an isolated farm, distant relatives of the PCs' family. I will work on this more later.

**Encounter #2:** *"A minor but compelling ruin of some kind (ankle-high foundations and a hole in the ground, a razed tower, Cyclopean masonry indicating an ancient toppled wall, etc.)."* To relate this to the environs, I decide this is the ruin of a dwarven watch-tower of the same age as the serpent temple. The dwarf NPC will want to explore this, or at least report on it.

**Encounter #3:** *"A field of bones is discovered; the bones have been immaculately piled and strange chanting is heard."* This is dangerous; I decide this will be an encounter featuring goblins, bitter enemies of the dwarves. But the wily dwarf will tell the PCs that it sounds like the numbers of the goblins are too great, and that it would be wise to report this place to the leaders at the log fortress so that a small force can come here and wipe the goblins out (a potential future mini-adventure).

**Encounter #4:** *"In the deep of night, one of the exhausted adventurers on sentry duty hears an urgent whisper from behind, 'You fool, not yet!'"* This might be an encounter with tomb robbers who are hoping to plunder the naga dungeon.

**Encounter #5:** *"Enormous spider-webs are found, strung with cocooned birds and a very dead halfling."* A giant spider is an extremely dangerous encounter for level 1 characters, so I will have the snow spider out in the woods hunting when the lair is discovered and give the PCs a chance to flee.

## Step 7B:
## The High Path (Snowy Hills)

**Encounter #6:** *"A pennant-covered border marker, lined with orc skulls, gives warning to adventurers to travel no further."* This reminds me of encounter #3 with the goblins, so I decide this will be another band of the goblin tribe instead of orcs.

**Encounter #7:** *"Minor animals are encountered, which could prove mildly hazardous if provoked (skunks, porcupines, mountain sheep, etc.)."* I decide there will be a narrow pass, with a herd of obstinate mountain sheep there. The adventurers might need to get creative to get through.

**Encounter #8:** *"Claim jumpers panic and hurl sling-stones at the group's horses."* A

good minor mountain encounter, perhaps made humorous if the dwarf NPC recognizes the claim jumpers as notorious dwarven ne'er-do-wells.

**Encounter #9:** *"Significant sign of nearby monsters (tracks, bodies of victims, spoor, banners, warning trophies, claw marks on trees, etc.)."* This may be a field of goblin banners.

**Encounter #10:** *"Fresh signs (tracks, hoof prints, footprints, bent reeds, etc.) indicate that a group of large animals are lurking nearby."* I think about what predators feed on mountain sheep, and decide that this might be a large mountain lion or even a badgerbear.

## Step 7C:
## The Middle Path (River and Forest)

**Encounter #11:** *"A strange but impressively appointed building (inn, tavern, outpost, caravansary, etc.) seems to loom up ahead from out of nowhere."* I decide that this is a gnomish tavern burrowed into the ground and fortified, a well-known place that the dwarf NPC will recommend as a place of healing (and rumors).

**Encounter #12:** *"A group of hunters, pursuing a wounded golden stag, rushes out in front of the adventuring party."* To add interest, I decide the hunters will be snow elves, and that there will be a tense dialogue if the dwarf NPC is almost hit by an arrow.

**Encounter #13:** *"Nervous prospectors come out and hail the adventurers; one of them is obviously hiding a sword behind his back."* Very similar to encounter #8; I decide that the prospectors will be a significant friendly / rival sub-faction of the main dwarf force; perhaps comprised of low-level thieves.

**Encounter #14:** *"A group of wily bandits, disguised as a patrol, asks the adventurers to follow them to a nearby 'trading post.'"* I decide that these will be stupid chaotic neutral humans, and that the dwarf will not be duped in the slightest but will play along with the adventurers if they want to find out where the bandit hideout is located.

**Encounter #15:** *"A few normal humans of random alignment are found in a nearby cabin / thorp / farming settlement."* Determining their alignment randomly, I decide these are neutral good fur trappers who are trapping beaver and other animals along the river. They might have an alliance with the dwarves due to the goblin presence, or might be at odds with the gnomes due to killing local wildlife. This will require some more thought.

## Step 8:
## Design Decisions Resulting from the Random Encounters

From these rolls, the world around the dungeon begins to take shape. These encounters give me a clearer idea of the wilderness surrounding the ruined dwarven fortress, which I now name Tol Tiris (riffing off of the name I decided on for the serpent god).

I will give the log fortress a far more informal name that dwarven warriors and gnomish burrow-scouts might come up with; I decide on naming it Goblin Head.

Of course, the gate will be decorated with its namesake, with perhaps a few snow owls plucking out choice eyes from the fresher goblin heads as delicacies. A shy player's PC might even have a role-playing moment when an owl with a bloody eye in its beak lands on her shoulder and dwarves make

note of this. A nice and strange "intro scene" to the area has been created.

Also, from roughing out these 15 encounters, I decide that *goblins* will be one of the major monster types for dungeon level 1. I keep this in mind as I think some more about just what the "big" evil monster imprisoning the naga might be.

# Step 9:
# The Builders of the Dungeon

Next, I will need to determine the sketch history of the dungeon. This is important, because I have not yet decided on the monster types to be found there (aside from goblins), and the dungeon is going to be designed to facilitate hundreds of hours of play.

Considering what I have developed so far, I do *not* roll randomly to determine who the first builders were. They were dwarves, plain and simple. But I don't yet know much more than that, so I will use random generation to decide what other forces are involved here.

I ignore the question, "In which direction was the dungeon built?" because I have already decided that the dungeon was first built on the surface (as the dwarven fortress) and then underground (seeking the riches of Tolshuthra).

I roll randomly to see how many different factions (generations) built the dungeon, and my roll of 67 indicates that five powers were involved. In other words, between the time the dwarves built the temple and later reclaimed the ruin, there were four other builder races involved who worked on the dungeon in some way.

As mentioned earlier, I decided that the first adventure would involve the uppermost two dungeon levels, and that the entire dungeon would be 13 levels deep. So I decide to rough out a scheme in which each generation of

builders dug the dungeon a little deeper, like this:

**Upper Ruins:** Dwarven / gnomish

**Dungeon Level 1:** Dwarven (serpent god vaults), now populated by goblins

**Dungeon Level 2:** Dwarven (serpent god vaults and mines), now populated by goblins

**Dungeon Levels 3-5:** Mystery builder generation #2

**Dungeon Levels 6-8:** Mystery builder generation #3

**Dungeon Levels 9-11:** Mystery builder generation #4

**Dungeon Levels 12-13:** Mystery builder generation #5

# Step 10:
# The Second Dungeon Builders

I then make four random rolls to decide who the other mystery builders were. I will be thinking about dungeon level themes as I go along.

The first roll gives the result **Trolls**. Therefore, dungeon levels 3, 4 and 5 were built by trolls and their slaves. Trolls are quite powerful enemies for low-level adventurers, so I decide that even though the trolls built levels 3 and 4, they were wiped out by the dwarves and other monsters and now exist only on level 5.

I start thinking about the nature of trolls. They like caves, eat dwarves, dislike goblins, and have no real relation to nagas that I can think of. But they are clearly enemies of the dwarves, and therefore they might worship something that hates or eats serpents. I can only think of raptors and mongooses at the moment, and neither sounds very appealing. Instead, I decide that the trolls *themselves*

devour snakes, and that there are snakes in the caves to feed them. I arbitrarily name this troll tribe the Snake Eaters.

Dungeon level 5, then, will be the Catacombs of the Snake Eaters. I decide that the trolls are the ones who invaded this region, wiped out the dwarves and took the dungeon as their own. They built dungeon level 3 themselves; I suppose that this level will consist of soft earth, and be easy to dig through. So that level will have snakes, edible fungus gardens and mud pools. I call dungeon level 3 the Mud Pools of Vollok. Vollok will be the name of a fearsome Troll King of old.

I am not sure of a theme for dungeon level 4 yet, but I decide that the stone is harder there and that the trolls used (dwarf?) slaves to dig out its dimensions. So level 4 will have a prison, torture, mining, and slave pit type of theme ... tentatively.

## Step 11:
## The Third Dungeon Builders

I make another random roll. Looking at the table, my result means the next generation of dungeon builders was made up of **Evil Dwarves**. Too redundant? No, I decide I like this. Twisting the game's design a little, I decide that the slaves of the trolls were indeed good dwarves, and that over time they degenerated to become savage and evil cave dwarves. They revolted against their masters and killed most of the trolls, and dug their way deeper into the earth; for they were no longer like their surface-brothers and could never return to the way they had been. I decide that the surface dwarves are ashamed of these degenerate evil kinsmen, and avoid fighting with them whenever possible.

Dungeon level 6, then, will be the black halls where the evil dwarves have made barriers and choke-points to keep out the trolls and surface dwarves. Dungeon level 7 will be their main stronghold, and dungeon level 8 will be where they stopped digging ... for some reason.

## Step 12:
## The Fourth Dungeon Builders

For the fourth generation, my roll indicates **Lizard Men**. This is a good solid race to build a dungeon history around, but unfortunately I cannot see a way to make it work with the themes I have developed so far. (I like the idea of lizard men being associated with Tolshuthra, but I'm not sure I can make that work without getting rid of my dwarves worshipping serpents idea, which is more interesting to me.) So I reroll and get a result which indicates **Ogre Magi**. This is an excellent classic race which I have rarely used before, and so I decide to go with it.

Unfortunately, I have designed myself into a bit of a corner with my decisions so far; by deciding that the dungeon was built from the surface to the underground, and with a completely unrelated race as the fourth builder generation, I have created a bit of an unworkable setup for fitting the ogre magi in. But I decide to force it to work, because I think the results will be intriguing.

I have two major choices, considering that the ogre magi built dungeon levels 9 through 11. The first choice is to have deep shafts on the surface leading straight to level 9. In other words, the ogre magi just arrived, went down and started digging their own lair. This is possible (if shaky), but I don't want level 1 characters getting slaughtered if they chance upon these portals that lead all the way down, and I don't want later adventurers bypassing the entire upper dungeon. So I go with my second choice,

which is putting in magical gates on dungeon level 8 which access the deeper dungeons. This is what I decide to do.

Going back to my earlier notes, I see that dungeon level 8 is a partial evil dwarf stronghold, but they stopped digging for some reason. I decide to read up on ogre magi for ideas. These monsters are from Japanese mythology (oni), and they are lawful, evil, and highly magical. They wield powerful spells, live underground and enslave humans and demi-humans from the surface.

This actually gives me a lot to work with. Because they are lawful evil, I decide that they are devil worshippers. Devils will be a major secondary monster on these levels. The gates will be infernal in nature, leading not only from the evil dwarf dungeon to the ogre mage dungeon, but also with a great portal leading to the uppermost plane of the Hells themselves. The evil dwarves stopped digging their dungeon, quite simply, because

they encountered a nasty group of magically-present ogre magi deep in the earth who almost wiped them out. The ogre magi have their own agenda and are content to leave the evil dwarves alive as "guardians" while they work on their own nefarious schemes (which I will flesh out later).

Dungeon level 8, then, is part evil dwarf fortress and part ogre mage caverns. Dungeon level 9 features the minor portals and the ogre mage clans, and dungeon level 10 has their infernal temples. Dungeon level 11 has the devil gate and the magical way to Hell. To give these pieces greater adherence to my larger themes, I decide that there was an ancient Ogre Mage Lord who was humiliated in battle by the dwarves' serpent god, and this will become part of their larger plot focusing on the enslavement of adventurers and surface dwellers. The ogre magi want to turn the former stronghold of the dwarven race of Tolshuthra into a great temple dedicated to their own infernal powers.

## Step 13:
## The Fifth Dungeon Builders

My dungeon history outline is almost done. Now I just need to decide which type of monster built the deepest levels, beneath the ogre magi. I have no idea if these builders will be allies of the ogre magi, their minions, their enemies, or have nothing to do with them at all.

The roll ends up indicating **Giants**. I like this idea and decide to keep it. Since the second, third and fourth builders have all been evil, I decide that the fifth generation were good. This will be a fairly unexpected twist for the players that may entice them. Looking at my monster notes, I see that the major good giant races are cloud giants (at least half of them) and storm giants. Cloud giants live in magical places in the sky, and storm giants

live in distant areas such as clouds, mountains and underwater palaces. Considering my options, I decide that the fifth generation of builders are underwater-dwelling albino storm giants.

This is a highly unusual idea, but it will surprise the players, and I think I can make it work. So I read up on storm giants. They are chaotic and good, the antithesis of lawful evil. These two monster types, the ogre magi and the giants, would be at each other's throats. So I decide that the storm giants were brought to the dungeon for a higher purpose; a chaotic good god of some kind decided to bring them to this area to fight the ogre magi and devils, and to save the dwarves. Would this god be an ally of Tolshuthra, or just an enemy of devils? I have no idea.

Rather arbitrarily, I decide that this storm giant god is an ally of the dwarves' serpent god. Considering myths about serpents and storm giants, I decide that I will give this secret dungeon history a Ragnarok type of feel. The storm giants are Nordic, and their purpose is to avenge the defiling of the temple and to wipe out the evil of the dungeon while ensuring that the gates to Hell remain forever closed. They are not direct allies of the dwarves, but an "enemy of my enemy is my friend" approach may well be devised later in the campaign.

To make all of this happen, I need to change one of my former design decisions. This generation of monsters built the deepest levels from the *bottom up*. They came up out of the netherworld, the great under-sea of storms.

Therefore, I decide that dungeon level 13 is the stasis tomb of the storm giant god himself, where he slumbers in the flesh. The giants are toiling for centuries to revive him so that he can wake and wipe out whatever devils the ogre magi might bring into the fray. This level will be the surface of a cold underground sea and he will be sleeping in a floating, glowing block of ice. Dungeon

level 12 is the storm giant stronghold, and dungeon level 11 is where they wage intermittent war on the ogre magi and their devil masters.

My strange, but very workable, history of the dungeon is now complete.



# Step 14: Summarizing the Dungeon Levels

Considering the design as a whole, I now name all of the dungeon levels based on my earlier decisions.

**Surface Setting:** Ice Ruins of Tol Tiris (occupied by dwarves and gnomes); mostly cleared, with a few minor encounters for level 1 adventurers.

**Surface Community:** Goblin Head (dwarves and gnomes): The base of operations.

**Dungeon Level 1:** Doom Halls of the Dwarven King (goblins and minor monsters); good for level 1 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 2:** The Treasure Vaults of Tolshuthra (goblins and servants of the

scenario villain); good for level 2-3 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 3:** The Mud Pools of Vollok (mud, slime and fungus creatures); for level 3-4 adventurers (tentatively).

**Dungeon Level 4:** The Accursed Slave Pits (undead and various monsters); for level 4-5 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 5:** Catacombs of the Snake Eaters (trolls and snakes); for level 5-6 adventurers. I note again that the trolls may be too difficult for level 5 PCs, so beginning with this level, I decide that the future adventurers will probably be leading strong bands of dwarven and gnomish NPCs into battle.

**Dungeon Level 6:** The Undercity of the Twelve Defiant (evil dwarves and minions of the trolls); for level 6-7 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 7:** The Obsidian Under-Spires (evil dwarf stronghold); for level 7-8 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 8:** The Forsaken Delve (evil dwarves and ogre magi); for level 8-9 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 9:** Labyrinth of the Cobalt Gates (ogre magi and dungeon portals, probably with magical monsters); for level 9-10 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 10:** Infernal Fane of the Scarlet One (ogre magi and devils); for level 10-11 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 11:** The Gauntlet of Bloodshed (storm giants, ogre magi and minions); for level 11-12 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 12:** The Tempest Netherworld (storm giants and underground sea monsters); for level 12-13 adventurers.

**Dungeon Level 13:** Frozen Tomb of Altorius Ul'Kom (storm giants and ice monsters); for level 13-14 adventurers.

I now have a solid framework on which to design my dungeon level themes. Keeping in mind, of course, that levels 1 and 2 are going to be sketched in some detail and levels 3 to 13 will only be barely sketched in for the beginning of the campaign.

Returning to the idea of the "big bad" monster on dungeon level 2, I decide it will be a troll. It will be severely crippled, perhaps ancient, blind and slow-moving. But the adventurers will need to figure out a way to trap it or kill it so that they can free the guardian naga. Maybe level two will have some already-triggered traps which they can reset and use to bait and kill the troll.

# Step 15:
# The Dungeon Surround

This is the easiest design decision so far. I have already decided on a log fortress atop a ruin, and so I do not need to randomly determine what the surround will be. Normally, I would roll on the appropriate table until something stirred my interest, but in this case random determination is unnecessary.

# Step 16:
# Real-World Inspirations

Now that I have a vague idea of my dungeon levels, I consider what the great netherworlds of Earth can offer to inspire my designs. Reading through the descriptions, I decide to use them as follows:

**The Catacombs of Paris** sound interesting because of their endless halls of skeletons and bones. I decide to use some of these

design elements in dungeon level 4, the Accursed Slave Pits.

**The Caves of Budapest** are somewhat interesting, and the thermal lake reminds me of the mud pits. I will consider some of these details when creating dungeon level 3, the Mud Pools of Vollok.

**The Cave Cities of Cappadocia and Anatolia** do not really apply to my design, because I want Goblin Head to be the archetypal base of operations and it is on the surface.

**The Maginot Line** is a classic underground stronghold. I decide that these fortifications would be built by intelligent besieged monsters, so I will use some of these ideas when designing dungeon level 6, the Undercity of the Twelve Defiant.

**Mammoth Cave:** I decide that dungeon level 12 will be huge, for possible future expansion if the players want to play even longer. So I consider a netherworld off of the Tempest Netherworld and leave it at that for now.

**Mary King's Close:** This is fairly inspiring as an urban/underground area, a mixture of surface and dungeon. I decide to use some of these details when creating dungeon level 1, the Doom Halls of the Dwarven King.

**The Ruins of Pompeii:** I originally did not have much need for a volcanic level in this dungeon, but I decide there may be some potential on the level with the Hell gate on it (level 10, Infernal Fane of the Scarlet One). I may feature some ancient buildings enclosed in volcanic ash here.

**Son Doong:** I don't really have much in the way of enormous cave systems in this dungeon, but I decide that these details might work for some of the islands in dungeon levels 12 and 13.

**Valley of the Kings:** Dungeon level 2, the Treasure Vaults of Tolshuthra, is an ideal place for dwarven nobles and priests to be buried. I make a note to use some Valley details here.

**Winchester Mystery House:** I decide that this highly urban setting does not fit the character of any of my dungeon levels, so I disregard it in this design.

Summarizing these level ideas in depth order, I now have a few inspirations for the levels as follows:

**Dungeon Level 1:** Partially inspired by Mary King's Close

**Dungeon Level 2:** Valley of the Kings

**Dungeon Level 3:** The Caves of Budapest

**Dungeon Level 4:** The Catacombs of Paris

**Dungeon Level 5:** ?

**Dungeon Level 6:** The Maginot Line

**Dungeon Level 7:** ?

**Dungeon Level 8:** ?

**Dungeon Level 9:** ?

**Dungeon Level 10:** The Ruins of Pompeii

**Dungeon Level 11:** ?

**Dungeon Level 12:** Mammoth Cave (tentative), Son Doong

**Dungeon Level 13:** Son Doong

This summary by level shows me that moving forward, I need more inspiration for dungeon levels 5, 7, 8, 9 and 11.

## Step 17:
## Dungeon Verisimilitude

Now that I have some idea of the denizens and environments, it's time to start thinking about the practical needs of the dungeon monsters themselves. My monsters are goblins, evil dwarves, trolls, ogre magi and storm giants. None are undead or lifeless,

and all have needs for sustenance. Air will be a major concern in this dungeon, because some levels are completely closed off from the surface. Food will need to be worked out in general, as will water. Light will need to be considered as well.

To briefly address these concerns, I consider the dungeon denizens by level.

**Dungeon Level 1:** Goblins and minor monsters. Air will come from the surface, and great wind tunnels (I decide) will flow down deeper into the dungeon. These almost-vertical tunnels will connect to the dungeon rooms through vents too small for adventurers to move through, but will give level 1 a creepy howling sound as the winds gust through. The goblins will eat surface food; I decide that they have secret tunnels leading out toward the mountain passes (remembering that I put in some random encounters with goblins in the wilderness; these encounters will now hide secret goblin entrances to the dungeon). Water will be in the form of a few waterfalls from the snowpack. Light on this level will be minimal, because goblins dislike it.

**Dungeon Level 2:** Goblins and servants of the old troll. Air will come from the vents and shafts, food will be brought by the goblin thralls on level 1. So the goblins on level 2 will be bigger and more decadent. I make a note that wandering monsters between levels 1 and 2 will be frequent as goblin thralls bring food to their masters. Water will come from the continuing waterfalls. Light will be primarily magical, a remnant of the time of Tolshuthra. Considering the serpent god's mining and treasure theme, glowing translucent crystals as light sources might be a nice touch.

**Dungeon Level 3:** Slime and fungus creatures. Air will come from the shafts, which I decide will be exposed to this level as bottomless pits with daunting catwalks leading into the level. (In the future, daring

adventurers might also use magical flight or levitation to take a shortcut from level 3 to the deeper levels using these pits.) Food and water will be in the form of fungus, mold and pools from the mud geysers and waterfalls. This level will be misty and humid. Light will come from strange phosphorescent fungi.

**Dungeon Level 4:** Undead and various monsters. This level will only have stale air from the bottomless pits. Food and water will be sparse, as most of the monsters here will not have need of it. Light will be minimal as well. I decide that these logistical barriers, plus the fearsome monsters here, will create a kind of "wall" which will make the players doubtful about having their PCs explore further. I note also that I had said that level 5 would have the PCs leading dwarf NPCs into battle, so dungeon level 4 will probably need to be a focal point in the future campaign. I decide that once the upper dungeon is cleared, the dwarf priest of Tolshuthra will command that dungeon level 4 be repurposed as a dwarven war base for the conquest of the deeper levels. Light, food, water and air will be major considerations for dwarven miners at that time.

Because the first scenario will only include dungeon levels 1 and 2, and dungeon level 4 will feature a major campaign roadblock, I decide that I do not yet need to think about verisimilitude for levels 5 through 13. These issues will instead be worked out when the time comes.

## Step 18: Considering Realistic Caverns and Dungeons

Now, it is time to start thinking about how to apply real-world "underworld physics" to my dungeons. None of my levels have a manor

house theme (yet, but there might be decadent ogre mage nobles); but I do have many levels that include caverns, dungeons, strongholds, temples or tombs.

First, I consider my design work so far and designate each level as belonging to one or more of these major dungeon archetypes. I come up with the following:

**Dungeon Level 1:** The room types here will primarily belong to Dungeon and Stronghold categories

**Dungeon Level 2:** Dungeon, Temple and Tombs

**Dungeon Level 3:** Caverns

**Dungeon Level 4:** Dungeon and Tombs

**Dungeon Level 5:** Stronghold and Tombs

**Dungeon Level 6:** Caverns and Stronghold

**Dungeon Level 7:** Stronghold

**Dungeon Level 8:** Caverns and Stronghold

**Dungeon Level 9:** Dungeon and Stronghold

**Dungeon Level 10:** Caverns and Temple

**Dungeon Level 11:** Caverns and Stronghold

**Dungeon Level 12:** Caverns

**Dungeon Level 13:** Caverns, Temple and Tombs



Looking over this list I note that no theme is cloned between adjacent levels, which is good. Each level will feel different and have its own special style. And as noted, I am most interested in detailing levels 1 through 4 (where the "we can't go further" roadblock will be); levels 5 through 13 will therefore be featured much later in the campaign.

I have built in some borrowed time in my dungeon design!

# Step 19:
# Dungeon Level Themes

Since questions concerning dungeon depth and thematic levels have already been considered, I decide to use a different approach to generate my dungeon level themes. I first decide that I am going to have *two* major themes on each level; and, instead of determining them only randomly, I decide that I will choose one theme for each level and randomly roll the second. The results of this decision are as follows:

### Dungeon Level 1

**Reprise:** The Doom Halls of the Dwarven King. Dungeon-Stronghold, inspired by Mary King's Close. Populated by goblins and minor monsters.

**Selected Theme:** Urban Undercity.

**Random Theme: Fracture Caves**. This will be easy to work into the created environment.

### Dungeon Level 2

**Reprise:** The Treasure Vaults of Toslhuthra. Dungeon-Temple-Tomb, inspired by the Valley of the Kings. Populated by goblins and servants of the old troll.

**Selected Theme:** Undercrofts, or vault areas beneath a temple.

**Random Theme: Glacier Caves**. The caves I will create will not be of pure ice, but may be open (recently?) to the surface; perhaps through a sinkhole or collapsed cavern.

### Dungeon Level 3

**Reprise:** The Mud Pools of Vollok. Caverns, inspired by the caves of Budapest. Populated by mud, slime and fungus creatures.

**Selected Theme:** Fungal Caverns.

**Random Theme: Jungle Caves**. This does not really work with my cold dungeon setting, so I reroll and arrive at **Solutional** Caves instead. I decide that some of the fungi on this level will have dangerous acidic qualities, which create the solution caverns "downstream."

### Dungeon Level 4

**Reprise:** The Accursed Slave Pits. Dungeon-Tomb, inspired by the Catacombs of Paris. Populated by undead and various monsters.

**Selected Theme:** Catacombs.

**Random Theme: Mad Wizard's Domain**. Not what I expected, but let's make it work. I decide that one of the buried gnomish nobles will have been an eccentric illusionist of some renown. Some strange machines and "friendly" partial golems will be there.

### Dungeon Level 5

**Reprise:** Catacombs of the Snake Eaters. Stronghold-Tomb. Populated by trolls.

**Selected Theme:** Subterranean Stronghold.

**Random Theme: Crystal Caves**. I decide that the stronger trolls will dwell in slimy crystal rooms carved from a vast deposit of translucent quartz underground. This might even be the source of the light-bearing stone that the dwarves used as a light source honoring Tolshuthra.

### Dungeon Level 6

**Reprise:** The Undercity of the Twelve Defiant. Cavern-Stronghold, inspired by the Maginot Line. Populated by evil dwarves and troll minions.

**Selected Theme:** Proving Grounds. "Subterranean Stronghold" makes the most sense, but I do not want this level to be too similar to level 5. I want it to have a bizarre twist. Therefore, I decide that the evil dwarves and troll minions will engage in strange and violent honor duels in arena halls, with victory determining which faction is obligated to surrender rooms and territory to the other. Of course, both factions will be eager to capture the adventurers and force them to become gladiatorial subjects furthering their own cause.

**Random Theme: Pirate Gauntlet**. This is intriguing, but really doesn't fit. (To be perfectly honest, if I wasn't writing a book, I might take the wild theme of "evil subterranean cannibal dwarf pirates" and go crazy with it.) I reroll and arrive at **Collapsing Level** instead. Perhaps some of the arenas have been blasted by magic or demolished by huge monsters in the past, and are now precarious. Such areas, avoided by the trolls and evil dwarves, might be reserved for battles between prisoners and slaves.

### Dungeon Level 7

**Reprise:** The Obsidian Under-Spires. Stronghold. Populated by evil dwarves.

**Selected Theme:** Subterranean Stronghold. I will make this area unique by having a vast great hall with many towers inside of it.

**Random Theme:** (Note that beginning here, I received theme results duplicating previous areas, which were ignored. I kept rolling until I got a unique result.) **Prison**. I consider populating this level with some kind of NPCs, perhaps dwarves and gnomes of importance from the first failed

expedition. This level will then become the focus of raids and daring liberation attempts.

## Dungeon Level 8

**Reprise:** The Forsaken Delve. Cavern-Stronghold. Populated by evil dwarves and ogre magi.

**Selected Theme:** Waterfall Caves.

**Random Theme: Monster Burrows**. I decide that this level will feature a compressed layer of fossilized and mineralized remains, which makes the area delectable to burrowing creatures (amber behemoths, dungeon worms, earth elementals, etc.).

## Dungeon Level 9

**Reprise:** Labyrinth of the Cobalt Gates. Dungeon-Stronghold. Populated by ogre magi.

**Selected Theme:** Labyrinth.

**Random Theme: Bottomless Pits**. This is interesting in context; I may have the magical gates be located at the bottom of "bottomless" pits thousands of feet down. Those who fall into them are unharmed, but are gated into other realms. This would also explain why no significant forces have yet invaded from the other side!

## Dungeon Level 10

**Reprise:** Infernal Fane of the Scarlet One. Cavern-Temple, inspired by the ruins of Pompeii. Populated by ogre magi and devils.

**Selected Theme:** Special (under-temple buried in volcanic ash turned to concrete).

**Random Theme: Cisterns and Reservoirs**. I decide that instead of *water* cisterns, these will be infernal fire pits. They will be filled with liquid elemental fire. Strong magics will be needed to protect many areas so that the

ogre magi (and adventurers!) are not asphyxiated or incinerated.

## Dungeon Level 11

**Reprise:** The Gauntlet of Bloodshed. Cavern-Stronghold. Populated by storm giants and ogre magi.

**Selected Theme: Gauntlet**. I've already used a Proving Grounds theme, so instead of reusing that, this level will feature an old *dwarven* gauntlet of defensive rooms which was intended to provide a final refuge for nobles during an invasion. Now, the defensive rooms are still dangerous, but many have been taken over by giants or ogre magi and repurposed.

**Random Theme:** I decide to keep rerolling until I end up with a cave-themed result that fits my preconceptions (hey, it happens), which turns out to be **Littoral Caves**. This is ideal, and I decide that this level will feature a great waterfall and underground river leading down to my sunless sea in the deep.

## Dungeon Level 12

**Reprise:** The Tempest Netherworld. Caverns, inspired by Mammoth Cave and Son Doong. Populated by storm giants and sea monsters.

**Selected Theme:** Sunless Sea.

**Random Theme: Magical Realm**. I decide there might be some kind of bizarre, air-filled palace ruin beneath the depths or something similar. This will be an area for further adventures and teleportation to other lands and dungeons. Maybe this palace is even where the darker secrets of Tolshuthra can be revealed.

## Dungeon Level 13

**Reprise:** The Frozen Tomb of Altorius. Cavern-Temple-Tomb, inspired by Son

Doong. Populated by storm giants and ice monsters.

**Selected Theme:** Glacier Caves.

**Random Theme: Elemental Node of Fire**. That is not going to work. Instead of rerolling, I change this to the obvious parallel that fits, **Elemental Node of Water**. The water here will be made airy and yet frigid by a constant influx of magical water from the elemental plane. Some fun magical effects, such as floating underwater ice globes and columns of differently colored and heated water, will be here as well.

# Step 20:
# Charting the Dungeon Levels

Now that I have a clearer idea of precisely what each dungeon level entails, I decide to chart the areas of levels 1 through 4 using the nine sector system.

Working from my themes and notes, I come up with the following (sometimes random, sometimes purposeful) ideas, some of which will change as I refine the design:

## Dungeon Level 1

| NORTHWEST Collapsed Undercity Stairs Up | NORTH Undercity Dwarven Lore | NORTHEAST Unfinished Undercity Stairs Up |
|---|---|---|
| WEST Sealed Highways Aqueducts | CENTRAL Doom Halls Stairs Up | EAST Goblin Warrens Stairs Down |
| SOUTHWEST Reservoir Stairs Down | SOUTH Fracture Caves Collapsed Aqueduct | SOUTHEAST Fracture Caves, Secret Treasures |

## Dungeon Level 2

I create sector maps for levels 2, 3 and 4 as well (represented hereafter as text, now that the sector box system has been shown for level 1). Note that I make certain that the stairs down on level 1 match up with the stairs up on level 2. I use the generic term "stairs" for now; more detailed types of ascent and descent will be worked out later.

**Northwest:** Tombs of the Commons, Stairs Down

**North:** Treasure Vaults, Tolshuthra, Troll

**Northeast:** Plundered Vaults, Troll Minions

**West:** Gnomish Tombs, Strange Monsters

**Central:** Goblins, Stairs Down

**East:** Dwarven Redoubt, Stairs Up

**Southwest:** Wind Vaults, Stairs Up

**South:** Frigid Caves, Water Monsters

## Dungeon Level 3

**Northwest:** Highest Point, Catwalks, Precarious Overlooks, Stairs Up

**North:** Fungal Caverns, Fungus Eaters, Slime Molds

**Northeast:** Flooded Caves, Stairs Down

**West:** Mud Pools, Mud Monsters

**Central:** Mud Pools, Stairs Up

**East:** Misty Chambers, Magic Mouths

**Southwest:** Slime Monsters, Stairs Down

**South:** Slime Pools, Crazed Dwarf Survivor, Tamed Wolverines

**Southeast:** Acid Pools, Lowest Point, Dead Troll, Stairs Down

## Dungeon Level 4

**Northwest:** Hall of Inquisitors, Secret Treasure

**North:** Undead Tombs I, Stairs Down

**Northeast:** Undead Tombs II, Stairs Up

**West:** Forbidden Gates, Imprisoned Horror

**Central:** Catacombs Maze, Stairs Down

**East:** Greater Slave Pits, Classic Monsters

**Southwest:** Torture Chambers, Restless Spirits, Stairs Up

**South:** Lesser Slave Pits, Rat Maze, The Packrat Stash

**Southeast:** Ghoul Warrens, Spider Priestess, Stairs Up

Levels 5 through 13 will be roughed out as the campaign progresses. Recall that I have put a "hard stop" on levels 4 and 5, and that the adventurers will need to lead dwarf and gnome NPCs into battle to fight their way into the deeper levels. This will require significant experience and lots of adventuring. The players may not experience the deeper levels until after at least a year of play.

# Step 21:
# Overall Atmosphere for Dungeon Level 1

Now that I have a clearer idea of the overall dungeon architecture, I decide to focus on detailing levels 1 and 2 some more. These level will be the site of the first adventure scenario, which I envision being played through by 1st-, 2nd-, and perhaps even 3rd-level characters.

Instead of using random determination to set the atmosphere of dungeon level 1, I decide upon the following prevailing conditions:

**Overall Light:** Near dark.

**Light Sources:** Phosphorescent spheres, filled with glowing mold (rarely encountered; most of this level, as preferred by the goblins, is dark). Some sunlight shafts for collapsed areas.

**Air Clarity:** Mist at ankle level, rising through cracks from frigid waters below, coiling with the breezes.

**Air Currents:** Slight damp (and chilly) breezes. Occasional wind gusts in areas near stairs.

**Plant Life:** Lichen; some stubborn patches of mold (some of which is phosphorescent).

**Odors:** Dust, dank and mold.

**Sounds:** Whispering wind, goblin drums, chanting, wind chimes. I am thinking of making the goblin tribe creepy by giving them a strange "music" obsession, perhaps turning skin and bones of victims into instruments.

Individual rooms and sectors will vary slightly. For example, the northwest sector will have stale air and more darkness; while the southwest and southeast areas (where wide staircases go up to the surface) will have fresher air, colder temperatures and perhaps better light as well.

# Step 22:
# Room Types for Dungeon Level 1

I step back and think about what I want before adding further details. I want this dungeon to be *big*, so that it can be used throughout the entire mega-dungeon campaign. The first adventure scenario will have lots of clues, maps and NPCs to help the adventurers to navigate their way to the guardian naga on level 2 without needing to explore the entirety of level 1. Arbitrarily,

however, I decide that each dungeon level will have approximately 100 rooms, or even more. If I consider putting in 11 rooms in each of the 9 sectors on each level, and add 1 room to the center, this gives me a ballpark figure of 100 rooms per level. The entire dungeon, then, will eventually feature well over a thousand rooms!

Having decided just how large my dungeon levels will be, I now need to consider appropriate room types for each level. Looking through the lists, I decide to use the following room types and tentatively assign them to the nine sectors on level 1:

**Level 1 Room Themes:** Dungeon, Stronghold. Now that I have plotted out the nine sectors, I decide to add a few Tomb areas as well.

**Northwest:** Audience Chamber, Court, Experimentation Chambers, Halls, Inquisitor Quarters, Interrogation Chamber, Kennel, Storerooms (Failed Experiments), Storerooms (Food & Water), Torture Chambers.

**North:** Armorial Hall, Bone Pits, Chamber of Biers, Embalming Chambers, False Tomb, Hall of Immortal Judgment, Offerings Chamber, Redoubts, Sepulcher, Tombs.

**Northeast:** Antechamber, Beast Crypts, Hall of Mourners, Internment Chambers, Strongroom, Tombs, Vaults, Walled-Up Chambers.

**West:** Collapsed Rooms, Flooded Rooms, Gates, Hall of Doors, Locked Chambers, Pump Room, Rubble-Filled Rooms, Sludge Pits, Subterranean Gatehouse, Underground Moat.

**Central:** Catacombs, Cisterns, Dead Ends, Maze, Portcullis Chamber, Revolving Chamber, Room of Slaughter, Teleportation Chambers.

**East:** Ash Pits, Crematorium, Dueling Pits, Gladiatorial Pit, Mechanical Room, Pyre Chamber, Secret Room, Slave Pits,

Storeroom (Oil), Storeroom (Weapons), Trophy Hall.

**Southwest:** Abattoirs, Cells, Cell Block, Forge, Haunt, Oubliettes, Smithy, Torture Chambers, Watchroom, Workpits.

**South:** Annexes, Cesspits, Garbage Rooms, Rat Lairs, Scrapheaps, Slave Pits, Unfinished Excavations.

**Southeast:** Burrows, Ghoul Lair, Hiding Place, Warning Chamber, Warrens, Webbed Rooms.

I try to fit the room types into the sub-theme developed so far for each of the nine sectors. Keeping in mind I will have 10 or 11 rooms in each sector, this quick 10-minute exercise already gives me an excellent conception for the layout of the entire level!

## Step 23:
## Doors for Dungeon Level 1

For this upper level, I want to include lots of maze-like options and corridors, so that careful adventurers are rewarded with effective maps and navigable routes, and reckless parties quickly become lost. Therefore I will include lots of stubborn doors that PCs might go through, or might find it necessary to route their way around. Stuck and locked doors will be common but easily avoided through backtracking and exploration.

I will decide which doors go where once I am making the full map, but I decide to use some of the following options, some of them several times each:

Archway, Covered by Rotting Tapestry; Bookcase, Pivoting (in the inquisitor barracks area); Cave-In, Partially Cleared; Crawlway; Door, with Barred Window; Door, Blocked (by rubble); Door, Concealed (behind falling water); Door, Glyph-Engraved

(runic marks of warning and sanctuary engraved long ago by dwarf and gnome prisoners of the goblins); Door, Iron, Rusted; Door, Locked; Door, with Magic Mouth (warning the adventurers not to go any further); Door, Rotted; Door, Sealed (with Silver) (for one of the tombs where undead are trapped); Door, Splintered; Door, with Tripwire (goblin traps); Door, Stone; Door, Stone, Pivoting (secret dwarf escape route); Door, Walled-Over; Gate, Rusted; Hole in Collapsed Wall; Hollow Obelisk (this will make an interesting entrance to the inquisitor area, marking a subconscious border between room regions); Membrane, Fungal (for the creep factor, some harmless mold and fungi growing over the bars of partially-opened gates and concealing them with draping masses); Mouth of the Colossus (I arbitrarily decide that major doors created by the dwarves will be in the shape of sculpted dwarf lord or serpent heads, with the opening being the mouth; this will become "code" as the players learn that these doors lead to important areas of dwarven lore); Opening, Ice-Covered; Opening, Misty; Opening, Triangular (I decide that the tomb areas will have strange ritualistic, triangle-shaped portals to give it an ancient and eerie feeling); Pipe Mouth, Flowing; Pipe Mouth, Sludge-Filled; Portcullis, Rusted Open (including some that have a very narrow gap opening; if the adventurers want to cross through, a brave gnome or halfling scout will need to do it); Portcullis, Rusted Shut; Turnstile, One-Way (dwarven defenses meant to channel invaders into murder areas, now repurposed as grim defensive points for goblin archers and dart-throwers); Turnstile, Rusted; Wall, Crumbling (water erosion and shifting ice).

As you can see from my parenthetical comments, further environment details start to suggest themselves when I try to conceptualize where the different door types might be located. This variety, along with many archways and plain wooden doors, will give dungeon level 1 exactly the maze-like

and storytelling atmosphere that I was hoping for.

## Step 24: Corridors for Dungeon Level 1

Following my door considerations and the direction the level design is taking, I next decide upon the types of corridors that I will want between my rooms. Again, my design methodology is become much more concrete as I start to realize which effects I want in the level, and where they might go. For this reason I again make appropriate selections from the table *without* using random rolls.

I decide to use the following corridor types somewhere in the level:

**Bridge** (there will be rickety walkways over the slave pits, where slavers can/could look down on their prisoners and select individuals for the arenas)

**Catwalk** (as above; but more precarious walkways made of fresh-cut pine will be placed over some pits and drops by the current dungeon denizens; these will be very dangerous, especially for heavy characters, and will be used by goblin skirmishers)

**Collapsed Tunnel** (some ice cascades, with perhaps some evocative effects created by unreachable rooms seen through transparent ice; perhaps these rooms can be reached by going down to a lower level and coming back up to a hidden area of level 1)

**Corridor, Blocked** (by Monster Corpse) (I decide I will frighten the players by placing a huge dead monster entombed in transparent ice, blocking an entire corridor; something for them to discuss and marvel at)

**Diagonal Corridor** (for a classic mapping feel)

**Escape Tunnel** (dug by slaves, and now used by monsters to reach and raid the surface)

**False Dead End** (a passageway blocked by icicles that can be knocked apart, but the noise will attract nearby monsters)

**Flooded Tunnel** (with very cold water and potential for hypothermia, but treasure is glittering in the torchlight; perhaps a thief can climb the slippery walls)

**Fungi-Filled Corridor** (pass through at your own risk)

**Hall** (with proudly-graven dwarven mosaics and bas reliefs that tell stories about the past, giving the players their first taste of the history of the dungeon builders)

**Mine Tunnel, with Track and Cart** (I am not yet sure how I will use this, but it will have something to do with the movement of gladiators, slaves and dead bodies)

**Narrow** (some tunnels will be mostly blocked by rubble or ice, allowing goblins to pass through easily but making the going slow, vulnerable and difficult for larger adventurers)

**Partially-Cleared Passage** (ice and rubble falls; perhaps I will even include an eerie passage with holes fully open to the surface and some upended, shattered pines that have fallen from the surface partially blocking the way)

**Processional** (some eerily carved ritual halls leading to the tombs and embalming rooms, with some warning runes saying that beyond this point only the dead are welcome, the living shall not return beyond this point unless they walk as breathless shades, etc.)

**Rope Bridge** (I am envisioning a perilous crossing of a room that has collapsed, revealing a drop to a deeper dungeon level and perhaps a waterfall)

**Rotating Cylinder** (this cunning gnomish device, perhaps something to do with mining or powering huge defensive doors, will be

rusted but potentially ready to be refurbished for some reason)

**Revolving Corridor** (another gnomish invention, intended to channel invaders into dwarven redoubts for slaughter; now used by goblins to confuse and ambush adventurers)

**Secret Tunnel** (exact parameters to be determined, but likely dealing with goblins)

**Stream** (perhaps a route all the way to the surface and the forest, which the dwarven rune priest in the snow owl temple will be very interested to hear about)

**Unfinished Excavation** (newer tunnels being dug into raw stone by the goblins, not nearly as safe, straight or expansive as the dwarven tunnels)

**Wind Tunnel** (perilous, near-vertical wind shafts; perhaps with eerie howling caused by the wind gusting through chocking sheets of ice)

**Zigzag Corridor** (defensive areas built by the dwarves where crossbows could be fired from fortified corners while falling back to deeper levels)

Some of the effects I am visualizing will begin to impress upon the players the importance of having "little folk" (dwarves, gnomes, halflings) in their adventuring party, as the goblin skirmishers perform hit and run ambushes and then slip away through small areas. As the dungeon campaign continues, this will help the players to warm to the idea of leading NPC dwarves and gnomes into the deeps for battle, for goblin slaying and for some long-building and delayed opportunities for vengeance.

As you can see, by this point in the design the dungeon level is becoming very interesting. Possible exploration and battle scenes are beginning to leap off the page.

The direction of my level design is changing somewhat as I think of new ideas. I am now

visualizing a colder, icier level than before, because of all of the evocative dungeon atmosphere effects I can add to entice players to explore the place further. This will require a little redesign when I go back through my earlier notes to expand the outline into a fully-scripted dungeon level, but the work will be worth it!

## Step 25:

## Connectors between the Surface and Dungeon Level 1

As I conceive of rooms, doors and corridors, I have decided along the way that dungeon level 1 will have more than just a few ways to the surface. This makes sense, as many of the monsters in the dungeon will be needing to raid the surface for food and supplies. However, I need to be careful that the level is not too "porous" with too many escape routes for adventurers, or it will lose some of its dangerous and labyrinthine feel. Therefore I decide that many of the newer ideas I am coming up with (wind shafts, ice cave-ins, escape tunnels, etc.) will be secret at first. As the adventurers explore, they will discover many of these areas; and although some will prove too narrow or unsafe for use, the dwarves will be eager to know about these potential areas for their counter-invasions beneath the earth.

I may decide that the rune priest will reward the adventurers with 100 pieces of gold for each "new" entrance they discover that the dwarves can confirm. This may also entail having a few NPC dwarf cartographers and gnomish burrow-scouts accompanying the group, which will help bolster their numbers as the goblins become more numerous and dangerous. This will be a good way to make the players care about the village of Goblin Head and the hard-working NPCs who live there.

With that tangent in the back of my head, I go back to my original sector outline of the level and note where I had put my "stairs up" notations. As a reminder, the sector outline looked like this:

## Dungeon Level 1

| NORTHWEST Collapsed Undercity Stairs Up | NORTH Undercity Dwarven Lore | NORTHEAST Unfinished Undercity Stairs Up |
|---|---|---|
| WEST Sealed Highways Aqueducts | CENTRAL Doom Halls Stairs Up | EAST Goblin Warrens Stairs Down |
| SOUTHWEST Reservoir Stairs Down | SOUTH Fracture Caves Collapsed Aqueduct | SOUTHEAST Fracture Caves, Secret Treasures |

I see that I had put "stairs up" in the northwest, northeast and central sectors. I now know, from my further design ideas since I first drafted this map, that the northwest area will be a partially-collapsed base for torturers of some kind (some of the monster ideas for the level, besides the goblins, are still vague at this time). The room types I had decided on for the northwest sector were as follows:

**Northwest:** Audience Chamber, Court, Experimentation Chambers, Halls, Inquisitor Quarters, Interrogation Chamber, Kennel, Storerooms (Failed Experiments), Storerooms (Food & Water), Torture Chambers.

Also, I had given this area the note "Collapsed Undercity." I decide that the staircase in this region will be huge, known to the dwarves, and now very dangerous. It will be a broad stair spiraling down, with shattered dwarven gates at regular intervals, and slippery ice falls toward the surface. On

days that the temperature is above freezing, water will flow down the steps; but this water is a major resource for the dungeon denizens, and "drinkers" (goblins? Rats? Something much worse?) will be frequent encounters when adventurers use these stairs. When the temperature is below freezing, there will be almost no monsters encountered but very dangerous slip-streams of ice where adventurers could fall all the way down to level 1.

I then look at the northeast. The room types I had scripted for this sector were like this:

**Northeast:** Antechamber, Beast Crypts, Hall of Mourners, Internment Chambers, Strongroom, Tombs, Vaults, Walled-Up Chambers.

Also, I gave this area the note "Unfinished Undercity" early on. My conception of this area changed from dwarven quarters to dwarven tombs, but I can merge these ideas together by conceiving a necropolis, a city of the dead. The corridors in this area, as I was noting, will include dwarf runes warning about sacrosanct areas and points of no return. Considering that dwarves honor their ancestors and are very honorable, I decide that a wily dwarf king of old might have decided that this sector was the perfect place to build an emergency escape tunnel and to tell no one about it. This tunnel's opening on the surface used to be disguised by a cunning gnomish illusion of a frozen lake. Now, the illusion has decayed and this tunnel is the main raiding path used by the underworld goblins. The dwarves of Goblin Head will know about this place, and despite their inability to control it due to the numbers of monsters using it, they will have some spiked log walls and observation posts near Goblin Head to watch over this area.

Next, I consider the central sector. The rooms for this area, as conceived, were:

**Central:** Catacombs, Cisterns, Dead Ends, Maze, Portcullis Chamber, Revolving Chamber, Room of Slaughter, Teleportation Chambers.

And my notes indicate these are the "Doom Halls." I decide there will be a lot of fallen dwarves' skeletons here, now horrifically chopped up by the goblins so that the skulls can be used as territorial markers and warning trophies. There may be a "side-quest" concerning the rune priest and brining these skulls to the surface, so that the restless spirits of fallen warriors can be put to rest in the snow owl temple.

Concerning the stairs up, however, I decide that these have completely collapsed as a result of the old wars, powerful magics used during battle, and the pressure of ice and water from the surface. The central "stairs up" will be a dangerous and icy waterfall, running down one side of the ancient stair-shaft. Here there will be slippery ropes, rusty chains and ice-covered iron spikes in the walls, all used by the monsters to climb up and explorers and dwarven warriors to climb down. I decide that during the day, this entrance will be well-guarded by dwarf sentries of Goblin Head, but during the night they need to retreat behind the walls of the village and leave this as a "monster highway" to the surface.

As the dungeon campaign continues, the control of this area will become a major plot point. The adventurers will probably need to wage a major battle here against the monsters from the deeps.

Now that I have these ideas in place, I have some idea of what the rune priest will say to neophyte adventurers when they prepare to explore level one for the first time. There are three known paths down, and probably many more. Each has its own dangers that the players will need to consider and prepare for.

So far I am liking the design of level one quite a lot, and I am ready to make a rudimentary map of it all. That comes in the next design step, a time-saving and error-reducing technique that I call "wireframing."

## Step 26:

## Beginning the Wireframing of Dungeon Level 1

Considering the size of this project, despite my building enthusiasm for the design, I refrain from setting my ideas to graph paper. Plotting ideas in concrete form while I am still conceptualizing major play ideas might not be wise. (Some GMs prefer to dive right in, but I like this layered approach so that I don't need to redo my work again and again as new and better ideas come to light.)

I now know enough about the level's atmosphere, themes, history, rooms, doors and corridors that I can rough out some detailed plans in a flowchart-like set of diagrams, called a "wireframe." A wireframe map does not show room dimensions, room contents, corridor lengths or specific features. Instead, it shows approximate

room locations, door locations, and corridor connections in a simple yet detailed format.

When a wireframe is being designed, it is easy for the GM to see which areas are over-connected, requiring some scaling back of movement options. More importantly it shows where room clusters are under-connected and need more corridors to avoid linear deathtrap configurations.

In the interests of space, I will not show the 27 (!) rough drafts I created on a display board to work out the nine total sectors, but I will instead show the final wireframes I arrived at. Recall that I had originally decided that each sector would have approximately 11 rooms, so that the entire level would have 100 or so rooms to allow for future exploration. The northwest sector wireframe, using my earlier-envisioned room and corridor types, is as follows:
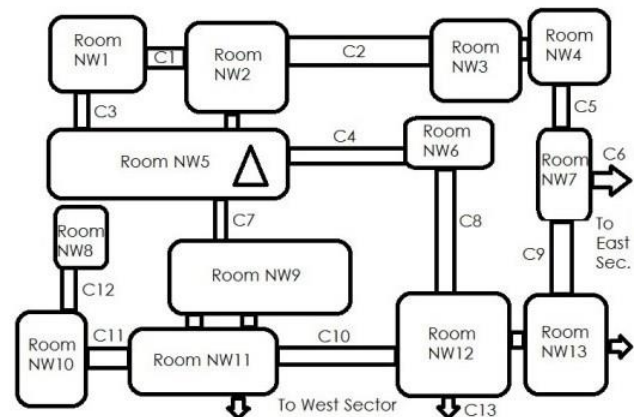


The rounded-square areas are rooms, not yet shown to scale. The longer connectors between them are corridors, and the shorter connectors are doors or apertures. The triangle shows where I will place the stairs up. The arrows represent corridors or doors that go to the two sectors that are adjacent to this northwest one; the ones on the right side go to the north sector, and the ones along the bottom go into the west sector.

I have 13 rooms in this sector as first envisioned, which is a little higher than the

total of 11 that I wanted (to have at least 100 total rooms on dungeon level 1). This is fine; I simply wanted to make sure that all of the room ideas I had were fit into this area.

A careful review will note that I have four major clusters of rooms: a group of three at upper left, a group of four at upper right, a group of four at lower left and a pair of rooms at lower right. The northwest subtheme will be "halls," the northeast will be "torture," the southwest will be "experiments" and the southeast will be "storage."

I have keyed the rooms as "NW" (northwest) as an example of the room identification process. The four rooms in the northwest are NW1, NW2, NW5 and NW8. NW5 is large because I want a grand entry after the stairs. I name these rooms as follows (recalling the room types I had selected for this sector earlier):

**NW1:** The Black Court

**NW2:** Audience Chamber

**NW5:** Hall of the Glorious Age

**NW8:** Collapsed Hall

For the northeast, there are rooms NW3, NW4, NW6 and NW7. Note that I did not put in an obvious and logical connector between NW3 and NW6; this is because I want to make sure that the adventurers' route through this area is a bit circuitous. Also, room NW7 goes to the north sector, which lies to the east. I name these rooms:

**NW3:** Interrogation Chamber

**NW4:** Torture Chamber

**NW6:** Inquisitor Quarters

**NW7:** Kennel and Guardroom

For the southwest, I have a lot of doors and corridors and only three rooms. This is a

logical setup for storage and high-traffic areas. This place has a grim subtheme, "experiments." This will be one of the more sinister parts of dungeon level 1. I name these rooms:

**NW9:** Ruined Experimentation Chamber

**NW10:** Failed Experiments Storeroom

**NW11:** Experimentation Chamber

Lastly, I have the two storage rooms to the southeast. Considering the needs of anyone once living in this area, these are easy to name:

**NW12:** Food Storage

**NW13:** Iced-Over Water Storeroom

The southeast part of this sector is unique in that it has two connectors to different sectors. Therefore, it is very likely that adventurers will pass through this area. I make a note to myself to put some useful dungeoneering equipment (weapons, poles, snowshoes, helmets, perhaps even some healing herbs or lanterns) in this area for intrepid and searching adventurers to discover.

I have also keyed 13 corridors (C1, C2, C3, etc.) which I will apply some of the corridor themes to. Of the ones earlier decided upon, some of the ones I will use include: Collapsed Tunnel, False Dead End, Flooded Tunnel, Hall, Narrow, Processional and Zigzag Corridor.

Similarly, I have a total of 30 (!) doors in this wireframe. I am defining a "door" as a place where a corridor connects with a room, or where two rooms are directly adjacent. Some of the door types will use here include: Bookcase, Pivoting; Cave-In, Partially Cleared; Door, with Barred Window; Door, Blocked; Door, Glyph-Engraved; Door,

Locked; Door, with Magic Mouth; Door, with Tripwire; Door, Stone; Gate, Rusted; Hollow Obelisk; Mouth of the Colossus; Opening, Ice-Covered; Opening, Misty; Portcullis, Rusted Open; Turnstile, One-Way; and Wall, Crumbling.

My initial conception of the northwest sector is now complete. This is a detailed example of the process; the other eight sectors will be wireframed in the future in a similar manner.

## Step 27: Connectors between Dungeon Levels 1 and 2

Similarly to my envisioning of the "stairs up" for this level, I also need to consider the "stairs down." In my original design, I had deciding that the stairs down were to be located in the east and southwest sectors.

The rooms in the east sector are gladiator pits, ash pits, storerooms and so forth. The rooms to the southwest are cells, oubliettes and torture chambers. Both of these room layouts speak more to the current state of the dungeon than to its history, and so I need to think about what types of ways down the dwarves might have first constructed.

I decide that the eastern sector will include the main way down that was used when the dungeon was a dwarven stronghold. Therefore it will be a huge pit with pulleys, winches and chains that can be raised and lowered, with a major staircase along the shaft's edges. This makes sense considering the storerooms in this area and the need for huge amounts of supplies for the dwarves who once lived below. In the current dungeon environment, this area will be rusty, icy and dangerous; but it will still be the major way down to level 2.

The southwest is a bit more problematic. I decide that there is a long, gradual ramp which slopes down to the next level. Since I already have a way that was used for the movement of supplies, I decide that this ramp was the major path for the movement of troops. This ramp will have statues of defiant dwarf lords, weapon racks, sculpted reliefs of dwarf victories and other militaristic details. Considering the current dungeon denizens, many of these features will be stricken and defiled. The ramp will be rubble-filled and rarely used by the goblins and other monsters. Perhaps they will have a superstitious fear of these dour, undying dwarves in stone which makes this route less-used by the forces of evil. This will make it an ideal path for the adventurers to learn about later.

Recalling that my first adventure scenario will feature a guardian naga of the dwarves' serpent god, and the naga's remembrance of elder times, I decide that the naga — if successfully rescued — will lead the adventurers to this escape route, and will explain much of the dwarves history along the way. Perhaps the NPC invading force, to hopefully be led by the PCs in the future, will use the southwest region of the level and this ramp in particular as their proud staging area for the underworld war to come.

## Steps 28 and Beyond: Continuing with the Dungeon Design

This concludes the extended example of roughing out the beginnings of dungeon level 1. The conceptualizing of dungeon level 2 and the full mapping will come later; I can either use a random dungeon generator or draw the maps by hand. Considering the importance of these areas to the long-term campaign, I decide that in the near future I will draw the maps by hand using my sector

maps as guidelines. In a pinch I will use some geomorphs if I like the effect.

The next step is to populate your dungeon with monsters, traps, tricks and treasure, which will be the subjects of our next two volumes on classic dungeon design. There are many rules out there for doing this, or you can simply follow your own preference. For those who wish for more guidance, however, books 2 and 3 will cover these topics in immersive detail. I will also continue the example of my Goblin Head mega-dungeon throughout those books as well.

I hope you have found this example useful, but don't slavishly imitate my approach; hopefully you have found many design decisions that you would personally disagree with. That is excellent; if you can do it better, you should. The only person who can make your perfect dungeon, after all, is you.

# CHAPTER 12: AFTERMATH

"Friends, mercenaries, lords of the underworld, we all did very well this day. Let me honor the memory of Dorothea the fallen by declaring that you, Grasloth, were mighty in cleaving the skull of the Goblin Queen. Aye Dorothea did fall, but first, you saved her life. And you, Sharae Twodirk, saved us from many a deathtrap with your cunning and your guile. And you, Darien of the Holy Avenger, healed our wounds and did smite the foul Lich Lord where he stood. And lastly, Warlock Wordor, I believe we can both agree ... now that it is time to divide the spoils ... that the Mantle of the Archmage would certainly be worn most finely upon *my* shoulders, and not your own."

— *The Last Words of the Grey Mage Emirikainen, Instigating the great Wordorian Kinstrife in the treasure halls under Ebony Eagle*

# Dungeons and Classic Adventures in Literature: Recommended Reading

Roll 1d100 to determine which excellent book or tale you shall vow to add to your collection and (re-?)read, immediately following your completion of the present tome:

**[01-04] The Inferno**, by Dante Alighieri

**[05-08] Three Hearts and Three Lions**, by Poul Anderson

**[09-12] Man of Gold**, by M.A.R. Barker

**[13-16] At the Earth's Core**, by Edgar Rice Burroughs

**[17-20] The Complete Compleat Enchanter**, by L. Sprague De Camp and Fletcher Pratt

**[21-24] Journey to the Underground World**, by Lin Carter

**[25-28] The Dungeon Alphabet Expanded**, by Michael Curtis

**[29-32] The Hoard of the Gibbelins**, by Lord Dunsany

**[33-36] The Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Coloring Album**, by E. Gary Gygax

**[37-40] At Moonset Blackcat Comes**, by E. Gary Gygax

**[41-44] "The Game Referee's Guide,"** or something similar, by E. Gary Gygax

**[45-48] The Maze of Peril**, by Dr. J. Eric Holmes

**[49-52] Red Nails**, by Robert E. Howard

**[53-56] Rogues in the House**, by Robert E. Howard

**[57-60] The Tower of the Elephant**, by Robert E. Howard

**[61-64] The First Book of Lankhmar**, by Fritz Leiber

**[65-66] The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath**, by H.P. Lovecraft

**[67-68] Imprisoned with the Pharaohs**, by H.P. Lovecraft

**[69-72] The Outsider**, by H.P. Lovecraft

**[73-76] The Rats in the Walls**, by H.P. Lovecraft

**[77-80] The Moon Pool**, by Abraham Merritt

**[81-84] Through Dungeons Deep**, by Robert Plamondon

**[85-86] The Pit and the Pendulum**, by Edgar Allan Poe

**[87-88] Down in the Dungeon**, by Rob Stern & Rob Greer

**[89-92] The Hobbit**, by J.R.R. Tolkien

**[93-96] The Lord of the Rings**, by J.R.R. Tolkien

**[97-98] The Compleat Dying Earth**, by Jack Vance

**[99-00] Journey to the Center of the Earth**, by Jules Verne

## Afterword

And so our exploration of classic dungeon fantasy role-play has come to an end … for now. There is much more to come.

Classic FRPGs have been played for nearly 40 years, and there are now so many play styles that it is often difficult to find one group of people where everyone agrees on the same tenets, approach and ultimate goals of the game. Modern fantasy role-playing has brought many advances to the field of gaming, especially in game theory, event resolution, systems for surprise and initiative, overall design refinement and combat balance. However, in focusing on reworking the "crunch" aspects of the game, so much has changed along the way that the classic *game* itself is in danger of becoming lost. This Guide is intended as one of many instruments to battle over-modernism, and to push the pendulum of the clock back so that it can swing back further the other way toward fun, ad hoc rulings, challenge, risk taking and improvisation.

The old school game lives on, in many different manifestations. Every FRPG system can benefit from Gothic atmosphere, dungeon crawling, elements of horror, swashbuckling play, pulp fantasy, and a "back to basics" mentality in environment

design. Most especially, however, this author contends that the essence of classic play is primarily in shifting the balance of power. Players in recent decades have become more enamored with the idea of storytelling, and less interested in danger-, challenge- and choice-focused sandbox games.

Storytelling is in vogue, and it does add significant drama, immersion and cinematic action to the game; but these benefits come at the far-too-grave price of minimizing danger within the game environment itself. When danger is lessened with the goal of always keeping the PCs alive, the fundamental death-defying accomplishments inherent in the classic game are irrevocably compromised. Worse, when there is little danger to be had, the meaning of rewards — and of treasure itself — are gravely minimized as well.

In returning the game to ideals which lie nearer to the original precepts of classic dungeon play, the players should be reminded that they are not entitled to rewards at every turn. They must earn their rewards through teamwork, skill and creative improvisation against the odds. Players interested in the old school approach should be firmly reminded that the GM is the sole referee and adjudicator of the game. When players question the GM's decisions in the name of self-interest, the game of imagined danger and peril becomes less fun for everyone.

There is an underlying tension as the players try to keep their heroes from harm, and the GM strives to challenge them. Part of the difficulty is caused by differences in perspective. Players who wish to shift the balance of power solely toward their own characters are encouraged to stop playing, to step back, and to become part-time GMs themselves. Sometimes, turning the tables can give players and GMs alike a fresh and vital perspective into what life is like on the other side of the gaming table. It may well be

that an empathetic, measured perspective change is all that is required.

Above all, players should come to the table with the understanding that control of the game is never in their hands; but if they play well and wisely, then *deserved* — not merely *delivered* — rewards are certain to come their way.

Characters in classic play will die, especially in the early going. That grim fact is inherent in a risk-oriented game. But death is not always the end. Trusty henchmen can advance in levels to the point where they can become Player Characters and avenge their masters' deaths; resurrection can be had for great heroes of renown who serve the patriarchs and their deities with cunning and valor; and sometimes, through wishes and altered reality, death itself can be entirely cheated by a turning black of the clock. Death is not always the end of a character's story. But it is its omnipresence, the *threat* of death, which makes the possibilities of victory all the sweeter.

Once players come to terms with the mortality of their characters, they tend to become less interested in creating premeditated character designs from levels 1 to 20, and less interested in plotting out a boring and predictable future marked only by undeserved "rewards" as speed bumps along the way. When they realize instead that the dungeon is unconquerable, but that real and significant victories can be snatched from the claws of dragons and even worse foes overcome, they are freed to focus their energies not on mock super-heroism and power-mongering, but instead upon the essence of the game: adventure, questing, peril, problem solving, quick thinking, panicked die rolls, shrewd tactics supplemented by luck, tragic and heroic deaths, and desperate escapes wrought only through the bravery of friends and boon companions.

As players increase their skill and understanding of the unforgiving dungeon

environment, they will find themselves surviving unforgettable battles in which friends banded together, defied the odds, became rich, and — most blessed of all — lived to fight together another day.

It is the dungeon adventure that often best epitomizes this essence of fantasy role-playing. With its sinister atmosphere, mythic underworlds, claustrophobic environs, deadly traps and wondrous secrets beneath the earth, the dungeon is the purest manifestation of draconian danger, Plutonian wealth, flashing swords, chaotic sorcery and eldritch mystery.

The dungeon is not an outmoded style of play; it is an eternal and archetypal source of imagination that can be adapted to any circumstance. It simply needs to be re-imagined in a more fundamental way so that it can remain vital in the current gaming environment. The GM and the players can work together on creating a resurgence for these ideals by getting things back to basics, by knocking down clichés and by reconsidering foregone conclusions. If the GM can surprise and delight his players and make them passionate about gaming (even if they didn't think they'd ever "feel that fire" again), then this Guide has served its purpose.

Of course, this book is by no means the last word on dungeon design. Far from it, in fact! There is much more to come. Books 2 and 3 of the Castle Oldskull Dungeon Design Guide Series will include a veritable dragon's trove of lore revealing the secrets of Monsters, Enemy NPCs, Rival Adventurers, Traps, Tricks, Treasures, and much more.

Until next we meet, use these suggestions to enhance your own play and dungeon designs. Even where you disagree with my suggestions, use the specific fundamentals of your disagreement to improve the way the game is played. There will certainly be times when you know much better than this author about what to create, and how to challenge your own intelligent and

idiosyncratic players. Use this Guide as a tool, not the word of law.

Be devious. Be merciful in conceiving your dungeon levels, and yes, be cruel. But most of all, think about how you can encourage your players to see beyond the clichés and stereotypes of classic play, and how to come to an understanding that stereotypes are not born of boring game elements; they are born of *epic* game elements, bolts of magical inspiration which only became mocked through overuse. Mockery is born when classic pulp elements are misunderstood, disrespected and divided from the spirit of the game.

Unify that spirit with the game once more. Go forth and create good dungeons. When the designing ends, the game begins. Prepare, engage, and roll for initiative.

And until next time, may you always roll natural twenties.

Enjoy the game.

# APPENDIX:
# THE SHARDS OF
# CHAOS

*Being a Miscellany of Obscure and Arcane Suggestions Aimed to Ignite the Imagination of the Ever-Harried Dungeon Designer*



Abandon all hope, ye of stultified imagination! This is a secret chapter for the crafters of dungeons and infinite netherworlds. This chapter is to the banal concept of "dungeon dressing," as an echo is to a song you have never heard. This is the chapter of Groohlz-Drahka, the Emerald Lord of Meaningless Things, the Shatterer of the 6,666 Ever-Shifting Shards of Chaos.

Behold the Shards he keeps to himself beside his throne, writhing in their current guises: A Throne of Sculpted Maidens, an Elaborate Cone of Parchment, a Book of Melting Pages, a Lizard-Worshipped Urn from Lost Bethmoora, the Unrepentant Laughing Skull of the Man Who Knew All But One Thing ... and more, and more, and more.

It is said that each of the 167 discovered Shards (6,499 remain to be unearthed) changes shape when an adventurer leaves a dungeon room, and enters it from another doorway. The Shards live and breathe and change, only when you doubt them. Take your wary eye not from them.

What are these things? Have they meaning? Are they threatening? Are they nothing? Oh, it would be unwise indeed to believe that. What are they? They are random things from the trove of Castle Oldskull. Who dreamt them? The Keeper of the Castle, surely. Who receives them now? You, the Game Master,

one by one. What do they mean? Anything you desire.

What secrets do they hold? That depends on the questions asked by your players. Are they deadly? When caught shifting between their guises, perhaps. Do be careful how you play with whatever you will find, deep within the underworlds of the dead.

How do you use this chapter to further your gaming? Roll once for each boring dungeon room (D1000, or =RANDBETWEEN(1,1000)), place the foretold Shard of Chaos, describe it to your players, and enjoy.

Should the adventurers leave the room where the Shard resides and later return; or, put the Thing in their sack and pull it out much later to ponder its meaning; or, simply if they turn their backs on it when Chaos frowns, roll again: the guise of the Shard has changed, once again and to be the same never after.

The shifting takes several seconds, or a night. Is the process magical? That is difficult to say. It may be primal, illusory, technological, perceived, mistaken, psychic, planar, dimensional, imagined, dreamt of, undreamt, disbelieved, induced by the beholder, demonic, angelic, incomprehensible. The tiny may well become immense. Do not be crushed, do not linger for too long over riddles with no answer.

For this is the secret of Groohlz-Drahka. All hail Groohlz-Drahka the Immortal Troll King, the Ever-Replenishing Jester, Devourer of Maiden Flesh. Welcome to the Trove of 167.

Begone. Bow not, mortal. Though you may laugh.

### The 167 Unearthed Shards of Chaos

Roll 1D1000 and consult the following table.

[001-006] A Ruined Clamp (It Has a Name)

[007-012] A Strange and Pinewood-Framed Piece of Chalk (Eternal, Never Diminishing, Ex Libris …)

[013-018] A Niter-Covered, Orcish-Inscribed Piece of Rotting Wood (Bearing the One Word Never to be Spoken)

[019-024] Undamaged Target Dummies (Six, Depicting Halfling Heroes of the Elder Age)

[025-030] Egyptian Mythos-Themed and Gnawed Grave Bundles (Anakha, Deshit-Riri, and the Tongueless One)

[031-036] Ruined, Fallen, and Archaic Deposits of Sulfur Crystals (Each Holds a Whispered Song)

[037-042] A Withered Fungal Turnstile (The Imbiber)

[043-048] A Muddy and Netted Piece of Rotting Wood (from the Wreck of the White Ship)

[049-054] A Gnawed, Dero-Crafted, and Filigreed Cupboard (The Skull Chatterer)

[055-060] Gray Jugs (27, a Different Warning Rune to Each)

[061-066] Mounded Kobold-Crafted Baskets (The Tail-Coil Gathering)

[067-072] Miniature, Rusted, yet Salvageable Hanging Lanterns (of the Thirteen Hues of Limbo)

[073-078] An Elemental-Themed Wall Relief (to be Kissed, Ere the Journey)

[079-084] A Red and Melted Unholy Symbol (Third Eye of the Crimson King)

[085-090] A Dead Homunculus in a Bottle (Igor IV, As Yet Unborn)

[091-096] Buried Ewers (Three; the Mouth, the Soul, the Mind)

[097-102] Unsheathed and Junk-Covered Crates (The Holders of the Insect Godlings)

[103-108] Stinking, Sought-After, Dried Troll Nets (and That Which Was Captured Ever)

[109-114] An Enormous Lead Column (and She Who Was Crushed Beneath It)

[115-120] A Lizardfolk-Molded Mass of Vegetation on the Floor (the Mother Who Shall Crawl Again)

[121-126] A Slaver-Covered, Camouflaged Whip (the Taster of Three More Questions)

[127-132] Submerged and Scattered Bones (Lo'kolai, Unredeemed)

[133-138] Tarnished and Voodoo Mythos-Themed Lockers (Nine, and the Cackling Ones)

[139-144] Orange, Ritually-Arranged, Gnomish Crutches (of the Hobblers Three)

[145-150] An Archaic Stone Slab (Aklo Writing)

[151-156] An Ash-Wood Candle Holder (and the Void That Is Not a Candle)

[157-162] A Toppled, Spoiled Barrel of Milk (The Ichor of Forgotten Dreams)

[163-168] Strangely Twisted Monster Corpses (Lucrius and His Brethren, Grafted into His Flesh)

[169-174] A Muddy and Caged Sheaf of Crossbow Bolts (The Flights of Imperious Planar Questing)

[175-180] Celtic Mythos-Themed Ceiling Glyphs (The Death Song of Andraste)

[181-186] A Bloodstained Pestle (The Crusher of Evil Eyes)

[187-192] An Improvised and Filigreed Alembic (The Secondary Distiller of Explosive Furies)

[193-198] A Strange Mural Depicting a Bizarre Whale Ceremony (The Slaying and Rebirth of Leviathan's Daughter)

[199-204] Gnomish Healing Herbs (The Speaker of the 1,000 Burrow Tongues)

[205-210] Scorched and Hanging Moths (Magically Held in Stasis / Time; the Souls of the Burning Silks)

[211-216] African Mythos-Themed, Improvised, and Slimy Jars (The Quivering Lifeblood of Inkanyamba)

[217-222] A Nether Gnome-Crafted Piece of Insect Exoskeleton (The Slaughter Trophy of Thoop-Shibboleth)

[223-228] A Tiny, Damaged, and Changeling-Crafted Shield (The Repeller of the Unsidhe and Their Cries)

[229-234] A Mounded, New-Looking, Pile of Stone Blocks (The Seals upon the Weirding Wound)

[235-240] Elemental-Themed Painted Curtains (Badly Mildewed; the Depiction of Temptress Zuggt'hala and Her Sporelings)

[241-246] Rot-Festooned and Smelly Fishhooks (The Gorger's Penultimate Dismay)

[247-252] A Pile of Decaying Wasps (The Willing Sacrifices of the Goldthirst Tribe)

[253-258] A Ritually-Arranged Set of Tarot Cards (Rotted; the Dolorous Lay of Baroness Emrithol)

[259-264] A Painted and Clawed Scattering of Rocks (The Territorial Markers of the Shivering Beast)

[265-270] A Tiny, Unbroken, Diorite Crowbar (The Sunderer-Way of the Quickling Troves)

[271-276] Rust-Covered (Iron-Sheathed) Demi-Human Skulls (The Speakers of the Fourteen Terminal Wisdoms)

[277-282] Fetid and Immense Glowworms, Crawling (The Feasting Remains of Bandabar the Unworthy)

[283-288] Large, Door-Mounted, Paintings Covered in Glyphs (The Imprisonment of the Shifting Ones)

[289-294] An Ancient Scorch Mark on the Wall (The Finality of Cthugha)

[295-300] A Coiled and Maggoty Giant Snake Carcass (Thulsa in His Imminent Rebirth)

[301-306] A Roped, Fragrant Satchel of Herbs (The Last of the Honey Dream Lotus)

[307-312] A Carving of the Ouroboros (The Unsevered Infinity)

[313-318] Rubble-Covered Weapons Racks (The Readiness of the Immortal Legion)

[319-324] Central American Mythos-Themed Pillars (The Spire Tops of Mictlan, Ere Xolotl)

[325-330] A Net-Draped Lever (Operational) (The Immaculate Iron Finger of the Ulthrogorgon)

[331-336] A Balanced Wall Plaque, Angled Against a Grating (The Abjuring Reflector of the Beholder of Unopened Throats)

[337-342] A Filthy, Glue-Covered, Fallen Rafter (The Last Failure of Eshembura the Tunnel Spider)

[343-348] Moist Clumps of Cinnamon-Scented Guano (The Sugared Gifts of Camazotz the Vision Bringer)

[349-354] Dripping Blankets Hanging from Ceiling Hooks (The Banishment of the Wretched Cloaker Defilers)

[355-360] Dark Elven-Crafted Hanging Nets (The Lingering Tresses of Lilith)

[361-366] A Balanced Ceramic Tile atop a Goblin Skull (The Thought Prison of Bagra Shrixu)

[367-372] A Damp and Collapsed Section of Floor (The Lidded Eye)

[373-378] A Gnole-Crafted Inscription on the Floor (The Ever-Summoning Cackle Chants of Yaenoghul)

[379-384] Stinking Tankards Made of Hellbeast Leather (The Belly Echoes of the Purple Iconoclast)

**[385-390]** Old Deposits of Azure Salt Crystals (The Powdered Seventh Skull of Ashmodai)

**[391-396]** Moist, Yellow, and Niter-Covered Hanging Chains (Doll and Idol Prisons of the Mouse King)

**[397-402]** An Immovable Pauldron (Magically Affixed to a Wall; the Unrelenting Defiance of Khemet Shai of the Brazen Khopesh)

**[403-408]** An Entwined String of Preserved Eyeballs (The Gazes of the Munificent Disciples of Skelos)

**[409-414]** A Mostly-Destroyed Orrery (The Mirror Universe in Miniature)

**[415-420]** An Immense Door in the Shape of a Beast Maw (The Bestial Swallower of the Kleptocrats)

**[421-426]** Brown-Stained and Splintered Human Skulls (The Honor of the Last Seventeen Who Fell)

**[427-432]** Centipede-Infested Moldy Furs (The Sacred Vestments of Sepa, Nomenclator of the Apshai)

**[433-438]** A Voodoo Mythos-Themed Rack of Rusty Knives (The Slaking Claws of the Ogun Tigress)

**[439-444]** An Immense Deposit of Alum Crystals (Palatiri the Seeress, Ere Her Final Transformation)

**[445-450]** A Conspicuous, Partially Melted Armillary Sphere (The Gate Hollows of the Manifold Infernal Netherworlds)

**[451-456]** A Fine Set of Crutches (Halfling-Sized) (The Celerity of Tremolo, the Bard of Smoke)

**[457-462]** Weird Streamers of Lichen (The Utricating Tufts of Utter Leng)

**[463-468]** A Corrosion-Layered Pair of Slippers (The Leap of Quon'la, the Shimmerer of Worlds)

**[469-474]** Two Glued-Together Kobold Corpses (It Didn't Work)

**[475-480]** An Ominously Deep Cesspool (The Mouth of the Juju Eblex, Ai, Shoggothai)

**[481-486]** A Withered, Dripping, and Precisely-Positioned Finger (Mummified) (The Beckoner of the Final Minion)

**[487-492]** A Scorched Hornets' Nest (The War World of Hymenopterion)

**[493-498]** Musk-Scented Blue Moss (The Earthen Beard of the Elder Moosleute)

**[499-504]** Dripping Icicles (Regardless of Room Temperature) (The Proof of Cryonia)

**[505-510]** A Lump of Grease (The Expulsion of the Devouring Revelation)

**[511-516]** A Caged Spinning Wheel (The Eternal Dance of Time in Seven Spheres)

**[517-522]** A Lice-Ridden Inanimate Flesh Colossus (Grumgrom, the Pulverizer)

**[523-528]** A Mounted Pair of Demon Horns (The Shame Crown of Onoskelis)

**[529-534]** Immense Beakers (The Titan Measures of the Crystallized Quintessence)

**[535-540]** A Disturbingly-Featured Grave Bundle (The Last, Lost Princess of Rana Xuma Chiol)

**[541-546]** A Putrefied Journal with Pages of Skin (The Speaker of Thine Elder Soul)

**[547-552]** A Rubble-Covered and Dwarven-Forged Set of Caltrops (The "Fool's Mithril" Barbs of Khom-Tori Khom-Tul)

**[553-558]** A Shimmering Rivulet (Glowing) (The Ovis Quiescence of Looking-Glass Land)

**[559-564]** Dirty Slugs (Covered in Dust, Dying) (The Return of the Circle of the Illustrious Archmagi)

**[565-570]** Swaying Ceiling-Hung Baskets (The Keeping of the Chittering Ones)

**[571-576]** A Cord Covered with Spider Cocoons (The Brood Thread of Pim-Pim-Teriax the Orb Weaver)

**[577-582]** A Sludge-Covered Piece of Rotting Wood (The Fell Heartwood of the Arboreal Giantess, Enghwaan Tulm)

**[583-588]** A Sumerian Mythos-Themed and Rust-Covered Piece of Armor (The Chthonic Deflector of Tishtrya)

**[589-594]** A Scratched Wooden Beam (Coded Inscription) (The Whittled Whateley Recording of Yog-Sothoth)

**[595-600]** Elven-Fashioned Nails (The Mushroom-Fragranced Hobnails of Oberon)

**[601-606]** An Oil-Soaked Haunch of Meat (Kenjiri's Lure)

**[607-612]** A Desiccated Giant Lizard Carcass (The Black Disciple of Bokrug's Deliverance)

**[613-618]** A Smoke-Scented Mug (The Death Draught Echo of Fangorius Rex)

**[619-624]** Chiming Mosaics (The Sounds Come From … ?) (The Star Lyres, Beckoning)

**[625-630]** Ornately-Carved Human Skulls (No Jawbones) (The Silenced Choir of the King in Yellow)

**[631-636]** Heaped Boulders with Hollow Insides (The Forsaken Egg Sheaths of Petron Dolm)

**[637-642]** A Wall Mural Depicting Diabolic Sacrifice (The Willing and Unwilling Blood Brides of Ba'al)

**[643-648]** A Faintly Glowing Canopic Jar (The Gold Dust Lungs of the Cynocephali, Impetrativa)

**[649-654]** A Petrified Thing Akin to an Immense Centipede (The Startlement of Wendonai)

**[655-660]** Collapsed Wooden Vats (The Quixotic Brews of Flabberghast and Flibbertigibbet)

**[661-666]** A Chewed and Gnawed Heap of Canvas Tarps (The Dreamt Meal of the Dragon Head upon the Invisible Jagannath)

**[667-672]** Bronze, Sludge-Covered Flasks (Droplets from the Four Humours of Trismegistus)

**[673-678]** A Bloody Tapestry Wrapped Over Something (The Modius Experiment)

**[679-684]** A Magically Hovering Flask (The Unclaimable Tears)

**[685-690]** A Chinese Mythos-Themed Scrawling on Wall (Concerning the Exploded Remnants of the Gorger Taotie)

**[691-696]** Pure White Frescoes (Crude) (The Flesh Images of the Emerging Ones)

**[697-702]** Unbroken Chain Links, Separated, Arrayed in a Circle (The Calling of Yag-Kosha the Unbroken)

**[703-708]** An Invisible Heap of Serpent Skins (The Thrice-Counted Weregild of Avaloria)

**[709-714]** A Destroyed Magnifying Glass (The Seer of the Curdle Ghast of Lilliput)

**[715-720]** A Hovering Great Helm (The Crest of Annihilated Myrmidon)

**[721-726]** A Calcite-Covered Idol (The Crystalline Kiss of Kali Everlasting)

**[727-732]** Withered Boxes Made of Insect Chitin (The Time Wombs of Shaggai)

**[733-738]** Wrecked Orcish Artifacts (The War Looms of Quij-Son the Triumphator)

**[739-744]** A Trash-Covered Footstool (The Sardonic Resting of Portorus Gravitas)

**[745-750]** An Improvised Piece of Rubble (Sharpened, Wrapped with Wire) (It Shivers)

**[751-756]** A Recently-Ground Pile of Bone Dust (The Dismal Failure of Cretchkri)

**[757-762]** A Dripping Tangle of Withered Vines (Panthlana's Veins, Seeking)

**[763-768]** A Disturbingly-Shaped and -Sculpted Chaos Gate (The Ever-Hungry Opening of Tlazolteotl)

**[769-774]** Melted Flagons (Humiliating Legacy of the Bumbleclank Clan)

**[775-780]** Stacked and Rotted Banners (The Conquering Reeds of Plutonia)

**[781-786]** A Yellow Mass of Vegetation on the Floor (Kleshim, Yes, the Servitor of Your Ultimate Wishes, Yes)

**[787-792]** A Rusty Cleaver Blade (The Barbed Tongue of Wepwawet)

**[793-798]** A Sodden Black Cape (Worn by a Shadow, It Follows)

**[799-804]** Brownie-Crafted Mouse Sculptures (The Night Steed Fetishes)

**[805-810]** Crude Bins Filled with Old Berries (The Treasonous Shamu-Bimble Harvest)

**[811-816]** Stomped Deposits of Mineral Crystals (They Die Not)

**[817-822]** A Tin Ladle (Very Large) (Grimgrum's Unstable Apothecarion)

**[823-828]** A Web-Enmeshed Journal (The Fated Un-Confessions of Arachne)

**[829-834]** A Badly Burned, Dero-Crafted Headdress (Doll Mask of the Machine Mother)

**[835-840]** Gore-Caked Slugs (Huge, Non-Combatant) (The Brine-Death Feasters of Yuggothai)

**[841-846]** Sumerian Mythos-Themed Wall Carvings (The Ravaging of Irkalla by Ereshkigal)

**[847-852]** A Bulging Area in the Wall (The Tumor of the Nastrond Behemoth)

**[853-858]** A Ceremonially-Painted Toadstool (K'mi K'mo, Bringer of the Immortal Fireflies)

**[859-864]** An Ominous and American Indian Mythos-Themed Painting on the Floor (Stone-and-Oil Reflecting Pool of the Skinwalker Cabal)

**[865-870]** Three Open Graves and a Pile of Removed Flagstones (Imli, Ongwi, and Erelu)

**[871-876]** Shimmering Mice (The Spell Incanting Requires Further Attenuation)

**[877-882]** A Grand Wall Mural Depicting the Triumph of Death (The Very Last Question of Princeling Gideon the Ninth)

**[883-888]** Moss-Covered Caskets (Tread Quietly, a Dream is Rooted Here)

**[889-894]** A Moldy Stick of Incense (The Ambrosial Essence of Fulgatha the Orb Eater)

**[895-900]** A Spice-Tinged and Glowing Cabinet (The Melange Locker)

**[901-906]** A Junk-Covered Piece of Paper (Expose It Not)

**[907-912]** Maggoty and Filthy Dishes (The Cruel Transmogrifications of Grey Brunhilde)

**[913-918]** Dwarven-Language Floor Scratchings (The Cries of the Cyst Knotters)

**[919-924]** Nineteen Decorated Animal Skulls (The Hungering Gatekeepers to the Happy Hunting Grounds)

**[925-930]** A Dried, Distorted, Demi-Human Corpse (It Has Your Features)

**[931-936]** A Filthy and Deep One Crafted Battle Banner (Extollings of the Dire Whips of Verdigris)

**[937-942]** A Small, White-Lit Opening Between Two Stones (The First Sign)

**[943-948]** Crawling Butterflies (The Elder Worlds Emergent)

**[949-954]** Submerged Dried Vegetables in a Shallow Pool (The Savor Offerings to the Feufollet)

**[955-960]** Stacked Bricks (Scorched) (The 347 Canticles of Overlord Cobalus, Hammer-Imperator of the Tommyknockers)

**[961-966]** A Classically Pointless Pile of Rubble (Really) (?)

**[967-972]** A Central American Mythos-Themed Bone Gorget (The Barbed Breast Mantle of Huitzilopochtli)

**[973-978]** A Centipede-Infested, Slimy Floor Pipe (The Under-Eden Faucibus)

**[979-984]** Primitively Carved Wall Protrusions (The Ascension of Bwur)

**[985-990]** Slightly Damaged Sarcophagus (Partially Open) (The Stealth Gate of Neter-Khertet)

**[991-996]** Seven Knucklebones (Gaming Dice) (The Astragali of Life-in-Death)

**[997-000]** A Disturbingly-Detailed Statue of a Dragon Beast (Do Not Blink in Its Presence)

## More Tools of the Mad God

So if you've found this book useful, where should you go from here? It really depends on what pieces of your world that you want to design next, how much help you need, and which way you want the campaign to eventually go.

All of these books can be found at the author's DriveThruRPG author page for Wonderland Imprints, at:

https://www.drivethrurpg.com/browse/pub/7178/Kent-David-Kelly

Here's a summary of what you will find there.

### Dungeon Design

The direct sequel to this book is *The Classic Dungeon Design Guide II*, which focuses primarily on using random generators to create an infinite number of unique dungeon features, such as altars, pools, doors, treasure chests, and so forth.



https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/210388/CASTLE-OLDSKULL--The-Classic-Dungeon-Design-Guide-II
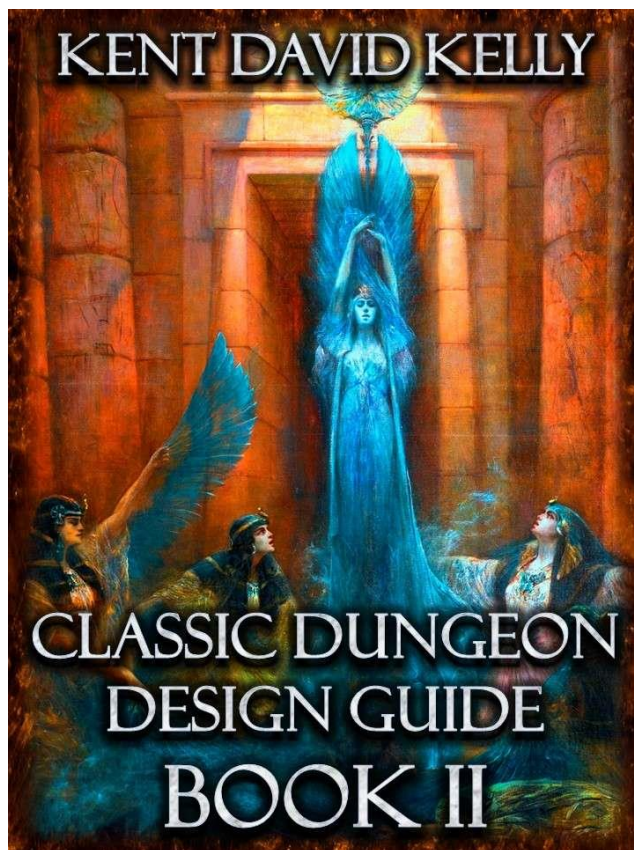
The third book in the series provides even more details for dungeon room types (with mapping and sizing recommendations), along with notes on real-world temples, castles, tombs, and other places of inspiration.

### Dungeon Design Automation

Sometimes, you just want to generate a dungeon using random generators, or you might even want to play the game solo.

The *Oldskull Dungeon Tools* are designed to automate many of the ideas I present in my Dungeon Design Guides, and despite the learning curve this system can save you a great deal of time.

Furthermore, the *Oldskull Dungeon Generator* is ideally suited for random level 1 dungeon creation, and can be use in solitaire adventuring as well.

## Dungeon Room Design

One of the hardest things in dungeon design, once you've become proficient at it, involves keeping each room and encounter unique and engaging. There are several books which provide ideas for bizarre dungeon room types:

➢ *The Book of Dungeon Traps*
➢ *Chaotic Descriptor Table*
➢ *1,000 Rooms of Chaos*
➢ *1,000 Rooms of Chaos II*



https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/224705/CASTLE-OLDSKULL--1000-Rooms-of-Chaos
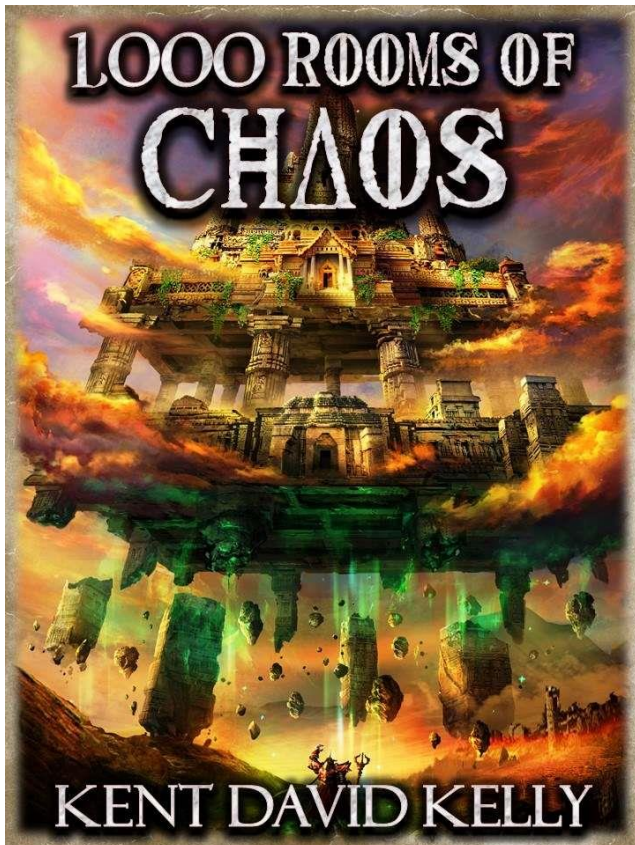
## Adventure Design

The topic of adventure design, which involves stringing all of the game elements together (benefactor, quest, side quests, wilderness, dungeon, complications, characters, and so forth), is particularly challenging. My *Oldskull Adventure Generator* is one of the most highly-regarded mega-supplements in this field.

## Character Options

Sometimes, the success of your game depends on the options that you open up for your players so that they're always excited to play. Unique races and classes can add a considerable amount of spice to keep your players intrigued.

Titles in this vein include:

➢ *Bloodbath Bunnies* (humorous medieval rabbits)
➢ *Oldskull Anti-Paladins*
➢ *Oldskull Half-Ogres*
➢ *Oldskull Plague Doctors*

Also, the *Dungeon Delver Enhancer* is a mega-supplement which gives the players a huge array of details for character design, including names, descriptions, skills, archetypes, and so forth.

## City Design

One of the most challenging fixtures you will need in the game is a grand city state, which will serve as the urban center for your campaign. The most comprehensive guidebook on this topic that I have published is the *Game World Generator, Deluxe Edition*, which includes a full-featured city generation system.

Other urban-themed books include:

➢ *Captains of the Scarlet Tabard*
➢ *City State Encounters*
➢ *The Order of the Scarlet Tabard*

**Game History and GM Education**

Beyond playing the game and creating your own campaign, you can learn a tremendous amount by following the history of the game as it pertains to E. Gary Gygax, David Lance Arneson, and other luminaries. These books detail the history with a focus on how to gather ideas from past masters for future game design:

- ➢ *Hawk & Moor Book I*
- ➢ *Hawk & Moor Book II*
- ➢ *Hawk & Moor Book III*
- ➢ *Hawk & Moor Book IV*
- ➢ *Hawk & Moor Book V*
- ➢ *The Steam Tunnel Incident* (a cautionary tale)

**Monster and Lair Design**

The GM is responsible for making monster encounters as exciting, challenging, and unpredictable as possible (while staying fair). These guidebooks can help you with monster lair particulars:

- ➢ *Lords of Oldskull: Krampus*
- ➢ *Monsters & Treasures Level 1*
- ➢ *Oldskull D100 NPC Generator*
- ➢ *Oldskull Dragons*
- ➢ *Oldskull Dungeon Bestiary*
- ➢ *Oldskull Dungeon Encounters Book I*
- ➢ *Oldskull Monster Generator*
- ➢ *Oldskull Serpent Folk*
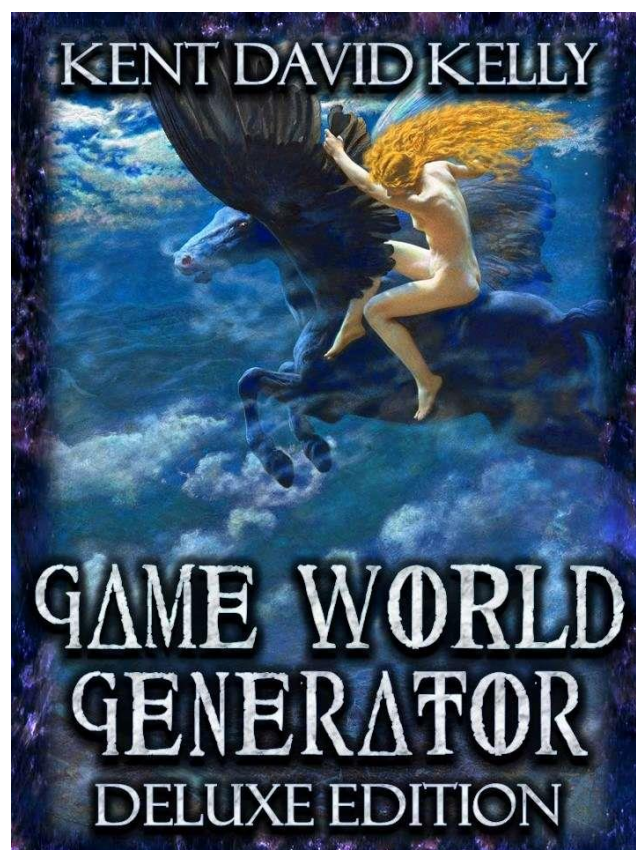- ➢ *Oldskull Trolls*

**Mythos Design**

To make the world truly come alive, the GM will need to add gods, religions, myths, legends, and resonant ties to classic works of pulp fantasy. These books can show you the way to do just that:

- ➢ *The Oldskull Necronomicon I*
- ➢ *The Pegana Mythos*

**Treasure Design**

Unusual treasures will give your players incentives to keep exploring the world, and to increase their characters' power. The GM's responsibility entails keeping player expectations and power balanced in ratio to the game's challenge level. These books can be useful in making interesting treasures:

- ➢ *The Oldskull Deck of Strangest Things*
- ➢ *Oldskull Treasure Trove*



https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/245925/CASTLE-OLDSKULL--Game-World-Generator--Deluxe-Edition

**World Design**

Beyond the dungeon, your players will come to expect you to provide a vast world to explore. The world will bring wilderness adventures, political conflicts, and high-level

campaign elements (such as baronies and colonial settlements) into play.

These books can assist you with world design:

- ➢ *Game World Generator* (the Basic Edition is more affordable, while the Deluxe Edition includes more features)
- ➢ *Oldskull Tyrrhenia Map Pack*
- ➢ *333 Realms of Entropy*

And there are always more titles to come! Be sure to like my author's page if you would like to receive regular notices of book updates, new offerings, sales, and other news from afar.

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## About the Author



Beginning play as a chaotic neutral normal human with one measly hit point to his name, KENT DAVID KELLY eventually became apprenticed to a magic-user of ill repute ... a foul man who dwelt in the steamy deeps of the Ivory Cloud Mountain. After this mentor carelessly misplaced an intelligent soul-sucking sword and then died under suspicious circumstances, his former henchman Mr. Kelly escaped to the deeper underground and there began playing Satanic role-playing games. This, the legends tell us, occurred in the year 1981.

Hoary wizard-priests who inspired Mr. Kelly in his netherworldly machinations included the peerless Gygax, Carr, Arneson, Cook, Hammack, Jaquays, Bledsaw, Moldvay, Kuntz, Schick and Ward. Sadly, a misguided made-for-the-basements movie entitled *Mazes and Monsters* gave Mr. Kelly's parents conniptions in 1982. As a result of that blasphemous Tom Hanks debacle (and other more personal lapses in judgment), Mr. Kelly

was eventually forbidden from playing his favorite game for a considerable length of time.

Nonplussed but not defeated, he used this enforced exile to escape to a friend's alehouse, and there indulged himself in now-classic computer RPGs such as Zork, Telengard, Temple of Apshai, Ultima, Tunnels of Doom, The Bard's Tale, Phantasie, Pool of Radiance, Wizard's Crown and Wasteland. He then went on to write computer versions of his own FRPGs, which led to his obsession with coupling creative design elements with random dungeons and unpredictable adventure generation.

Mr. Kelly wrote and submitted his first adventure for Dungeon Magazine #1 in 1986. Unfortunately, one Mr. Moore decided that his submission was far too "Lovecraftian, horrific and unfair" to ever serve that worthy periodical as a publishable adventure. Mr. Kelly, it must be said, took this rejection as a very good sign of things to come.

In the late 80s and 90s, Mr. Kelly wrote short stories, poems and essays … some of which have been published under the Wonderland Imprints banner. He wrote several dark fantasy and horror novels as well. Concurrently, he ran Dark Angel Collectibles, selling classic FRPG materials as Darkseraphim, and assisted the Acaeum with the creation of the Valuation Board and other minor research projects.

At this time, Mr. Kelly and his entourage of evil gnomes are rumored to dwell in the dread and deathly under-halls of the Acaeum, Dragonsfoot, ENWorld, Grognardia, Knights & Knaves, ODD, and even more nefarious levels deep down in the mega-dungeon of the Web.

There he remains in vigil, his vampiric sword yet shivering in his hand. When not being sought outright for answers to halfling riddles or other more sundry sage advice, he is to be avoided by sane individuals *at all costs.*

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