

Augmented Imagination Dungeons

A Dungeon-Delving Supplement to Augmented Imagination

by Mick Hand

What is this for?

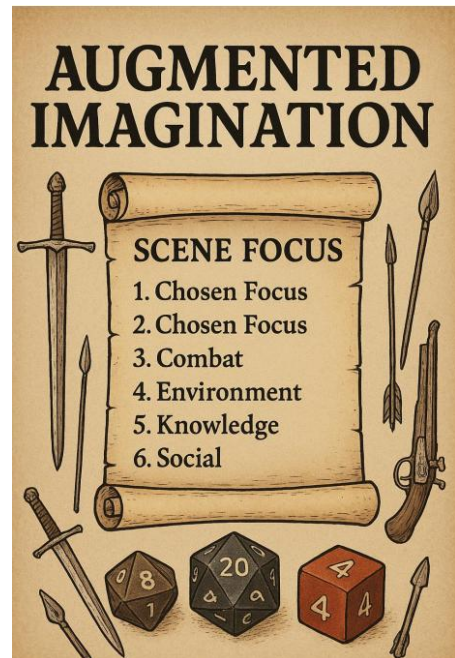
I don't know if this article is entirely necessary as I believe the Augmented Imagination Framework is complete enough to let you imagine your own Dungeon Crawls, just using the standard Scenes, Ask the Bones and the Lists (People & Other Monsters, Random Encounters per Biome etc).

However, recently I wrote up an Actual Play Session that was mainly a Dungeon Crawl and realise that I made a lot of on-the-fly decisions that seem natural to me but might be useful to gather into step-by-step guidelines. These really are just guidelines covering how I go about the process of running myself through a Solo Dungeon. As with everything, you should use what you like and discard anything you don't like.

I'm not planning to cover running a pre-made adventure as that requires some different techniques. I'll focus on **MAKING-IT-UP** and **PLAYING-TO-FIND-OUT**.

I may add both THIS Article and the one about Romance in Solo RPGs into the main Augmented Imagination book if I update it to Version 2.0.

It's ALL available **FREE** at <https://aigm.iGM4u.com/aigm.html>



Up-Front Decisions for your Solo Dungeon Crawl

There are almost certainly lots of different categories of Dungeon, but what I like to decide up-front are more meta-game things...

- Do I (the Solo PLAYER) know the layout of the dungeon? Am I starting with a ready-made Map? Or am I discovering the layout as I play?
- How big is this Dungeon (or don't I know yet)?
- Will it be a multi-level Dungeon with a gradual progression of difficulty and reward as you go from level to level
- Is there a BOSS? Do I (the Solo PLAYER) know who/what the Boss is?
- How much do I (the Solo PLAYER) know about the likely inhabitants and contents of the Dungeon? Is there a THEME?

Dungeon Mapping

I like to set out the Dungeon, usually a room at a time, in my VTT of choice (Roll20) and move tokens around, particularly when a combat occurs. You may prefer other tools, like Owlbear Rodeo VTT, or Foundry VTT or to go analog with graph paper and pencils. You might just stick with Theatre of the Mind. All equally valid.

If you know the layout of the Dungeon...

- You **COULD** get hold of a pre-made map. Perhaps from <https://dysonlogos.blog/maps> or draw one yourself if you are lucky enough to have the talent.
- You **COULD** grab a map from an existing Dungeon Scenario. There are lots of maps and pre-written adventures available for Basic Fantasy. All their PDFs are free https://www.basicfantasy.org/downloads.html#sn_modules
- You **COULD** use one of many on-line Dungeon Generators such as... <https://mythical.ink/rpg-tools/dungeon-generator> or the ones at the DONJON Web Site, particularly https://donjon.bin.sh/fantasy/5_room

If you want to discover the layout through Play...

I prefer to do this to constantly surprise myself and make it interesting and risky to open each door.

- You **COULD** use various different sets of dungeon room tiles, perhaps on cards like the Deck of Dungeons, or use any of the online generators mentioned above but grab a single area at a time. Take a screenshot of the bit you want, then load that into your VTT. When you want the next piece of the Dungeon, generate another Random Dungeon and grab a bit of that, anything that looks like it would fit reasonably well. You can always slide, rotate and re-size the pieces of map and hand-draw any bits you need to get them to “fit”.
- In my game, I used the **Donjon 5-room generator** https://donjon.bin.sh/fantasy/5_room and screen-grab individual rooms (regenerating after each room) and piece them together as best I can.

How Big is the Dungeon?

Step 0: Decide how many Scenes your current Activity should be

This is just like when you start a **Journey** in Augmented Imagination, what's the MINIMUM number of Scenes you think it should take to explore this dungeon? (Additional Scenes don't count against the total, so you can't be sure EXACTLY how many Scenes/Rooms there will be).

If you don't want to have a fixed idea, you could roll a d20 after each Scene (maybe roll 1d20+5 if you want to enforce a minimum number of Scenes) and if you roll under the number of Scenes, you've reached the end (or reached the Final Boss if you haven't had that experience yet). If you want more of a sprawling Mega Dungeon, then you could make it a d100+5.

In the example, I decided on a single-level 5-room Dungeon as it's a common trope in D&D type games. This doesn't have to mean there are only 5 rooms, just that there will be at least 5 significant Scenes. You might imagine moving through endless halls of abandoned chambers, or finding one complex chamber filled with different traps and summoned guardians. The key thing for Augmented Imagination is just the number of interesting/challenging Scenes that you experience.

Will it be Multi-Level with Escalating Threat?

For Multi-Level... you could use the d20+5 mechanism but when you find the “Final Room”, Ask the Bones if it's stairs going further and then start again. Perhaps you want to decrease the dice size used to check for the end as you work your way through more levels.

For Escalating Threat... the chance of peaceful rests could become less likely and check more times for the chance of IMMEDIATE Additional Scenes. Also, if you were using an Encounters List for the previous Level and want to stick with the theme, make a copy of it, remove the two

least threatening encounter ideas and add two more dangerous ones or leave gaps and if you roll them, make something up.

The BOSS Monster

Do you (the Solo PLAYER) know who/what the Boss Monster is? If so, they will probably set the tone for a lot of the other things you encounter.

One of the guiding principles of Augmented Imagination is to provide you with the tension and surprise you'd normally get from a GM-run game, so even if you DO know what you're expecting, it's worth using Ask the Bones to discover if there is some sort of Twist. They may have unexpected Allies! They may not be here after all! They may not be exactly what you thought they were! They may have known you were coming and prepared an Ambush!

If you don't know in advance, there may be clues as you progress, so if you get Knowledge Scenes, maybe you can get an idea of what's coming. I'd suggest first learning a broad category or make a list of POSSIBLE Boss Monsters and each successful Knowledge Scene can narrow down the options.

Likely Inhabitants

If you have a Theme in mind for the Dungeon, that might provide an obvious list of potential creatures.

For example...

- a Necropolis would probably be populated mainly by Undead
- a Faerie Palace by faerie creatures
- a Fort in the woods by Bandits
- an abandoned dwarven mine by goblins

If you are happy to know the full list of potential monsters, write your own table of monsters, making one or more entries be Traps if it makes any sense that there would be some traps. In my example, I'd already made a list of likely enemies for the area around the Dungeon and just swapped a couple of those entries for a Magical Glyph and a Mechanical Trap.

1. 1d6 Twig Blights & 1d6 Needle Blights
2. 2d6 Twig Blights & a Vine Blight (4HD, Challenge ½)
3. Animated Wood Statue (8HD, Challenge 2) from "Monster Manual Expanded"
4. Undead Servant of Shar
 1. Shadow (3HD, CR1/2)
 2. Ghoul (5HD, CR1)
 3. Specter (5HD, CR1)
 4. Wight (6HD, CR3)
 5. Ghast (8HD, CR2)
 6. Wraith (9HD, CR5)
5. Mechanical Trap (5d6)
6. Glyph of Warding (6d6 Necrotic)

As I had a single 4th level character by this time, you can see that this went the full range between easy, balanced, hard and deadly foes. In fact, the first entry (intended to be the easiest) could turn out to be more difficult than expected if the numbers rolled were high and

they won initiative – in games like D&D5E, numbers of enemies really can count due to the Action Economy.

If you don't want to make a full list in advance, you could use the existing method for Random Encounters by Biome... Make a list of two possible monsters or traps (the most likely threats given what you know of this Dungeon so far, or something generic like Skeletons or Zombies or Giant Rats that you might find anywhere). When you need to know what you've discovered, roll a dice size larger than the number of Encounters in your list. If you get a result corresponding to an Empty Entry, make something up on the spot. If you are using a map from an existing adventure, flick to a random page and see if the encounter there would fit (tweak it as needed).

If you are struggling to think of something, or don't know the bestiary of your RPG very well, you COULD ask an AI (such as GPT5 or Copilot or Gemini) to give you a list of 6 encounters, describing the current situation to it and maybe asking it for a list of monsters from your RPG System that would fit the location and provide a good challenge for your single Level X character. You could tweak your prompt to include some challenges that are Deadly, but beware of making things TOO DEADLY as your character MIGHT lose initiative and be instantly killed if you are unlucky.

The Basic Process

- **Stick to the Scenes mechanism.** You can easily imagine that the Scenes take place in Rooms and Tunnels but are free to decide whether it's one Scene per location or whether all Additional Scenes arise in the same location as the Scene that spawned them.
- **Use the Sparks tables** if you need some additional guidance for your Scenes.
- **If you want a Short Rest,** make another check for an Additional Scene to see if you are interrupted.
- **If you want a Long Rest,** decide how Unlikely or Almost Impossible it would be. Ask The Bones if you get an uninterrupted rest. If you are interrupted while trying for a Long Rest, you could penalize yourself with a COMBAT Scene with a hostile random encounter, rather than rolling for the Scene Focus as trying to sleep in a Dungeon (especially on your own!) seems really risky.
- **Try to imagine what your Character is doing in some detail,** especially before opening any door or working out what is beyond.
 - The Detect Magic spell could give Advantage on Investigation to spot a magical trap (or even spot one automatically if you prefer). It only lasts a short time. If your character can do Ritual Spells, they might be able to cast it as a Ritual Spell and not have to use a Spell Slot (whenever you take additional time, make an extra check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene).
 - If you are willing to spend extra time searching for traps, maybe give yourself Advantage to your Investigation in exchange for making another check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene. Success doesn't mean you DO find a trap, but that you find one **if there is one**. That will get determined either by an Ask the Bones or by the room contents you generate. Nb. In Shadowdark and some OSR games, spending that time can automatically succeed if there is a trap, rather than having an Investigation Check.
- If your character doesn't have any way to open a lock or break open a door, consider giving a reasonable chance that they find a Key on one of the previous enemies they

have looted. It's OK to **sometimes** have a locked or magically trapped door prevent the character from going further, this can lead to side quests to find a key, hire a lockpicker, acquire a scroll of Knock or Dispel Magic etc. But **don't block yourself too often** or you may grow disheartened with the game. You COULD maybe force a gagged and bound prisoner to step through a glyph to discharge it? Or knock politely on a locked door?

- If it seems like your described activity has a chance to **surprise** the occupants of a room (sneaking through the door or kicking it in and leaping to the attack), give them a Perception Check or Ask the Bones if they are surprised. In D&D5E creatures can't act in the first round if they are surprised and this can be a key factor in combats for your solitary hero.
- When playing out a Scene, it's often worth making a table of **potential outcomes before** you make a roll. Eg...

When using the Religion skill to try and puzzle out what some runes signify...

➤ Nat 20 – Understand the Runes and Advantage on the next Challenge
➤ Extreme Success (by 5+) – Understand the Runes
➤ Success – Understand one of the Runes
➤ Fail – Don't understand the Runes
➤ Extreme Fail – Waste enough time that you need to check (LIKELY) for a hostile encounter
➤ Nat 1 – Sure that you understand the Runes, you open the door and get Surprised for the first Round or at Disadvantage if it needs a Save

- Remember to include some **POTENTIALLY USEFUL** locations as well as just dangerous ones. Loot or Traps that can be turned against the inhabitants. In my example I put a Magic Circle that could grant you additional Spell Slots (making your spells more powerful). I often give some down-side consequence, so the Player has to make a tactical choice whether to risk it or not. In this case it was an ARCANA Check to work out what it did...

➤ Nat 20 – 9 Spell Slot Levels are stored, you can use as many at once as you want
➤ Extreme Success (by 5+) – 9 Spell Slot Levels are stored, you can use up to 3 of them at a time
➤ Success – 1d6 Spell Slots are stored, they all get used at once
➤ Fail – 1d6 Spell Slots are stored, they all get used at once, but you take 1d6 necrotic damage for each one (unknown peril) nb. Fergal is immune to Necrotic damage! Fergal Appears from the Stairs and will get Bless from the door.
➤ Extreme Fail – Waste enough time that you need to check (LIKELY) for a hostile encounter. Fergal Appears through the Double Doors, revealing whatever Encounter awaits in there!.
➤ Nat 1 – Fergal Materializes inside the Circle, so can use the additional Spell Slots herself straightaway

If I'd taken a bit longer to think about this, I **might** have made two separate rolls, one to see whether I worked out what it would do and another to see what it did, but the combined roll certainly ratcheted up the tension and gave me a way I could have used Inspiration, or tried to influence the outcome by making some other skill check to try and get Advantage (risking Disadvantage on a fail)!

Social Scenes in a Dungeon

Some Social Scenes (like Friends, Family, Romance etc) are particularly difficult to imagine if your character is wandering through an ancient Necropolis that has lain undisturbed for thousands of years.

My example showed how I managed to get an innocent Romance Scene into the game even though the character was alone, but if you don't want to play scenes that seem so unlikely, you could change any Scene like that into either COMBAT or ENVIRONMENT to simulate how much more dangerous Dungeons are than normal life.

Later in the Example, I got a Knowledge:Rumor Scene, despite there being nobody around to tell me a Rumour. Fortunately, the character had just been beset by magically-induced nightmares so I was able to imagine that she'd got the rumour from something spotted in that dream sequence. Again, if it's too hard to imagine such a Scene, swap it for COMBAT or ENVIRONMENT.