

PYRAMID[®]



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DUNGEON FANTASY[™]

POWERED BY GURPS

**HEROIC BACKGROUND
GENERATOR**

by David L. Pulver

IT'S A QUEST!

by Christopher R. Rice

TRAPPED IN THE LIVING TOMB

by Steven Marsh

THE STATE OF THE DUNGEON

A Progress Report

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Why venture into some dank hole devoid of green, growing things – bunched up with clumsy, noisy, smelly companions – to play “kill or be killed” with abominations against Nature? For treasure and sport, of course! Don’t expect me to help carry the wounded, though.

– Llandor the Gray, Scout

Soon, the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* shall be making its triumphant debut to a world hungry for satisfying dungeon-crawling action. But until then, *Pyramid* is here to stoke the fires of anticipation.

There are many ways one can get started on a life of adventure, but perhaps the most harrowing is to be *Trapped in the Living Tomb*. That’s right; this is a complete, ready-to-play adventure for the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* (written by long-time *Pyramid* editor Steven Marsh). But how can that be, when the game hasn’t even been released yet to the outside world? By being a *solo adventure* that contains all the information necessary to play! All you need are dice, a pencil, and a copy of the character sheet on p. 16. Can you help a mighty swashbuckler escape from a mysterious subterranean enigma that’s teeming with traps, puzzles, and dangers?

When you put together the pieces of adventuring excitement, well . . . *It’s a Quest!* Join Christopher R. Rice – co-author of the forthcoming *Dungeon Fantasy Traps* supplement – as

he shows you how you can make a satisfying adventure (or even campaign story arc) by just rolling a few dice. With this article, you can jump-start your imagination to generate a complete idea for your *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* campaign before you even crack open the set!

You can make the nuts-and-bolts of a hero with the in-depth design system of the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG*, but sometimes you want to

know where that adventurer came from; fortunately, that’s easy with the *Heroic Background Generator*. Author David L. Pulver – co-author of the *GURPS Basic Set* that’s the foundation of the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* – presents a set of tables that help you come up with a complete background for your would-be crypt-crawler.

There’s no need to visit a sage or temple mystic to learn *The State of the Dungeon!* Discover the latest news about the progress on the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* . . . and insider news on other elements related to that set.

This issue also includes a *Random Thought Table* from Steven Marsh that provides a few more things to think about as you consider your hero’s strengths and weaknesses.

You don’t need to approach the old stranger in the tavern to begin your journey. With this issue of *Pyramid*, your *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* adventures can start now!

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue

Green: Columnist

Dark Blue: GURPS Features

Purple: Systemless Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE STARS SOON ALIGN! THE TIME IS NIGH!

It's a conundrum: How do we support and get folks excited about the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* here in the pages of *Pyramid*, when folks don't have their snazzy boxed sets or follow-up items yet?

Fortunately, we're used to doing the impossible twice before breakfast around here, so we hope we've risen up to the challenge. We decided to take the tack of asking what would be useful to have in hand before fans get the complete, hefty set.

Thus, we have a solo adventure designed to set the mood for the forthcoming set and teach a few of the basics of the full *Dungeon Fantasy RPG*. Unlike most other solo adventures, this one assumes you know *nothing* about the system . . . so it's ideal to print out and hand to anyone who's new to the game. Speaking personally, I've wanted to write one of these ever since I discovered my first paragraph-style fantasy adventure 30-odd years ago, and I hope you enjoy playing it as much as I did writing it.

We also have two articles that feel like mini-supplements of their own. One is devoted to helping players make heroic backgrounds for your fledgling dungeon-crawlers . . . a perfect way to get inspiration or even dictate randomly how you got in the crypt-crawling business in the first place. The other is a guide for Game Masters to craft campaign arcs and storylines (including plenty of key ideas), letting you tie together adventures into a larger whole.

VOICES FROM THE DUNGEON DEPTHS

We'd be remiss if we didn't do one more special call-out. Normally, here in the pages of *Pyramid*, we add amusing or relevant quotes from the larger world that catch our fancy. However, to help get in the mood, this month

instead we received *new* quotes from *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* mastermind Sean Punch, providing insight from the mouths of iconic characters presented in the boxed set and the screen. Think of it as a thematic appetizer while you await the full game.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

We've never had a set like the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* before . . . and we've never had an issue of *Pyramid* like this before! Between the standalone solo adventure, the mini-supplements, and the future previews, we're curious: What did you think? Do you love having your gaming arsenal augmented beforehand like this? Or is there something you'd like to see different? Let us know privately via email at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the fervent fan base publicly and discuss this issue at forums.sjgames.com.



Additional Material: Sean Punch

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25 “An excellent question!” you exclaim. “Well, you see, it’s less than, but the same as the greater-than portion of the answer you’re attempting to assert with the number of fingers. Greater than makes as much sense as less than and equal to, except for the one that’s the right answer makes even more sense, which is less.”

An eternity seems to pass. Finally the guardian says, “That answer . . . is correct . . . I think.” Then it disappears.

Go to 61.

26 Without the threat of the glowing guardian, it’s easier to assess this room. It appears to be the same size as the room you entered from – a square, 30’ to a side. There are two identical-looking doors along the east and west walls, and the door south leads back to the room with the arcane circle in the middle of the floor that you fell into originally.

If you wish to try the west door, go to 47.

If you wish to try the east door, go to 10.

Otherwise, you can return to the room you came from before; go to 110.

27 “I am sorry; I do not understand. Please restate your request.”

Do you ask her for anything else?

- Aid; go to 6.
- Escape; go to 107.
- Information about the place; go to 50.

Or do you leave this room (return to 85)?

28 Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet). If you succeed, go to 48. Otherwise, you don’t find anything interesting; return to 4.

29 Carefully examining this device, your fingers discover a hidden recess that pushes away, revealing what you realize must be a slot – probably for a lever of some sort. Go to 3.

30 You’re confident there are no traps associated with it; your gut tells you it’s safe. (*In the full **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, the GM will roll for you when you wouldn’t know the outcome one way or the other . . . like when you’re checking for traps.*)

If you would like to peer into the orb, go to 101. Otherwise, return to 4.

31 The figure exclaims in a booming voice, “Answer my riddle you must, lest I turn you into dust.”

If you attempt to attack the figure, go to 42.

If you listen to hear what it has to say, go to 73.

If you attempt to run away, go to 99.

32 The first things you notice as you step through this doorway are the two attractive-looking swords hanging on the far wall. You know swords, and those cutlasses look amazing! They could never replace your Hellsender, of course . . . but they’re still worthy of examination.

The second thing you notice is the door slamming shut behind you. A voice that sounds like stones grinding intones,

“UNAUTHORIZED PRESENCE DETECTED.” The two blades immediately fly off the wall and glide toward you. Uh-oh.

Instinctively your hand goes to your blade.

Make a **Fast-Draw** roll. If you succeed, go to 88.

If you fail, you still go to 88 . . . but you spend your first turn drawing your weapon and must **Dodge** instead of **Parry**.

33 Is there *any* problem that violence won’t solve? You think not!

If you’re attacking the strange contraption with a sword (either your weapon or another weapon you’ve found in the area), make a **Rapier** roll and go to 20.

If you’re attacking it with a pickaxe, go to 40.

Otherwise, if you think better of this course of action, return to 47.

34 You pick an item from your backpack and toss it through the doorway (mark the item off your character sheet). It falls to the ground, about the distance you would expect with the heft you threw it. If you wish to make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet), you may do so at -2. If you succeed, go to 12.

If you fail the **Per** roll or don’t wish to roll, you may step through the doorway; go to 118.

Otherwise, there’s not much else you can do besides close the door and continue exploring; go to 68.

35 The chair is *still* incredibly comfortable! You love this chair. Return to 4.

36 A final bolt shoots out from the shelves. As your heart shocks into permanent stillness, you find yourself wondering: Is there *anything* you could have done differently? Go to 51.

37 The spectral figure listens to you yammer on about how the possible answers are less than, greater than, *and* equal to fingers and humans. Finally, after a long silence, it says, “I have failed to comprehend your answer. Try again.” The guardian repeats the riddle; go to 73, but you can’t attempt to fast-talk again.

38 Does the phrase “Chibble-chibble-tok” mean anything to you? If so, go to 9. If not, go to 81.

39 This definitely seems to be the bedchamber of a magician of some sort. You find a few interesting items: three books in a language you don’t understand (4 lbs. each), a large mortar and pestle (6 lbs.), and a cameo with tiny drawings of a middle-aged man and woman (0.5 lb.). You may take any or all of these items, but if you do, see *Picking Up Stuff*, p. 4.

Go to 89.

40 Yes! The pickaxe. If there’s a better way to make holes in inanimate objects, you don’t want to know about it.

The gargantuan mysterious device, for its part, isn’t dodging. Go ahead and roll your swing damage (2d-1).

If you do 8 or more points of damage, go to 58.

Otherwise, your blow dings off it. Return to 47.

With knowledge about how players prefer to spend their time during game sessions, the GM can decide on what types of challenges and encounters to include in each adventure and how complicated to make each one. This allows the GM to pace the game sessions so that the players feel like there is neither too much nor too little to do.

Pacing is incredibly important when it comes to maintaining involvement in the game world. Suspension of disbelief suffers when play is rushed during one session but then lackadaisical in the next. Thus, the GM must keep a fairly even pace or risk breaking apart his quest mosaic. He'll also need to decide how much time the group will game, how often "table talk" occurs (talking about non-gaming stuff at the table), and how often specific elements appear within each session. A rough guideline for the quest clock is 10% table talk, 20% interaction, 20% puzzles or overcoming obstacles, and 50% combat encounters, spread out over each session. Thus, if the GM usually runs four-hour sessions, he might decide that two hours are for combat encounters, 45 minutes for interaction (dialogue, social encounters, etc.), 45 minutes for puzzles or

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Let's talk this over first. No plan, no Thief.
 – Hap Badapple, Thief

overcoming obstacles (dungeon riddles, travel hazards, etc.), and the rest for table talk.

Example Campaign, Part 5

The GM has watched his players over the last 11 sessions (which last about four hours each), and he's come to the conclusion that his players are about 10% table talk, 30% interaction, 30% puzzles or overcoming obstacles, and 30% combat encounters. This allows him to spend his prep time making sure he has engaging dialogue, interesting puzzles, and unique encounters. It also lets him know when he's got breathing room (during table talk) when he's running to improvise something if needed.

WHEN IT'S OVER

All quests must eventually end. The heir to the throne must be saved and the dragon must be slain. The kingdom must again know peace . . . for now. So what happens next? The GM has a couple of options. He could simply decide that it's done, and the players move onto something new and unrelated. Or he could decide to link the next quest to the previous one. To do this, use the same method for *Creating the Quest Mosaic* (p. 20), but on a grander scale. The GM should be careful here as the players may not want another linked series of adventures and may want to go back to a more freeform style – and that's all right! A good GM works with his players (and vice versa) and between them, they create a fun experience for all.

RANDOM QUEST GENERATOR

We've talked about taking something that's already there and turning it into a quest, but what about creating something from whole cloth? Whether it's at the table and you need something fast or you're trying to come up with something for your next game session, the following tables will be useful.

At each stage, the GM can pick something suitable, or roll randomly.

1. Determine what the keystone is.
2. Determine the number of touchstones.
3. Determine the number of tiles.
4. Roll on the appropriate table for the keystones, touchstones, and tiles.
5. Determine the number of complications the quest has, and roll them on the appropriate table.

KEYSTONE TYPE

Roll 1d to decide what the keystone of the quest mosaic is.

Roll	Type	Roll	Type
1	Person (below)	4-5	Event (p. 23-24)
2	Place (pp. 22-23)	6	Roll twice and combine them in a logical manner
3	Thing (p. 23)		

NUMBER OF TOUCHSTONES

For the most part, the GM is likely to just pick the number of touchstones important to the quest. He's going to have to

draw from previous game sessions to really make things work together. To randomly determine how many touchstones the quest mosaic has, roll 1d+1. If the touchstones are all similar, then roll once on the *Keystone Type* table (above) to determine what it is. Otherwise, roll on the *Keystone Type* table once for each touchstone.

NUMBER OF TILES

Roll 1d on this table to figure out the number of tiles the quest mosaic has. If you have more than double the number of touchstones as tiles, multiply the base amount of tiles by 1.5; round up. Roll on the *Keystone Type* table (above) to determine what each tile is.

Roll	Number	Roll	Number
1	1d-2	4	1d
2	1d-1	5	1d+1
3	1d	6	1d+2

PERSON

Key people in adventures can include everything from gods to monsters to fairy rulers. They can represent the player characters, too! When you roll on this table, first roll 1d: On 1, the event relates to one of the PCs; select or roll randomly to determine who it is. On 2-6, roll on the following table instead. Townsfolk, nobility, priesthoods, or gods are always selected by the GM. Roll 1d.

Step 3. Parentage

You might have some details about your parents. Roll 1d.

Roll Relationship to Birth Parents

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Orphaned; your natural parents are missing or dead; roll on the <i>Orphan Table</i> (p. 30) |
| 2-4 | Raised by two parents; roll twice on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30) |
| 5-6 | Raised by one parent; roll once on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30) |

Step 4. Your Mentor

A classic hero has someone who trained them, or a friend or advisor who led them down the path to adventure. A mentor figure may be someone you studied under, but it does not imply you had the same profession (and template). For instance, your mentor figure may be a wise wizard, but many warriors or thieves in heroic fantasy and swords-and-sorcery stories have wizards as mentors without ever being mages themselves!

Roll once on the *Who They Are Table* (p. 30) to determine their background, proceeding to other sub-tables as indicated.

Step 5. Familial Relationships

For your mother and/or father (if applicable), or foster parents, and your mentor, roll for each one's fate unless already determined by other rolls. Roll 1d: 1-2 – dead; 3-6 – still alive.

To find out their attitude toward you now (if still alive) or just before their death, roll 1d: 1-3 – they love you; 4-5 – the relationship is troubled, estranged, or cold; 6 – they hate you. You may reciprocate or have a different attitude.

Step 6. Siblings

Roll 1d-3 to determine the number of surviving birth-siblings or foster-siblings in addition to any family members who might have been mentioned already. Then roll 1d on this table once for each person.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Older brother	4	Younger sister
2	Older sister	5	Identical twin
3	Younger brother	6	Fraternal twin

If important, roll 1d for the state of the relationship with each person, as with Step 5, above.

Step 7. Omens

A hero's birth, or adoption if of unknown parentage, is often marked by signs and portents! Roll 1d to find out about the remarkable happening at the hour of your birth.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | A natural disaster – a storm, earthquake, flood, or hurricane |
| 2 | A great commotion of animals; roll on the <i>Wild Animal Table</i> (p. 32) |
| 3 | A monster attacked; roll on the <i>Monster Table</i> (p. 32) |
| 4 | A mysterious stranger was passing through, who commented on your birth; roll on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30) |

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5 | A great battle; perhaps you were born on the battlefield |
| 6 | A celestial event (comet, meteor, super nova, or eclipse) |

Step 8. Darkness

Heroes often encounter evil or tragedy in some form during their lives. Tragedy is often part of your heroic past, sometimes shaping your life to this day. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Your life was free of evil. Perhaps you adventure to help the less fortunate, – or maybe you're so incredible that no one dared go against you! |
| 2-4 | Someone did you wrong. Roll on the <i>Evildoer Table</i> (p. 32) to find out who it was, and then on the <i>Dark Deeds Table</i> (p. 32) to determine what that person did. |
| 5 | Someone who you were close to you died tragically (or vanished). No person was to blame, but roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33) to determine who it was and on the <i>Disaster Table</i> (p. 33) for the nature of their fate. |
| 6 | A disturbing prophecy was made at your birth by a local oracle or distinguished visitor; roll on the <i>Dark Prophecy Table</i> (p. 33) to see what that person foretold. |

Step 9. Special Legacy

Something special happened early in your life. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | An important person (roll once on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> , p. 30) owes you a favor, for you saved that individual from something bad (roll on the <i>Grim Fate Table</i> , pp. 32-33). |
| 2 | You inherit the deed to a ruined tower, old house, abandoned village, or other place of mystery that was once in the family. Unless you want to pay starting wealth for it, the GM may assume it is occupied by brigands, haunted, or is a monster-filled dungeon. Perhaps you can try to reclaim your family home! |
| 3 | You learn you are the true heir to a dynasty, tradition, martial-arts style, cult, mercenary unit, or the like. If you do not choose to buy appropriate Rank or Status, assume you have been forced out, driven into exile, or left for some other reason. |
| 4 | You inherited a powerful or edifying book or scroll – or perhaps just a few fragments or pages from one, with clues as to where the rest can be found. Or maybe it's in a language you don't understand. |
| 5 | You inherited a map, verse, or other clue to a treasure, possibly one within the nearest dungeon, possibly far distant. |
| 6 | You have a broken magic item and a clue to its repair; roll on the <i>Broken Magic Item Table</i> (p. 33). |

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what’s new at gurps.sjgames.com.

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Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The *Pyramid* web page is pyramid.sjgames.com.

Gamer and Store Finder (gamerfinder.sjgames.com): Connect with other people and places playing our games. Add yourself to our database so they can find you as well!

Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We’ve added them to many *GURPS* book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

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.

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