

GURPS®

Fourth Edition

DUNGEON FANTASY ENCOUNTERS™ THE ROOM



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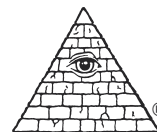
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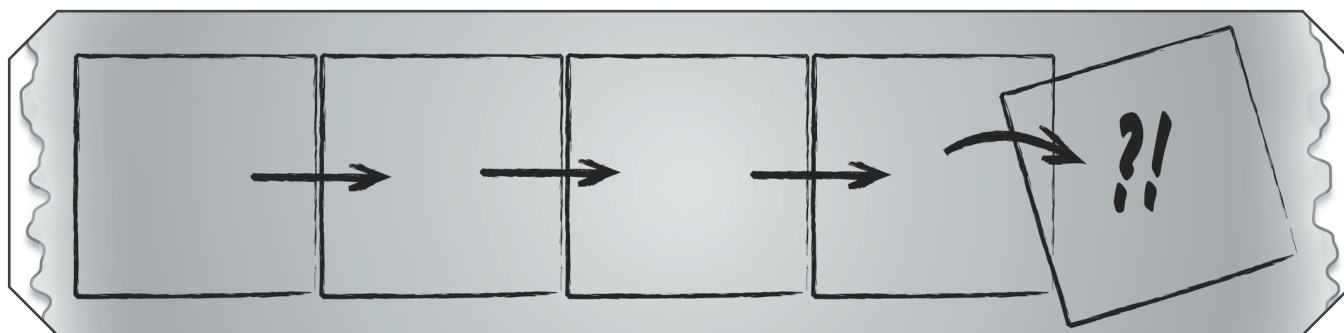
Stock #37-0362

Version 1.0 – October 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Even setting aside all the encounters, a dungeon requires a lot of work from the GM: mapping it, finding a place for it in the campaign world, getting the heroes there, and so on. While running the adventure, describing rooms and passages to the group's mapper takes time and patience. And *then* there's the matter of players having characters shuttle to and from town, revisit explored areas to cart out every last copper, return to the magic fountain for more sips (or to bottle the water), and so on.

For some, these things are among the charms of hack 'n' slash fantasy! For others, they're a pain in the neck.

Old-school gaming often got around this by having areas linked together almost at random: "You leave the Dragon's Lair, fall down a chute, and end up in the Golem Lab." Digital dungeons were (and sometimes still are) often procedurally generated, and didn't allow players to return to earlier areas. But such approaches tend to have almost *no* story, which is a problem of its own.

The Room offers a compromise: It allows the GM to string together odd encounters without having to worry *much* about

mapping, logic, or even having the delvers stray far from home. At the same time, it offers a structure within which all of this almost makes sense, and perhaps even hints at deep secrets in the campaign world's past.

As in other supplements, important traits the PCs can use to solve problems are in **boldface**.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995. In that capacity, he has written, edited, or contributed to some 150 **GURPS** releases, revised the game into its fourth edition (2004), and been a regular contributor to *Pyramid* magazine. From 2008, he has served as lead creator of the **GURPS Action** and **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** series; work on the latter led to his design of the **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango. He lives in Montréal, Québec with *son amour*, Geneviève.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ROOM

At first glance, The Room appears to be just another 30' x 30' area in some dungeon, building, or large vehicle – or perhaps the entire interior of a small freestanding structure like a kiosk, mausoleum, pavilion, or shed. In reality, it's much more. To begin with, it isn't *in* reality . . .

THE DOOR

The delvers first encounter The Room under unremarkable circumstances: Behind a door of a variety common in the area they're exploring, which could be *anywhere* (see *Where Is The Room?*, p. 4). The opening is wide enough to admit one person at a time, in single file.

This entry might be obvious, concealed, or secret (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons**, p. 19). Access could be controlled by anything from a cloth curtain or flap, through a door, gate, or portcullis of any kind (**Dungeons**, p. 18), to something as exotic as a shifting stone panel or a glowing magical portal. This might be locked, barred, or magically sealed, if that's typical in the area and possibly even if it isn't – The Room is *special*, and The Door is likely to boast an intricate puzzle lock or enchantment to pique visitors' curiosity.

If The Door is magical, that shows up to the usual spells and abilities – but however extraordinary the entrance, there's no way to divine that the chamber beyond is unusual.

It appears to be a typical room to anyone using a spell like **Earth Vision**, **Glass Wall**, or **Transparency** to take a peek. Otherwise, Information-class and Knowledge-college spells sense nothing special from The Room itself, because it *isn't actually there*. The entryway decorates a two-dimensional opening to an uncanny passage to another realm, though the presence of a dimensional portal *might* be detectable; see *What If?* (p. 5).

Opening or destroying The Door (or boring a hole in it!) likewise reveals what looks like a typical dungeon room, lit in whatever way nearby chambers are lit. This space has no special properties that stand out to advantages or spells. That's because what shows through The Door is a cosmic *projection* from The Room. It has depth, shadow, an echo, and even an odor, but all this originates at the strange portal . . . which, as it isn't magical in the usual sense, doesn't show up to such spells as **Mage Sight**. See *What If?* for more.

Stepping Through

Anybody who crosses The Door's threshold is transported to The Room. There's no jarring resistance roll, and no sense of teleportation that would necessitate a Body Sense roll, to give away the game. Spectators witness someone enter a room normally.

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

WHERE IS THE ROOM?

The Room could show up anyplace with sufficient space to hold a chamber of its size and shape: a 10-yard square. Its impish Creators knew the jig would be up if those peering through The Door (pp. 3-4) saw an area that couldn't possibly squeeze into the surrounding floor plan! That makes the easiest option either a dungeon sprawling through solid earth, or a freestanding (and likely deserted) 30' × 30' edifice – but The Room *could* go in a larger building or even aboard a ship, if there's a spot big enough for it.

As an added twist, there could be an *actual* 30' × 30' room where The Room appears to be – because The Room *isn't* there, but in another dimension! Such an area would be accessed by an ordinary door, in which case the Creators would've been sure to include a door like that in the panorama visible from The Door, to keep everything consistent. This would run the risk of ruining the trick, however, as visitors who've already checked out the mundane room may realize that it isn't the same place, or simply decide they needn't visit a second time.

No, WHERE Is The Room?

The Room is in a “pocket dimension,” somewhere best described as *nowhere* – similar to the Sanctuary spell (**GURPS Magic**, p. 86), but more elaborate.

The usual way *into* The Room is through The Door (pp. 3-4). Visitors can walk, fly, or even teleport across the threshold; objects can be tossed in. No commonly studied Plane Shift spell transports people to The Room, but the Creators seem like the sorts to leave a scroll or grimoire sitting around that casts or teaches the spell while neglecting to mention its destination.

The only ways *out of* The Room are either to get lucky while exploring it (see *Destinations*, p. 7) or to **Plane Shift** to one's home plane. Those who escape using Plane Shift and later pass through The Door again *don't* return to the same space as anything or anyone they left behind! Teleportation won't work – it can't cross the dimensions going the other way.

Visitors who have **Peripheral Vision** (and no helm to inhibit it) get a Vision roll to notice that they can't see a doorway behind them – only a blank wall! People with 360° Vision (as from the **Rear Vision** spell) or who *back* into The Room realize this automatically; so does an advance scout who goes in alone and takes a look around. But there's no immediate danger, so Danger Sense *doesn't* go off.

A visitor who notices what's happened and shouts, holds up a hand, or otherwise warns others not to follow will be seen or heard through The Door, even though they can no longer detect their allies. This requires no special roll by anybody, though others must be able to detect the warning to react to it – too bad if they're deaf and the only signal is a shout. If someone is following immediately behind the one who gave the alert (close enough to “help” them if there's a trap), they must roll vs. **DX**; failure means they don't stop in time and stumble into The Room as well.

It's possible that *everybody* will enter The Room before they realize what's going on!

Those who've already entered could try any number of things:

Step back out. They can try, but The Door isn't there – just a blank wall. It won't hurt anything but their dignity to smash into this, unless they do so at a full run.

Throw something out. No dice. The object bounces off the wall.

Obstruct the entrance. Attempts to keep allies from joining them *fail*. Anybody who steps through The Door appears in The Room as close as possible to the wall (though they won't teleport *inside* other people or things).

Use magic. Spells cast in The Room cannot affect the real world, although visible and audible effects are perceptible through The Door. No spell can be cast *into* the real world unless it *explicitly* crosses dimensions (which almost none do); e.g., Communication and Empathy spells can't contact people in the real world.

Shout, signal, write a note and plaster it against the wall, etc. Fine! Allies still in the real world can perceive The Room through The Door and receive such messages.

Leave through another door. Fine! See *The First Three Doors* (p. 5).

A cautious group might split up at this point. Adventurers who've yet to enter The Room may opt out – though the GM is within their rights to demand self-control rolls for disadvantages like **Impulsiveness**, **Overconfidence**, and *especially* **Curious** and **Obsessions** with exploration or supernatural power, and to warn anyone with **Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions)** that abandoning trapped allies means losing earned character points.

Those who hesitate for too long can end up more split up than they want; see *Splitting Up* (p. 9).

THE FIRST ROOM

Visitors arrive in a 30' × 30' room typical of the dungeon or building they just left: Ceiling height and wall construction are identical to those of that place. Each of the three walls the delvers *didn't* enter from has a door in the center that looks like the doors back there. The chamber is also lit the same way, meaning there may be glowing slime, torches, chandeliers, magical light spheres, or whatever, which the heroes can interact with as usual. Otherwise, there's nothing of interest.

True delvers won't take the GM's word for any of this! They'll want to try all manner of **Sense** rolls, skills (**Architecture**, **Observation**, **Prospecting**, **Scrounging**, **Tracking**, **Traps**, etc.), and spells to find clues, secret exits, and most of all *treasure*. Let them. Tell whoever succeeds by the most on whatever roll they were attempting that the only item of interest is that *there is nothing of interest* – it's as if the area has never been visited, not even by whoever built it, lit the torches, etc. (If nobody tries anything, award this information to whoever has the highest **Perception** score.)

That in itself should be creepy . . .

The Walls

Hard-headed delvers may decide to *mine* their way out. Magic simply fails, as if the walls were meteoric iron (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers**, p. 27).

Physical force works (**Dungeons**, p. 17) but accomplishes nothing other than making the chamber a bit larger, because it's *solid matter forever*. This is true even if the walls appear to be made of, say, wood or brick – the heroes end up with a wood- or brick-lined hole, and a lot of sawdust or brick dust. The GM may inflict splinters, sneezing, etc. that give -1 or -2 to DX and IQ as a hint that the adventurers are wasting their time.

*And you may ask yourself, well
How did I get here?*

– Talking Heads,
“Once in a Lifetime”

The First Three Doors

The three doors out of the first room *look* ordinary, often physically resembling The Door (pp. 3-4). They can be opened, smashed, etc. with no more effort than usual for that kind of door. Doing so reveals swirling portals into black nothingness. At this point, the jig is up on The Room being a normal place, so the Creators didn't bother with illusions!

Those who try to throw, shoot, roll, etc. an inanimate object through a portal are out of luck – the item just bounces off, as if it hit a wall. If it's fragile, check for breakage.

Those who try to poke an object or body part through a portal to check it out must roll a Quick Contest of **Will**+1 vs. 16; defensive spells, Magic Resistance, etc. have no effect on this. If they *win*, they and all their possessions stay put – they neither sense nor touch anything. Otherwise, they and everything they're carrying end up on the far side, with a blank wall behind them. Their allies witness them vanish as if teleported. The same thing happens to anyone who steps through willingly, and to pets, zombies, etc. sent ahead as scouts.

Groups who rope themselves together or otherwise try to remain physically connected will find that people who disappear leave their bit of rope (or whatever) behind, attached to the others. It isn't cut; it's just abandoned.

Those who try to push or pull more weight than they can carry (p. B353) go through *without* their burden. If they're the last one in, their wheelbarrow, sledge, or whatever is lost forever!

These portals cannot initially be scryed because *they have no fixed destination* – the only way to discover where they go is for somebody to pass through! Doing so “sets the destination,” after which a party member who stays behind can try **Scry Gate** (**Magic**, p. 85) if they want. This is cast at -10 and resisted at skill 20; for even odds, the caster would need at least skill 30! It's easier just to join the brave traveler.

LATER ROOMS

Later rooms – beginning with the three accessed from the first room – are *also* 30' × 30' squares, and have the same ceiling height as the first one. There are many significant differences, however. Most important, *Contents* (pp. 7-8) are likely, and infinitely variable . . . but let's start with the basic physical variations, which are slightly less unpredictable.

Arrival

Upon arriving through a portal from another room, a roll against **Body Sense** (defaults to DX-6 or Acrobatics-3) is required. Success lets the new arrival act normally. Failure means they *must* Do Nothing for one turn. On a critical failure they fall down, physically stunned! The latter two results can be bad if the room isn't empty . . .

If the visitors walked through a door in a wall to get here – which is *always* the case when arriving from the first room – they exit through a blank wall in this room.

If the visitors descended through a floor to get here, they exit from the ceiling of this room. This is at the height the GM picked for The Room, so there may be falling damage to worry about (four yards is typical, for 2d-1 crushing). It's possible to try **Acrobatics** to reduce this only if the Body Sense roll succeeded. Arrivals won't tumble through any floor exit, however.

If the visitors climbed up through a ceiling to get here, they exit from the floor of this room – standing, unless they critically failed at Body Sense.

WHAT IF?

There should be no reason to suspect The Room's presence, but delvers are a wary lot – and *players* might read this supplement. Thus, adventurers may turn to tricks.

Mundane Probing: Inanimate objects – arrows, stones, 10-foot poles, ropes, etc. – poked or launched through The Door pass into The Room exactly as if into an ordinary room. Objects (not people!) grasped by beings still in the real world can be pulled back out, too.

Magical Probing: Spells cast into The Room *seem* to work as expected. They gather unremarkable information consistent with what the chamber appears to be, produce the standard magical effects, even summon creatures if that's what they do. There's no “dimension crossing” penalty to give things away – the room is a cosmic artifact, and ordinary spells aren't in its league. In particular, **Wizard Eye**, **Ear**, **Nose**, etc. (regular or invisible) pass through The Door into The Room, and transmit information across the dimensions; there's *no* evidence that the space they're exploring isn't in the real world.

Seek Gate: The weird portal to The Room is sensed at -10 (treat as Conceal Magic) and must overcome the equivalent of Scryguard-20. As **Seek Gate** is an Information spell, it is rolled in secret and costs full energy. Unless it works and beats the Scryguard despite the penalty, it finds no gate.

Spells of Transport: Any spell that could carry someone across a doorway and into a room will do so – even if it can't normally cross dimensions. It won't work going the *other* way, though! See *No, WHERE Is The Room?* (p. 4).

Walls, Floor, and Ceiling

These can be made of anything. For each new room, roll 3d on this table, pick a result, or make something up:

- 3-4 – *Flesh!*** Pulsating and living. Edible, if disgusting.
- 5-6 – *Plants.*** Live trees or briars, too dense and twisted to push past. May bear fruit.
- 7-8 – *Wood.*** Common (pine, oak, etc.), not valuable (like mahogany). Can be burned.
- 9-10 – *Solid stone.*** Common (e.g., granite), not semiprecious or precious.
- 11-12 – *Mortared stones.*** As above, but fitted together from smaller stones.
- 13-14 – *Mortared bricks.***
- 15-16 – *Metal.*** Low value (iron, lead, etc.). Conducts Lightning (*Magic*, p. 196).
- 17-18 – *Solid bone!*** Seemingly from some unimaginably huge creature.

This is largely a special effect that determines the difficulty of mining with physical force – like the walls in the first room, these ones are immune to magic. That's no more productive than in the first room, so DR and HP don't matter; the GM can set these by fiat. Still, composition may matter to heroes seeking fuel or food.

Lighting

The room may be lit. If *Contents* (pp. 7-8) include beings, traps, or tricks that require specific lighting to be effective, that need takes precedence. Otherwise, roll 1d: 1-5 means a lit room; 6, an unlit one.

For flavor, light sources can vary with the nature of the room's surfaces:

Flesh or solid bone. Glowing organic (?) slime. Almost always has a sickly hue, like blood red, jaundiced yellow, or bilious green. Roll 1d for the darkness penalty: 1-2 is -7; 3-4 is -8; 5-6 is -9.

Plants. A break in the canopy above admits "natural" (not really!) light that gives a darkness penalty of 1d-8, keeping negative numbers; -7 is like starlight, -6 to -4 is like moonlight, and -3 or -2 is like daylight filtering through leaves.

Wood, solid stone, mortared stones, mortared bricks, or metal. Whatever sources of light were common in the area where the heroes found The Room – usually torches, but perhaps something extravagant like magical light.

Exits

Each room has six surfaces – four walls, a ceiling, and a floor. The one visitors *enter* through is always blank. Roll 1d for the number of *exits*:

- 1 – Two.**
- 2-3 – Three.**
- 4-5 – Four.**
- 6 – Five.**

These can be in any surface, but they're always *centered* and there's *never* more than one per surface. Place as many as possible in walls the delvers didn't enter through. Put any remaining ones in the ceiling and/or floor. If it's either/or, roll 1d: 1-3 is ceiling; 4-6 is floor.

For a ceiling exit, roll 1d: 1-3 means the heroes must find their own way up; 4-6, that there's something hanging there to climb.

The *construction* of exits depends on the nature of the room's surfaces:

Flesh. All exits resemble organic sphincters. Any dangling route to the ceiling is a nasty organic tendril. Ew!

Plants. Wall exits resemble topiary arches in the greenery. A floor exit is a dirt pit. A ceiling exit looks like shimmering in the sky visible through the break in the canopy; if there's a way up to it, it's a vine.

Wood. Exits are fairly ordinary wooden doors; one in the floor or ceiling is a wooden *trapdoor*. Any route to the ceiling is a rope.

Solid stone, mortared stones, or mortared bricks. For wall exits, roll 1d: 1-5 means a wooden door; 6, a shifting masonry panel. For a floor exit, roll 1d: 1-3 means a wooden trapdoor; 4-5, a masonry frame around a pit; 6, a built-up masonry "well." A ceiling exit is a wooden trapdoor; any means of reaching it is a rope.

Metal. Wall exits are solid gates of the same metal; floor and ceiling exits look like "iris valves" with metal leaves that spiral open at a touch once unlocked (if necessary). Any means of reaching the ceiling is a chain.

Solid bone. All exits resemble gaping, marrow-filled foramina. A hanging route to the ceiling resembles a ligament. Yuck.

Mechanically, all exits work as described in *The First Three Doors* (p. 5): They're not abnormally hard to open, though they might be locked; living beings cannot "cheat" to look through, or move inanimate objects or heavy loads through; and scrying won't work until someone goes through, at which point it's merely incredibly difficult.

But where do they go?



Destinations

Passing through an exit uses the mechanics in *Arrival* (p. 5). It also “sets” the exit’s destination, for anyone interested in scrying. Except for *The First Three Doors* (p. 5), roll 3d for this:

- 3-4** – *The Door*. Whether the exit was in a wall, floor, or ceiling, the heroes escape and end up back where they found The Room. Anybody who escapes and goes back into The Room “resets” *everything* – no two adventures are alike!
- 5-17** – *Another Room*. See *Later Rooms* (pp. 5-7) and *Contents* below).
- 18** – *Elsewhere*. The delvers escape, but not to where they encountered The Room. They should end up someplace the GM is prepared to have them go. Some other area of the dungeon, building, or whatever that contains The Door – or the nearby town (whether that means the Wizards’ Guild Tower or asleep in bed at the inn) – calls for the least effort. A *different* such place, perhaps in a faraway land, requires more GM planning. Even another plane of existence isn’t out of the question. If the GM wants a challenge and has lots of adventures ready, roll on the next table.

Random Destinations

Roll 3d.

- 3-4** – *Another plane of existence!* This could be anything: the Astral Plane, Hell, Lands of the Dead, etc. See **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners**, pp. 39-42 for ideas.
- 5-6** – *A distant dungeon*. A whole other dungeon in a faraway land where the monsters, magic, weapons found as treasure, and so on differ from what the heroes are used to.
- 7-8** – *A nearby dungeon*. Another dungeon in the delvers’ stomping grounds.
- 9-11** – *Same dungeon*. A different area of the dungeon where the PCs found The Room.
- 12** – *Home again, home again*. A relatively safe part of the town the adventurers left to visit the place where they encountered The Room.
- 13** – *What are **you** doing there?* A part of the town the delvers left for this adventure, but one where they should *not* be – like, say, the halls of the Thieves’ or Wizards’ Guild.
- 14-15** – *What are they saying?* A settlement in a distant land unknown to the heroes. For added fun, make sure the language and culture are different and challenging.
- 16-17** – *Wgah’nagl fhtagn!* Someplace in an unknown foreign land where the PCs are in hot water – such as in the Crown Princess’ boudoir, or in a prison (or on a sacrificial altar) with their gear locked in the guardroom.
- 18** – *When are we?* Wherever the adventurers found The Room, but in the ancient past when the structure was being built. Getting home involves dealing with an effectively foreign culture, powerful magic, and probably the Creators. **Hidden Lore (Lost Civilizations)** is a lifesaver!

THE ENVIRONMENT

Players *will* ask, “What’s it like here?” Here are some *recommended* answers. If *Contents* (below) need different answers to work, use those ones – not these!

Physical Environment

Most rooms “within” The Room contain breathable air, refreshed by whatever powerful forces transport travelers. If the GM feels the heroes are dawdling, this can start to run out (much as for the Sanctuary spell). Most groups will solve that problem with spells; see **Purify Air** (*Magic*, p. 23) for how long air lasts.

Rooms mostly or entirely filled with water or toxic gas – or that contain a vacuum – are *possible* but not *fun*. The Creators were mischievous, not murderous! Still, if adventurers linger for too long, a room may start to fill with water or gas. This is another problem magic can solve, but it might render rest difficult or impossible.

Temperature can vary between 35°F and 90°F without being too troublesome, but mostly remains on the cool end of comfortable: 50°F to 60°F. Anything more extreme is unlikely to be fair *or* fun, but rapid changes can encourage heroes to get moving.

For further physical details, see *Walls, Floor, and Ceiling* (p. 6) and *Lighting* (p. 6).

Supernatural Environment

There are generally no penalties (or bonuses!) to spells in The Room. Mana, sanctity, Nature’s strength, and the weird energies summoners draw upon are at whatever passes for “normal” there.

Think long and hard before changing this assumption. Unlike somebody who escapes into a Sanctuary spell (where magic use is at -5), a visitor to The Room is a prisoner. They aren’t taking a break from the adventure to recover energy and prepare powerful spells. Moreover, The Room’s magic-immune walls and scrying-resistant portals render many of their spells useless.

Still, if the heroes are sitting around being boring, the GM can have them “use up” the supernatural energies in that room: Inflict a cumulative -1 to spells every two or three hours until -10 is reached. At -5, Recover Energy ceases to work. At -10, *no* magic works – the area has no mana, sanctity, etc. left.

For added flavor, the Necromancy college and spells of necromancers might get a *bonus* of up to +5 in rooms with flesh or bone surfaces, and not lose effectiveness even while other spells do. The Plant college and all druidic spells may behave similarly in rooms walled in by plants.

CONTENTS

The Room isn’t an adventure; it’s a *setting* for adventure. Aside from *The First Room* (pp. 4-5), what’s found within is left to the GM. Anything that makes sense (more-or-less) in a 30’ × 30’ box *might* turn up on the far side of a portal. Here are some ideas to prime the pump.

Monsters

Any monster is more dangerous when delvers are arriving single-file through a narrow portal, and some are failing Body Sense rolls. Foes who have some concept of how The Room works – which seems likely, if the Creators put them there! – might be waiting, weapons aimed at the doors, ready to pick off anyone who steps through, and happy to exploit the plight of disoriented victims. This is particularly true in areas where arrivals fall from the ceiling and start the battle wounded.

Given The Room's weirdness, assume that professional adventurers using its portals are wary and won't be *surprised*. But they can definitely find themselves *surrounded* by enemies who've taken Aim or Wait maneuvers – perhaps for millennia.

The most fitting monsters don't require food, water, or much in the way of intellectual stimulation. A few classes work especially well:

Constructs. These are the most likely guardians left behind by the Creators: tireless, immortal, and in a sense *part of* The Room. Stone golems (*Dungeons*, p. 26) and obsidian jaguars (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, p. 24) are a good fit for stone-walled rooms, bronze spiders (*Monsters 1*, p. 5) for metal-walled ones, and corpse golems (*Monsters 1*, p. 8) for flesh- and bone-walled ones.

Undead. These, too, might've been left by The Room's builders. They might instead be abandoned servants or scouts of previous visitors – meaning skeletons and zombies (*Summoners*, p. 26). More creepily, they could *be* visitors who died here and remain as ghosts (*Summoners*, pp. 22-23) or other creatures brought to unlife by The Room. For a real challenge, one of the Creators could lurk here as a lich (*Monsters 1*, p. 23).

Elder Things. Sapient, scheming Things would never end up trapped, but The Room uses cosmic, dimension-warping forces that could pull *lesser* ones out of the void. Astral hounds (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psi*, p. 42) and Demons from Between the Stars (*Monsters 1*, p. 9) are good examples. Also, an apparent “portal” in the floor might really be a living pit (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 3*, p. 13).

Elementals. These might be natives, especially earth elementals (*Summoners*, pp. 27-28) and rock trolls (*Monsters 3*, p. 19) in stone- or brick-walled areas, metal elementals (*Summoners*, p. 29) in metal-walled ones, and wood elementals (*Summoners*, pp. 31-32) in wood- or plant-walled ones. But any elemental could be *summoned* when a portal is activated.

Demons. Any variety of demon might be imprisoned in The Room – in which case killing the delvers is probably their ticket to freedom! – or, like elementals, be summoned by a portal.

Everything else! If elementals and demons can be summoned to order, so can other monsters – using a portal could conjure seemingly mundane animals or sapient warriors via magic similar to Create Animal and Create Warrior (*Magic*, p. 98). Rooms of flesh or plants may even support actual life. Those made of flesh might exude goo; see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 2*. In those made of plants, the *plants themselves* could be monsters like octopus blossoms (*Monsters 3*, p. 16).

Other Travelers

Not all beings in The Room need be residents. Others could have strayed through The Door and become lost. Also, there's no reason to believe The Room has just *one* entrance – or that other ways in are in the same place, time, or dimension as the one the PCs used.

The GM can treat these sorts of encounters as wandering monsters (*Dungeons*, p. 20) in chambers without other contents – or emerging from portals if the heroes linger in one place for too long – but they shouldn't be *too* frequent. A roll of 6 or less on 3d is best. If wanderers are more common, it's hard to explain why The Room hasn't been revealed to the world by escapees, or why the delvers only just found The Door when every other rat and orc already has.

More interestingly, these could be other explorers. While the “rival adventuring party fight” is a noble hack ‘n’ slash tradition, there's no reason to assume hostility. Indeed, if someone wants to introduce a new PC – or acquire an Ally – it could be fun to arrange a fluke encounter.

Tricks and Puzzles

Traps – if used at all – should be on the sides of doors facing *into* chambers, to be disarmed before passing through portals. Those on the far sides of portals, or on floors, are unfair and thus unfun when it isn't possible to check for them before arriving and setting them off.

On the other hand, a room could be tricky in some way. Perhaps all the exits are well-hidden; maybe a few are actually secret loot caches. Conceivably the room is one big puzzle to solve before it's possible to leave, or to win some great treasure. There are endless possibilities, from problems to handle with skill rolls to riddles for the *players* to unravel by having their characters pull levers, move pieces on a giant chessboard, light and extinguish torches in a special order, etc.

The trick might not be the room itself, but linked to something *in* the room: A statue mightn't be an animated monster like a golem, but it could speak riddles and reward the right answers; a fountain could produce random magical effects, both good and bad; an altar might bless or curse; and so on. Such things suit any dungeon, but in The Room, they'll *never be seen again* once the delvers depart; thus, the GM can offer once-in-a-career experiences or powerful effects without worrying too much that the adventurers will return to exploit them over and over.

Unusual Features

Finally, some chambers could contain furniture, gardens, trees, ponds, streams, goods abandoned for no obvious reason, or a thousand other things. These might simply be “flavor,” but they also let the GM subtly provide food and other resources to the heroes, who can't just leave The Room whenever they want.

An interesting twist on this is the shop. It's literally that: a business set up in one of the chambers within The Room, run by a powerful immortal being – perhaps one of the Creators, maybe a minor *god*. Heroes can buy, sell, trade, even steal. They should be careful, though, because the entity behind the counter is surely powerful, and if they flee through a portal, they have no idea where they'll end up!

CHAPTER TWO

ADVENTURES IN THE ROOM

A great feature of The Room is easy mapping: The GM needs just one map of a 30' × 30' area for battles, and doesn't have to map a dungeon. They won't spend tons of time describing the size and shape of rooms to players who like to map, either.

It's best to develop sets of *Contents* (pp. 7-8) in advance, rather than to ad lib – though these can show up in a random order, if the GM likes. On average, if rolling as described in *Destinations* (p. 7), plan for *about* 30 “interesting” rooms before the delvers escape. If that seems like too few or too many, don't roll – have escape be automatic after the prepared encounters are used up.

As the party moves from one chamber to the next, cross off prepared encounters and make brief notes:

Room 22. Stone-walled, torch-lit, wooden doors in four walls. Party arrived through ceiling, had stone golem encounter #3, rested for an hour, left through door #2.

Since the delvers can't revisit areas, this is mainly a way to keep track of time and the encounters you've used. Knowing gamers, though, these details could become important!

SPLITTING UP

If the players decide to split up – or some people hesitate while others forge ahead – log progress as described above, but separately for each group. Those who follow *exactly* the same sequence of steps will end up in *exactly* the same space. It's possible to leave chalk marks or whatever beside portals to blaze the trail. The Room will eventually wipe these out, but for the GM's sanity, assume that takes months or years.

Through bad planning or impulsiveness, different groups might take divergent paths. That's no worse than any other case of splitting up the party, except that the heroes can't do much to get back together. If that becomes annoying, remember that chambers within The Room

aren't linked in ways explorers can predict – you can reunite people by declaring that they pop into the area where their friends are! Perhaps each time a portal is used, there's a 6 or less chance on 3d of this happening, as recommended for wandering monsters. If the Creators built in a mechanism to reunite people, the odds could be higher, or increase by +1 or more with each portal crossed until a reunion is certain.

Finally, if an adventurer wants to spend a use of **Serendipity** to find lost friends, let them. Weird coincidences *definitely* suit The Room!

VARIATIONS

The Room uses 10-yard squares of fixed height for *all* areas for two reasons:

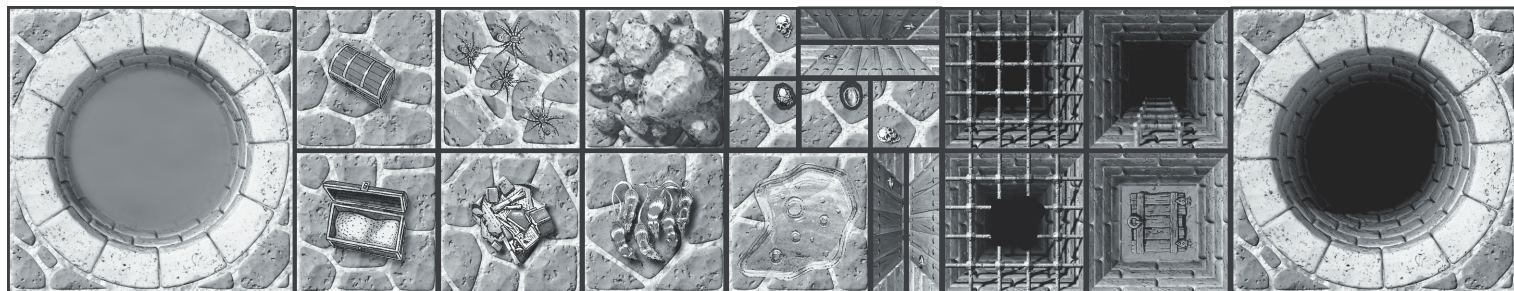
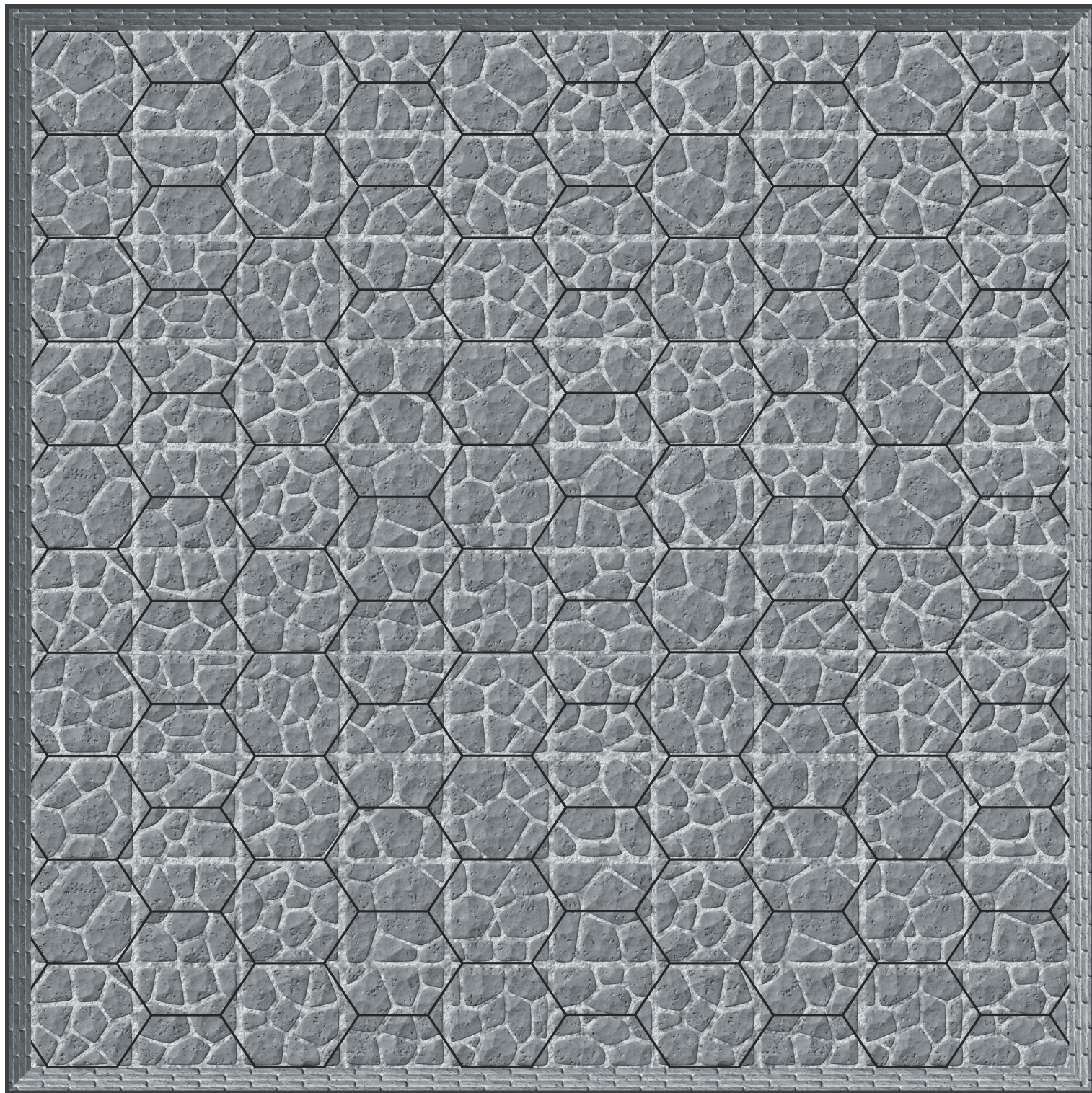
1. To create an uncanny atmosphere that triggers player doubt. (“Weren't we here before?” “It looks the same, but I'm not sure.”)
2. To reduce the GM's workload by economizing on maps and descriptions.

Using squares of other sizes, octagons, irregular caves, outdoor areas, etc. – or putting multiple exits in a wall, or 20 (or 200) exits in a chamber – won't alter how The Room works in play, only how much work the GM must do.

And it might not even do that! If the GM has all kinds of dungeons from past campaigns, friends' campaigns, unused adventures, other games, etc., this is a golden opportunity to drop ready-made rooms from those into a single adventure without the need to have them make sense together – and without worries about the delvers ever seeing them again. This makes The Room a mega-dungeon in a 30' × 30' box.

We can do this. We just have to stay calm, and work together as a team. There's gotta be a lot of people looking for us on the outside.

– Quentin, in **Cube** (1997)



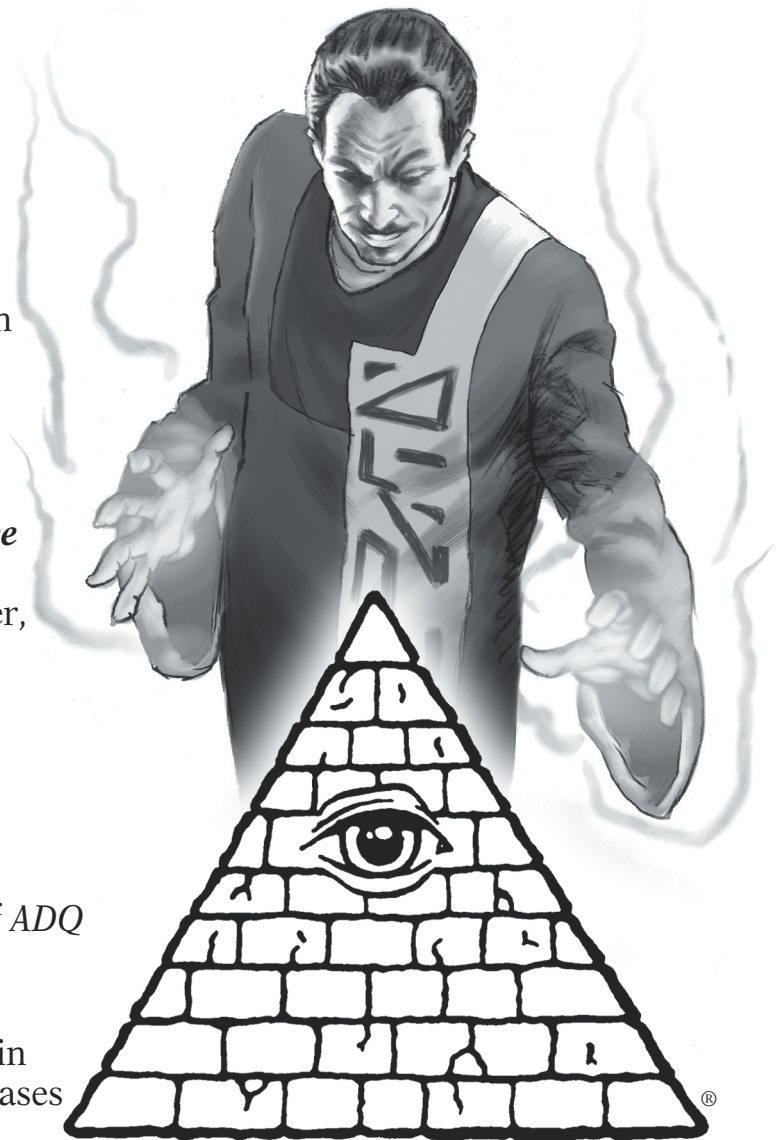
For a full-color, full-size map, print off four six-by-six rooms from *Cardboard Heroes Dungeon Floors* or *Cardboard Heroes Cavern Floors* (found on Warehouse 23). Trim one wall from each copy, then overlap and tape together the pieces to form a 10-by-10 room.

SAMPLE MAP OF THE ROOM

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