

Shadowdark Solo 002

AUGMENTED IMAGINATION with Shadowdark SOLO

Continuing my step-by-step example of using the new Augmented Imagination framework for Solo or Co-op play, this time with Shadowdark.

I'm planning on using the Framework with the Shadowdark RPG mechanics, a party of three adventurers and playing a Pre-Written Scenario I haven't read at all yet.

This is a BIG departure from the original intention for the Framework, where the Scenes Mechanism drove much of the play. The pre-written area descriptions will now provide the Scene Focus and Scene Details, but I'll be trying to distill from the descriptions an underlying challenge, then focussing on that to "Play out the Scene". I'll be relying heavily on Ask the Bones and on defining lists of Potential Outcomes BEFORE making the key dice rolls in each Scene.

Shadowdark (along with most other OSR-inspired games) tends to reward "**what the players say their characters are doing and saying**", rather than just rolling Checks. This usually relies on the GM knowing more about the situation than the Players and then interpreting their actions to make a (generous) decision whether it works, so I'll try to find other ways to inject Augmented Imagination's trademark tension and surprise.

All documents about Augmented Imagination, including the FREE Rules PDF and lots of Actual Play examples can be found from the <https://iGM4u.com> website, under the heading Augmented Imagination.

The scenario I'm going to play is called Tomb of the Serpent Kings, by Skerples. Available for FREE on DrivethruRPG or directly from his blog <https://coinsandscrolls.blogspot.com/2017/06/osr-tomb-of-serpent-kings-megapost.html> The blog post also offers a couple of links to additional versions of the map that I may use.

Last Time...

- Our heroes – Kaylid the Desert Rider, Ferula the Witch/Priestess & Duthor the Thief - had an argument with Kaylid's Uncle Faruk and his nasty bodyguard, Abdul, as they were "borrowing" a couple of his camels.
- Kaylid began a tentative romance with Ferula (Stage 1 / 3)
- Duthor discovered some secret in the Map that describes a Trap in the Tomb giving them Advantage to dealing with it, but there was a drawback, and I'll double the damage it does if they fail
- They found a Poisoned Oasis in the foothills but realised before they drank
- They reached the entrance to the fabled Tomb of the Serpent Kings

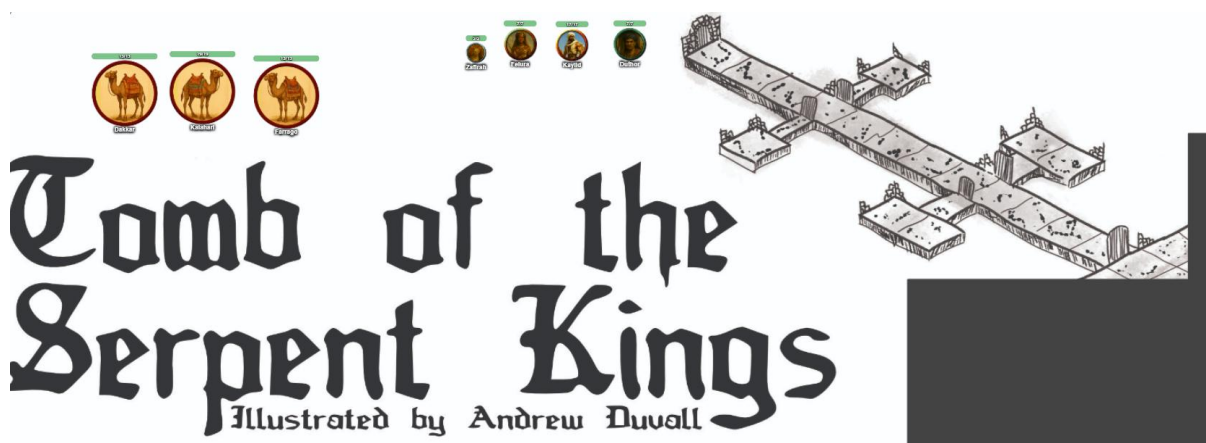
Dungeon Crawling

From this point on, I can't always stick to Augmented Imagination's basic Scenes procedure (at least not the part about choosing a preferred type of Scene, rolling to find out the Scene Focus and the Scene Details). Instead, I intend to follow this

Augmented Dungeon-Crawling Procedure

1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions
2. Read some of the Area description
3. Distil the nature of the Area's Challenge
4. Play out the Scene
 - a. If it makes narrative sense, stick to the Always-On Initiative mechanism
 - b. Because I often take breaks, or spend time setting up the VTT scenes, I don't want to use the real-world 1-hour timer for Torches. Instead, I'll make a 1d6 roll at a critical point in every Scene to see if the Torch goes out.
 - c. If there's no reasonable way to determine Success/Failure, I'll try outlining some possible Outcomes and then making a Check
5. Check for an Immediate Additional Scene
 - a. Additional Scenes are **LIKELY** to be replaced with Random Encounters (I haven't read enough of the scenario to know if there are wandering monsters, but if there's a table, I'll use that)
6. As this is a perilous environment it will be 50/50 whether we can get a Short Rest and Unlikely we can get a Long Rest undisturbed. During a Short or Long rest, I'll give myself the option of a Social or Knowledge Scene if I want one, but with the risk of rolling for Scene Focus and rolling for an Additional Scene afterwards. If **implausible** Social/Knowledge scene details arise, I'll swap them for Combat scenes!

I've decided to use an isometric version of the map, so in my Roll20 VTT, I turned off the grid and I've loaded in the map, then overlaid it with big black rectangles so I can reveal it slowly as I go.



SCENE 01 – The Tomb Entrance

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Kaylid (with his bow) and Felura will hang back with the camels, while Duthor sneaks closer and checks the entranceway for traps/guardians and lights his first Torch.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

The first area is known as The False Tomb. "Describe this area with words like "shoddy" "chipped" and "damp". It's a root cellar. There are little white roots in the ceiling and gravel on the floor.

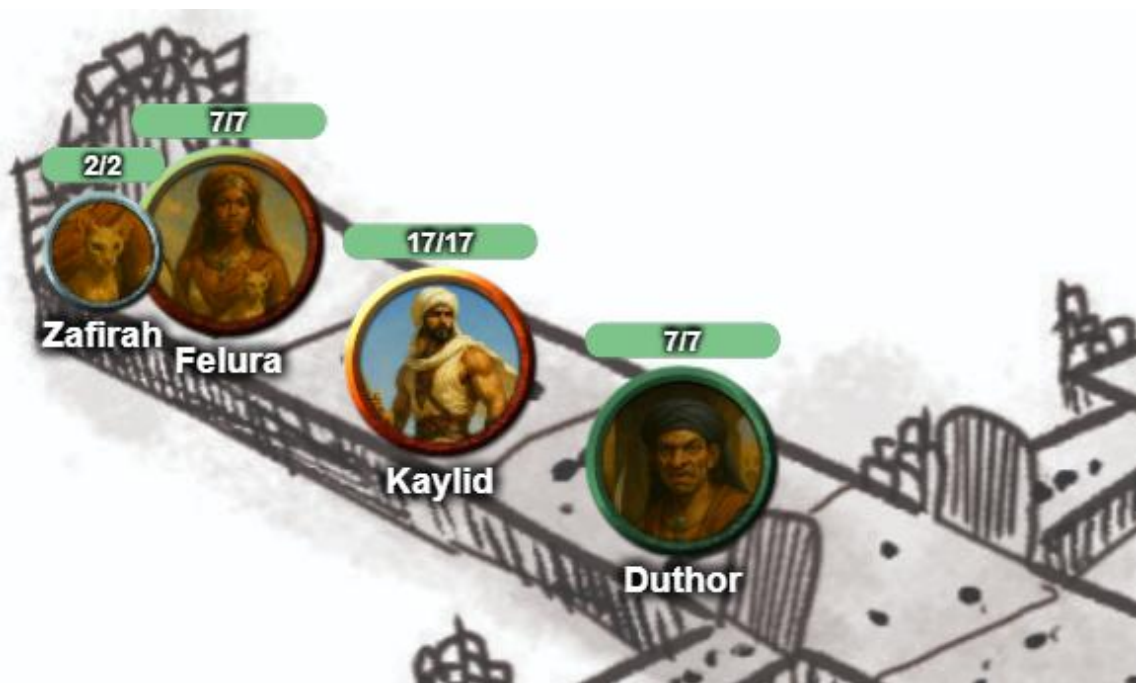
From the map in the book, it looks like the entrance is just open with rubble strewn about even though the isometric map appears to have a portcullis. I'll say that the portcullis is bent and broken and not an obstacle.

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

It appears there's no challenge at the entrance.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Duthor sneaks inside, beckoning for Kaylid and Felura to follow. He will advance slowly, poking the floor ahead with a stick and eyeing the white roots suspiciously.



Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:NO - You get some breathing space between scenes if you want/need it unless you think it is more appropriate for the narrative to continue immediately.

I'm assuming the chance of a Wandering Monster/Random Encounter is the same 1 in 6 as for an Additional Scene. I'll make further checks if they do anything that takes a while to do or if they make unusual amounts of noise.

SCENE 02 – First Treasure!

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Despite Always-On Initiative, it makes most sense to stick with Duthor doing the initial investigation, trap detection and evasion, with Kaylid covering him. I forgot to give Felura any ranged combat capability (other than throwing her dagger) so for now she'll stay back a bit and may use her Shadowdancer (illusion) spell to lure out any suspected ambusher or draw an attack, or her Hypnotise spell if the opportunity arises. She's closely followed by Zafirah (same square but walking behind and alert for enemies at the rear).

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

These small rooms are identical in size and content. They both contain a wooden coffin with a clay statue of a snake-man warrior inside. The statues are hollow. Each contains a gold amulet worth 1gp, a dried snake skeleton, and a cloud of poison gas (d6 damage, can only reduce a PC to 0 HP).

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

There is a trap in each small room. This is what's been described in the Map and they have Advantage because of it.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Suspecting gas, Duthor will wrap a wet cloth around his face before trying to disarm the first one. As he already has Advantage for Thievery, I'll say the Map info adds a further +2.

Disable Trap DC12 Dex (+4) Advantage +2 = 11 & **16**

On the other side...

Roll 1 in 6 for Torch to fail... 6

Disable Trap DC12 Dex (+4) Advantage +2 = 7 & **21**

They collect their first loot, two small gold amulets worth 1gp each. (not enough for any XP). They are pleased, but Zafirah sarcastically mentions how they can hardly pay back the money to Faruk with 2gp, it will possibly buy a few fish from the market in Khemi for her meals.

As the second success was Extreme (by 5 or more) I'll say Duthor can have collected the gas trap intact. He'll leave it here for now in case it breaks in his pocket, but it might come in useful one day.

Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:NO - You get some breathing space between scenes if you want/need it unless you think it is more appropriate for the narrative to continue immediately.

SCENE 03 – The Scholar Tomb

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

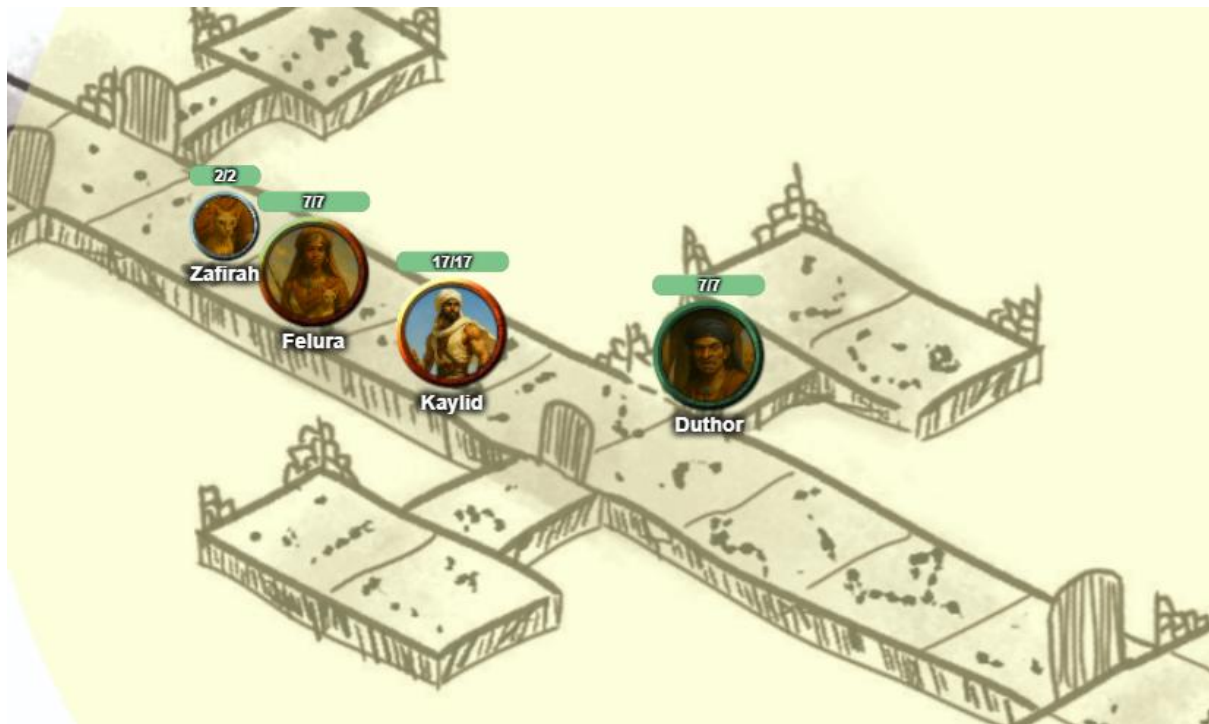
They continue down to the next pair of doors, tapping floor and ceiling, Duthor carefully examining the area with the torch. At the doors, he'll look for traps, pits and trip wires. Then carefully open the left (north) door.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

Similar to **2: GUARD TOMBS**, but inside the coffin is a clay statue of a thin and sly-looking snake-man scholar. Its scrolls have crumbled to dust. The statue contains the same amulet, snake skeleton, and poison as the others.

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

As it looks the same, it's sensible to make the same Check to disable it and wear the wet scarf again.



Nb. At the top left of the image, you may just be able to make out the radius of Duthor's torch light. So they are now aware of the door at the end of this tunnel too.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Roll 1 in 6 for Torch to fail... 4

Disable Trap DC12 Dex (+4) Advantage +2 = 14 & **18**

They now have a golden amulet each (carried by Kaylid).

Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:NO - You get some breathing space between scenes if you want/need it unless you think it is more appropriate for the narrative to continue immediately.

SCENE 04 – The Fourth Little Tomb

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

As it all looks the same, same actions.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

Similar to the **GUARD TOMBS**, but inside the coffin there is a clay statue of a robed snake-man sorcerer wearing a silver ring. If the PCs didn't already learn that the other statues were hollow, they'll almost certainly try to pry the ring off, breaking the statue open and revealing the poison gas and amulet.

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

Same trap to disable BEFORE attempting to get the ring.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Roll 1 in 6 for Torch to fail... 4

Disable Trap DC12 Dex (+4) Advantage +2 = **19 & 7**

His Extreme success means there's another bottle of Poison Knockout Gas available.

They don't have a Detect Magic spell, so the ring just looks like more treasure.

I think Duthor would crack off the clay finger and put on the ring.

The ring is a magical but also cursed. If worn on a finger, the fingernail becomes long, bifurcated, and pointed like twin fangs. It can be used like a poison dagger (living targets must Save vs. Poison or take +1d6 poison damage on a hit), but each morning, the wearer must Save vs. Poison or take d6 damage. If they take 6 damage at once from the poison ring, their finger falls off and turns into a snake.

Does the nail grow immediately (if not it grows overnight).

Ask the Bones 50/50: 4 (3,1) NO! And
Drawbacks: It drew attention

At a quick skim, I couldn't see any table of Wandering Monsters, so I'll use the existing **Identify a Target** mechanism in Augmented Imagination.

IDENTIFY A TARGET

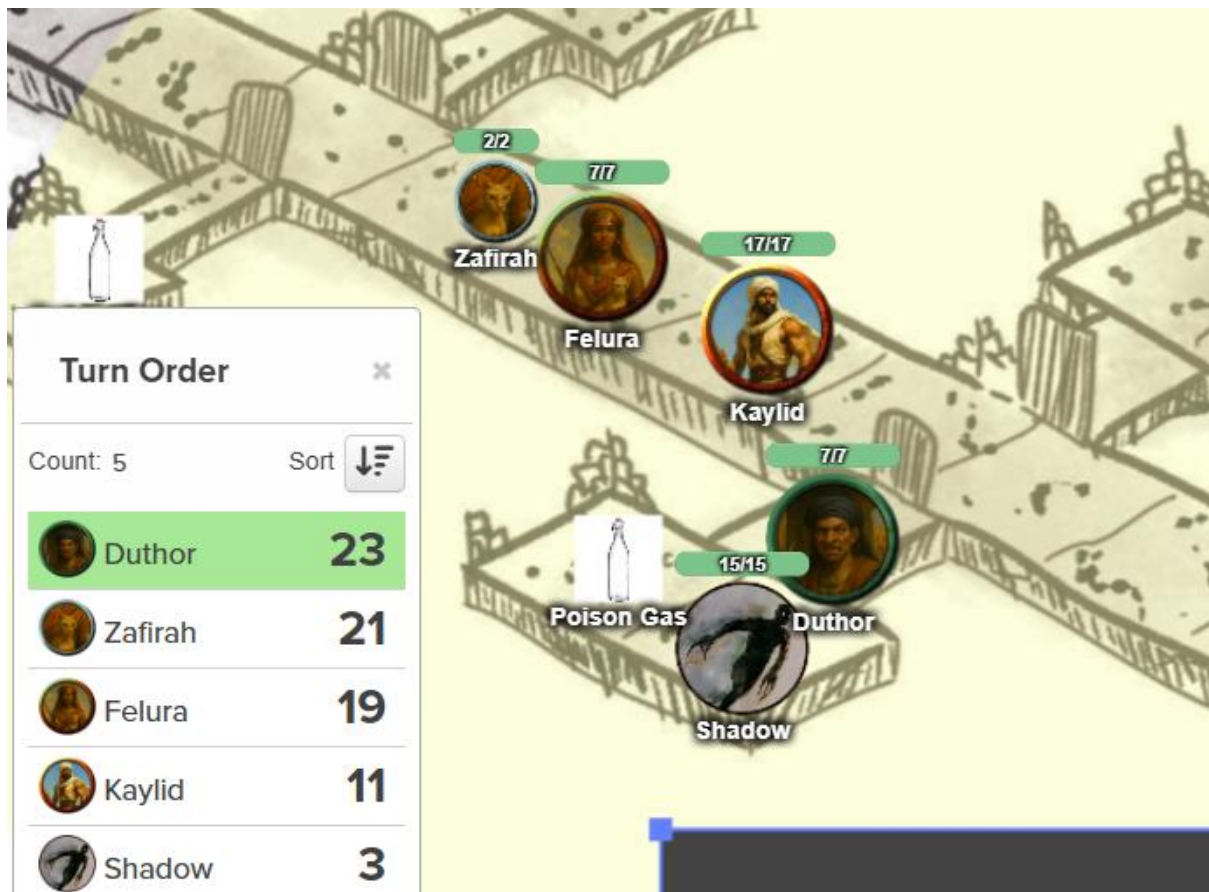
If there is an "obvious" or "particularly suitable" target, feel free to just choose that, or Ask the Bones after deciding whether it is 50/50 or LIKELY or ALMOST CERTAIN.

If necessary, you can roll on the Identify a Target Table below instead...

1d6	Type	Instructions
1	Biome Encounter	Roll on the current Random Encounters by Biome table
2	Biome Encounter	Roll on a different Random Encounters by Biome table
3-6	People	Roll on the People & Other Monsters List

If you roll a 2, pick some other Biome at random from your area map. If you don't already have an encounter table for it, follow the usual procedure and add 2 entries, then use a d4 to roll.

An “obvious or particularly suitable” enemy would be the Shadow of the ring’s former owner rising to reclaim it.



Shadow: pg 250 of the Shadowdark book.
AC 12, HP 15, ATK 2 touch +2 (1d4 + drain), MV near (fly),
S -4, D +2, C +2, I -2, W +0, Ch -1, AL C, LV 3

As monsters are a bit simpler in Shadowdark than in D&D, there’s no “needs magic to hit” or “resistant to non-magical weapons”.

Round 1

Roll 1 in 6 for Torch to fail... 4

Duthor attacks with his scimitar. I imagine that the Torch has been propped up carefully against the wall while he did his trap-removal.

Duthor Scimitar (+4 Dex) = 11. Just a miss.

He scrambles back out of the door to draw the creature out to where Kaylid can hit it too.

Zafirah will slip around a corner out of sight. I’ll miss her out unless there is something useful she can do.

Felurah will light her own Torch as Duthor left his in the room with the Shadow so the corridor is probably pretty dark!

Kaylid is eager to attack the thing so steps to the doorway to hit it. His pike can reach it without having to enter the room.

Kaylid Pike (2H +4) = 14. Hits for 7 damage reducing the Shadow to 8/15.

The Shadow is Likely to pursue Duthor for the ring.

Ask the Bones Likely: 10 (5,5,4) Yes

It gets two Touches...

Shadow Touch (+2) = 10. Miss

Shadow Touch (+2) = 21. Hits for 4 HP and Drains 1 point of STR.

Duthor is down to 10/11 STR and 3/7 HP.

Round 2

Duthor stabs again with his Scimitar.

Duthor Scimitar (+4 Dex) = 10. Another miss.

Felura can't get at the thing, so will just hold the Torch.

Kaylid takes another stab at it.

Kaylid Pike (2H +4) = 11. Just Misses.

Felura will give him her Luck Token (perhaps he can feel her watching him and makes a special effort!).

Kaylid Pike (2H +4) **LUCK TOKEN** Re-roll = 20. Hits for 8 damage.

This is enough to finish the creature, and it dissipates with a whimpering screech.

Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:NO - You get some breathing space between scenes if you want/need it unless you think it is more appropriate for the narrative to continue immediately.

Felura will try to heal Duthor's wounds, but can't return his lost STR.

Felura Casts Cure Wounds (+5 with Advantage) = **22** & 11, for 2d6 = 6 Healing

Duthor is fully fit again, but the STR won't return until after a Long Rest.

SCENE 05 – The Great Door

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Recovering his torch, Duthor heads down to the door at the end, carefully scanning and prodding for pit traps and pressure plates. At the door, he'll look for traps, check it's locked and pick the lock if it is.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

A large door, barred with a lengthy piece of stone hung on two iron pegs set into either side of the doorframe. Requires at least three PCs to lift (or, if the party is smaller, all PCs). When the bar is lifted, the iron pegs begin to rise. When the bar is fully removed a trap is activated. A huge stone hammer swings down from the ceiling, aiming straight for the backs of the now-trapped PCs. It nearly fills the corridor, but there is a small gap on either side.

This trap can be identified by examining the door or pegs, by noticing that the iron pegs slowly rise as the bar is lifted, or by checking the ceiling. If the bar is quickly replaced, if the pegs are held down, or if the trap mechanism in the ceiling is damaged, the trap will not activate.

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

I didn't say I was checking the ceiling, but I think if I'd known there was a stone bar and iron pegs, Duthor would have paid attention to them.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

I'll give him an Intelligence Check (with Advantage for Thievery) to see if he can identify the trap.

Trap Detection INT (+1 Advantage) = 8 & **16**

Kaylid will boost Duthor up to the ceiling to try and disable the trap.

Roll 1 in 6 for both of the two lit Torches to fail... 5 (I'll go with the same chance even for multiple torches as a sudden gust of wind could do it)

Trap Disable DEX (+4 Advantage) = **24** & 10 CRITICAL SUCCESS

Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:NO - You get some breathing space between scenes if you want/need it unless you think it is more appropriate for the narrative to continue immediately.

Wrap Up

This method seems to be working well.

I must try to remember the cursed finger ring after their first long rest!

If you are finding the story and the system interesting, or have any comments and suggestions, please let me know.

Hopefully see you next time.