

Shadowdark Solo 008

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 and a party of three adventurers and playing a Pre-Written Scenario I haven't read at all yet.



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

The scenario I'm playing 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. I'm using the Isometric one created by Andrew Duvall.

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 Rest (8 hrs + Rations in Shadowdark), 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!

Last Time...

- Our 2nd-level heroes – Kaylid the Desert Rider, Ferula the Witch/Priestess & Duthor the Thief just managed to destroy the Stone Cobra Guardian, so the way forward is now open.
- Next came a combat with a very dangerous bunch of warriors belonging to the deceased Priest Gazali. Kaylid was taken down, but fortunately, this was a RESCUE Scene and the ghost of the NPC Furieth turned up to chase off the last few.
- Unknown to the characters, the leader, Gazali's Bodyguard – Tariq Assam escaped along with one of his Bandit followers.

SCENE 01 – Down the Stairs

Felura will try to cast Cure Wounds again as Kaylid is still injured.

Felura Cure Wounds (+5, Advantage) DC11 = 24, for 11HP.

Kaylid is back to full 17/17 HP.

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Our heroes gather up the bodies of the fallen (5 Bandits) and loot the corpses.

Will Tariq and his remaining follower have left their camels and supplies?

Ask the Bones 50/50: 8 (4,4) Yes But Drawbacks: Something connected went badly at the same time

I'll say that 1d6 of the seven camels got spooked and fled (3). This leaves 4 camels and 5 bandit corpses.

For each of the Camels there will be 3 days fodder (enough to get them back to Khemi) and 3 days rations and 3 torches and on each bandit 1d6 gold (5d6=17). They each had a club and a shortbow and 10 arrows too. I gave it one roll (58) on the low-level treasure table too and got a "Copper-and-gold mead tankard (20 gp)".

All that treasure (including the re-sale value of camels) must be worth another 3XP each, taking them all to 17/20 XP.

Not knowing what else to do with the 5 bandit corpses, they carry them down into the Tomb and drop them into the well!

Carefully avoiding the trigger on step three, and stepping over the rubble of the Stone Cobra Guardian, Duthor leads the way down into the octagonal chamber at the bottom. There are brightly-painted shields on the walls, one of which flew across to land on the Stone Guardian's arm.

He will check each of the shields for traps before pulling them down to examine them closely.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

Now the monster has been defeated, there's nothing more to add. The shields are almost worthless.

Step 3. Distill the nature of the Area Challenge

There's no challenge here.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

The slow and cautious approach will lead to 2 additional checks for Additional Scenes.

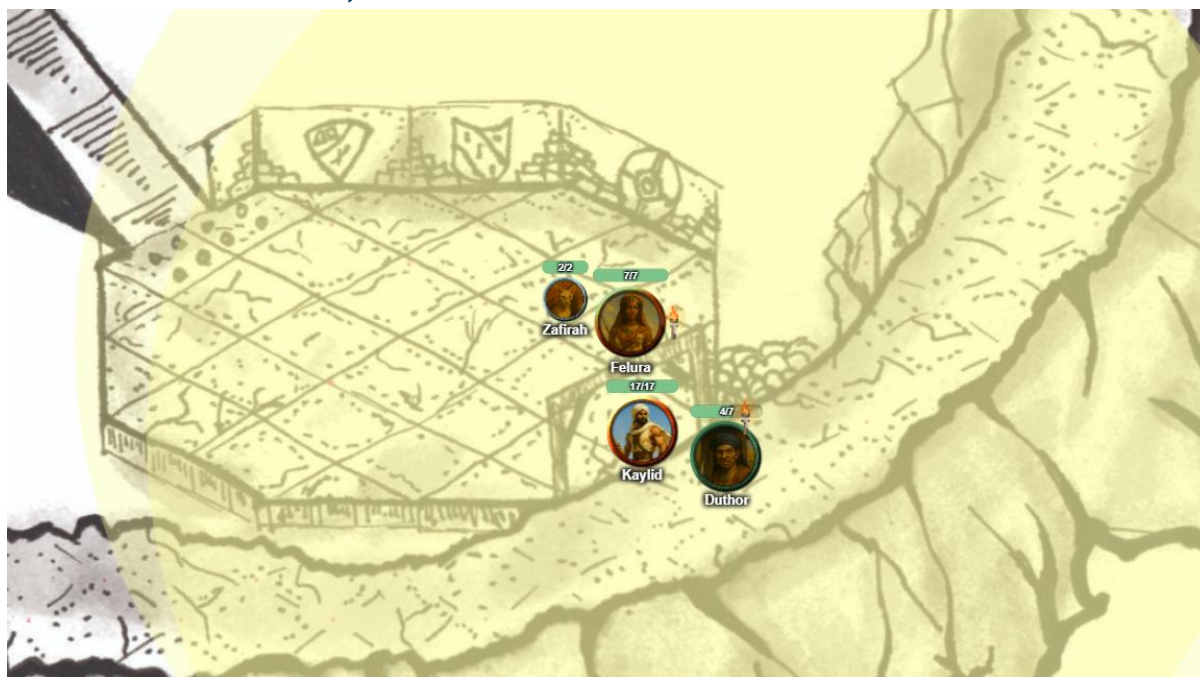
Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Three Checks...

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.

Check for Torches going out. No.

SCENE 02 – Chasm, Area 20



Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Duthor will lead the way through the opening. He'll lean through and check above the doorway for traps and check the floor for more pits or pressure plates.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

20: CHASM AND PATH

A narrow path along a bottomless chasm. To the north, the path dead-ends. To the south, the path leads to the rest of the tomb. The path is 10' wide and slightly slippery; running or leaping will require a fairly easy Save. The chasm is 60' wide, and the opposite side isn't visible unless the PCs use flaming arrows or a very powerful light source. If the PCs anger the fungus goblins, this path will be their preferred ambush spot. The goblins are sticky and disregard the slippery stone floor.

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

Duthor will head north, scouting ahead to the dead-end while the others guard the ledge by the doorway to prevent any monsters from blocking Duthor's return.

As I've not read ahead, I don't know what's on the far side, or bottom, of the Chasm or where these "fungus goblins" might come from. I'll give the party (Duthor) a check DC15 to learn something from tracks and other markings that suggests that there are unusual goblinoids about.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Duthor INT (+1) DC15 = 4. Fails.

Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:YES - There is a new Scene immediately, before you have time to recover. Choose a Chosen Scene Focus and then roll for the Scene Focus as usual.

Additional Scene: Green Crystals

I'll choose Social and hope that I can get a ROMANCE opportunity as Kaylid and Felura have a few moments away from Duthor.

Scene Focus:KNOWLEDGE

KNOWLEDGE Scene:MAGIC - You encounter/discover something or someone magical. Imagine what it could be Make rolls on the Spark Tables for inspiration if necessary. Some kind of Skill check should be needed to understand/learn from/acquire/bypass the knowledge/power/item.

Spark 1: Acrobatic, Spark 2: Ore

I'll imagine that when Duthor reaches the dead end (a rockfall that blocks the ledge) he can see some sparkling crystal ore giving off a VERY FAINT green glow, but he'd have to climb up to get it.

He'll call for the others to join him (ruining their chance for Romance!) and rope him up so he can clamber up to cut off a chunk of the glowing crystal.

Duthor DEX (+4, Advantage) DC12 = 6 & **21** Success.

He cuts a small piece of crystal from the wall and brings it down. The glow fades within a minute. (because the oppressive nature of Shadowdark doesn't really want any permanent light sources).

Felura will try to gain some understanding of the nature of it from her Arcane studies (Cult Initiate).

- Nat 20 – Learn that the crystal saps living energy and causes Undead to develop. You'd need an equivalent weight of crystal to the size of the corpse for it to wake into Undeath about 1 in 6 chance per night.
- Extreme Success (by 5+) – Learn that the glow is harmful (CON Draining) to living creatures but heals Undead.
- Success – Learn that the glow is harmful (CON Draining)
- Fail – Learn that it's magical and could be valuable, but MIGHT be dangerous
- Extreme Fail – Learn nothing and waste so much time you have to check for a COMBAT Encounter (LIKELY)
- Nat 1 – as above but Duthor & Felura also need a CON Check DC9 because of the exposure or lose 1 CON.

Felura INT (+1, Advantage) DC 15 = 3 & **18**. Success.

Check for Additional Scene...

Is there an ADDITIONAL Scene?:YES - There is a new Scene immediately, before you have time to recover. Choose a Chosen Scene Focus and then roll for the Scene Focus as usual.

Additional Scene: Can Romance Blossom in the Dark?

I'll choose Social and hope that I can get that ROMANCE opportunity for Kaylid and Felura.

Scene Focus: CHOSEN FOCUS (Choose or Roll Scene Details). I choose ROMANCE.

Felura feels a bit dizzy after examining the crystal and sways. Kaylid puts his arm around her to steady her and they have an intimate moment.

Felura will be moved by his care and look of concern and put a hand on his cheek then move in for a kiss. She will commit to the relationship, risking 2d6 Emotional HP damage for +5.

Felura CHA (+4, +5) DC18 = 14 +5 = 19.

She gains a Luck Token and now both Felura and Kaylid can hold multiple Luck Tokens (up to their Level).

Despite the complaints of Zafirah and Duthor, that this is hardly the time and place for “making out!”, our two lovebirds have managed to form a stable romantic bond. ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

SCENE 03 – South along the Chasm (Area 22)

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Leading them the other way along the ledge, Duthor will spot the heavy stone door with an unusual symbol on it. He will approach cautiously, checking floor, walls and ceiling for traps and pressure plates. When he gets to the door, he'll check for locks, pick the lock if necessary, but wait for the others to get close before opening it. If it opens outwards, he'll use the rope to pull, otherwise will use one of the spare Long spears to push it open.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

Outer Halls (22–26)

Dressed stone, slightly damp, mold and slime on the lower walls. The air is cold, especially close to the chasm. Some dry and dusty areas. Everything has carved or painted snakes on it.

22: STONE DOOR

Recessed 5' into the wall and held closed by a heavy stone bar. The door is barred on the side facing the chasm. If approached from the other side, it cannot be opened without demolishing most of the door.

This sounds like the same “stone bar” mechanism as one of the earlier doors that had a hammer trap!

*It contains the same type of hammer trap as **5: DOOR/HAMMER TRAP**, but the hammer swings away from the door, rather than towards it. This makes it easier to dodge (+2 bonus to the Save) but any hit PCs must Save again or be flung into the chasm.*

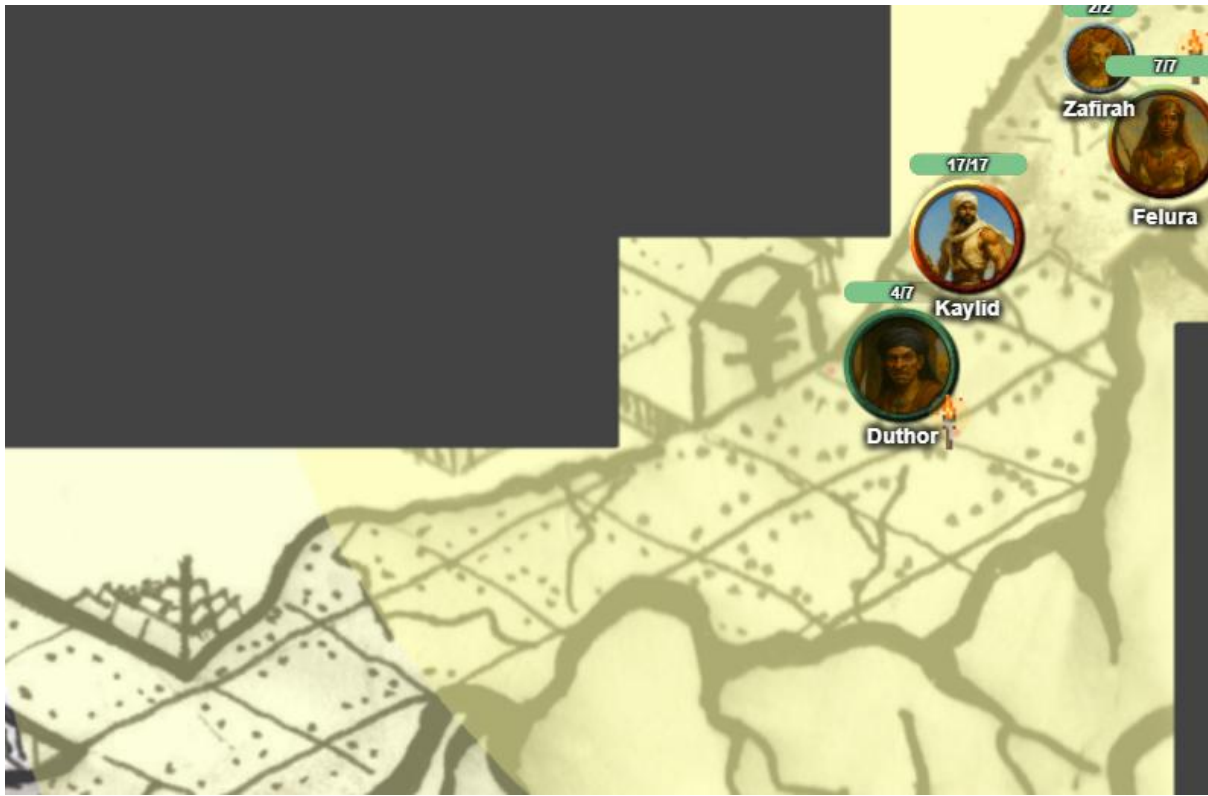
Lessons: traps repeat. Be cautious around bottomless chasms!

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

As the stone bar mechanism is so clearly like the previous trap, the description of Duthor's actions would be enough (in a game with a GM) to not need any kind of Check. However, I'll just make it an Easy Check DC9 using Duthor's Thievery to get Advantage.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Duthor will carefully lift the bar off one side, keeping the iron peg from springing up and then hold it down with a long spear, letting it up once he's back out of the immediate area.



Duthor DEX (+4, Advantage) DC9 = 6 & **20**. Success.

The hammer comes down from the ceiling and would have swept anyone less cautious off the ledge into the chasm!

Step 5: Check for an IMMEDIATE Additional Scene

Check twice as they are being slow and cautious

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 – Ceremonial Room (Area 23)

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Peek around the hammer trap into the room. If seems clear, Duthor will go in and cautiously look around while Kaylid covers him from the doorway with one of the bandit shortbows.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

23: CEREMONIAL ROOM

*Used by the snake-man priests to prepare and meditate. Contains several low benches, ancient wall hangings, and a dry fountain. Goblins pried a gold statue from the fountain and hid it in **49: GOBLIN THRONE ROOM**. A few scraps of gold leaf worth 1gp and a primitive tool marks are all that remain*

Seems “safe” and from the map, looks like there is a tunnel leading further in that splits into two.

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

Only challenge here seems to be recognising from the tools and scratches that it was goblins who scraped away the gold.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Duthor INT (+1) DC12 = 4. Fail.

“Somebody’s been here before us and scraped away all the gold” muttered Duthor as he sneaked around the empty chamber.

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 just noticed Duthor is still injured, so Felura will try to heal him.

Felura CURE WOUNDS (+5, Advantage) DC11 = 9 & **23**. Heals him for 8, back to full.

SCENE 05 – Skeleton!

Step 1. Describe the Party’s actions and intentions

There are cracks drawn on the floor (in my map) so Duthor will advance slowly, prodding with the long spear. He’ll gesture to Felura to do the “illusionary thief” thing, sending it across the two tunnel openings to draw any attacks from whatever has been scraping gold. He’ll hide at the corner to ambush and won’t look around until after the illusion.

Felura SHADOWDANCE (+5) DC11 = 15. success

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

On the map it looks like the right fork goes up stairs (to 31) and the left fork continues at this level (to 24) .

*A long, narrow hallway slopes downwards to the south. Contains 1 **Skeleton Jelly** (HD 2, MORALE 12, ATK 1d4 [Slam]) that will move towards noise*

SKELETON JELLIES

Found In: 24: HALLWAY, as a Wandering Monster

Stats: as a weak skeleton that is completely invulnerable

Appearance: A skeleton covered in orange ooze. Immortal and nearly indestructible. Any attack that would normally deal 4 or more damage just knock them back 5'. **Wants:** to squish heads and make more skeleton jellies

Armor: as leather

Hit Dice: 2, but infinite HP. You cannot reduce their HP by damage, magic, fire, acid, prayer, cruel insults, or the touch of the grim reaper himself. They are too dumb to live and too stupid to die.

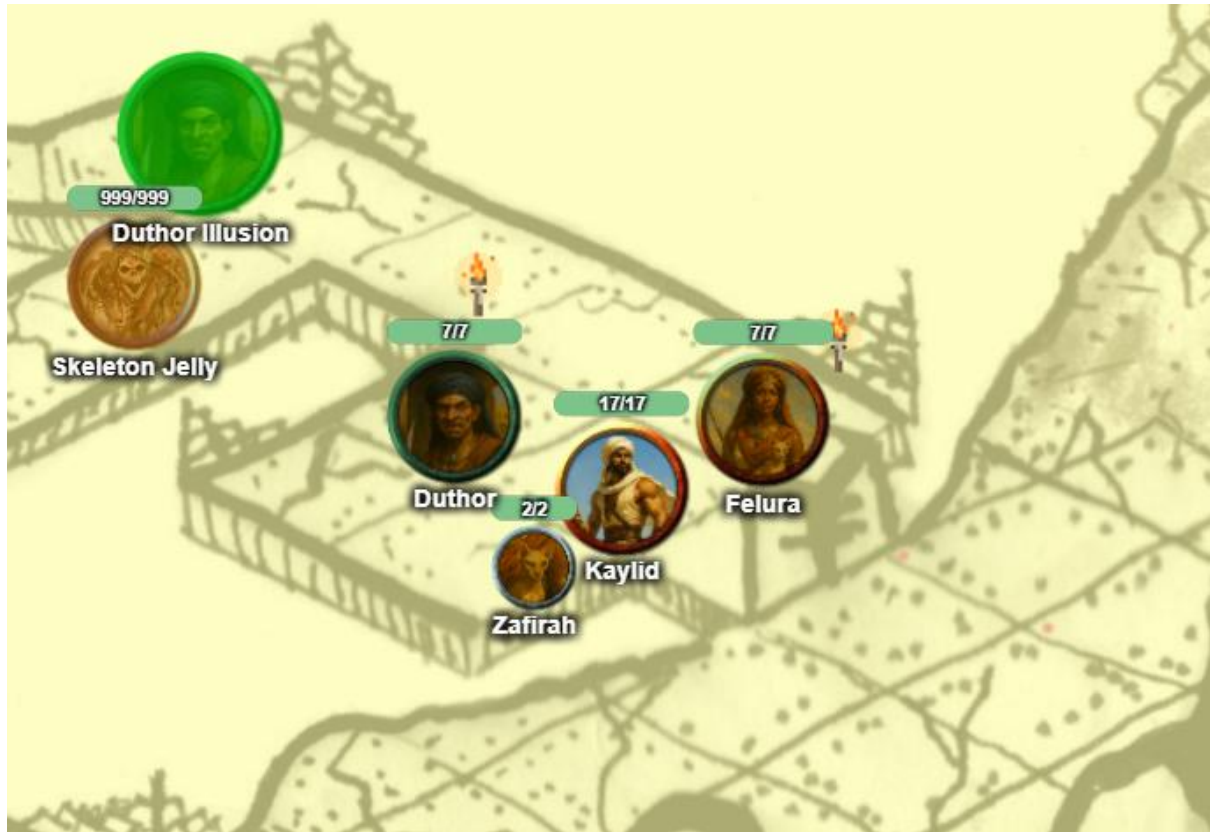
Move: ½ standard, but up walls too, if they get stuck

Morale: 12

Damage: 1d4, usually by grappling your head

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

Combat, but the key thing is how quickly they will realise the thing is indestructible, then they can use the illusion spell to lure it off the ledge into the chasm or try to swing the hammer trap to knock it off the chasm.



Step 4. Play out the Scene

Duthor gets a look at the illusion, glares at Felura “Again with the big nose!”.

Felura shrugs apologetically. “Your face is... unusual!” and then glares at Kaylid when he sniggers “Unusual, yeah, that’s the word”. Zafirah snorts too. “Unusual as the back end of a..”. But then the unseen monster lurches forward to attack the illusion.

Round 0

“Skelly” Claw (+1) vs AC 10 = 17. Hits and destroys the illusion.

Round 1

Duthor will run in and BACKSTAB it.




Duthor Fingernail (+4) vs AC11 = 21. For 2 + 6 = 8 damage.

I’ll say that every hit gives a DC15 INT Check to notice it’s invulnerable! The thing just drops back a pace.

Duthor INT (+1) DC15 = 8. Fails.

Felura will suggest that Duthor moves back to lure it into the room where they can surround it. As she isn’t doing anything else, I’ll give her the check to see if she notices the invulnerability.

Felura INT (+1) DC15 = 15. Success

 Duthor	23
 Felura	18
 Skeleton Jelly	18
 Zafirah	13
 Kaylid	13

She spots something strange about the creature and how the scratch seems to immediately heal over as the orange coating seems to flow back into the wound, repairing it completely! She follows her cat out onto the ledge.

The “Jellyton” lurches forward and attacks Duthor.

“Jellyton” Claw (+1) = 10. Miss

Zafirah will slip out onto the ledge.

Kaylid will take the torch from Felura and shout at Duthor to lure the thing into the room and try burning it. He steps back into the doorway so the thing will have to come all the way into the room to attack.

Round 2

Check if Torches go out (1 in 6) = 6.

Duthor will try to burn it with his torch before stepping back.

Duthor Torch (+4) = 18. Hits for 2 fire damage. No significant effect!

Felura will suggest trying to lure it to the edge of the ledge and then push it over.

Felura SHADOWDANCE (+5) DC11 = 24.

She conjures the Duthor illusion again and has it “standing” just off the ledge, hovering in space over the long drop.

“Jellyton” Does it charge for Kaylid?

Ask the Bones Likely: 6 (4,2,1) No

It turns for Duthor.

“Jellyton” Claw (+1) = 5. Miss



Zafirah runs behind her mistress.

Kaylid backs off onto the ledge and stands beside Felura.

Round 4

Duthor scampers out after them all, so the only “enemy” the monster can see is the illusion of Duthor hovering off the ledge.

“**Jellyton**” rushes at the illusion.

“Jellyton” Claw (+1) = 5. Miss

Kaylid passes the torch back to Felura and then CHARGES at the monster.

Kaylid Long spear CHARGE (+4) = 21. For 7 damage x2 = 14.

The monster is pushed off the ledge.

Our heroes probably think that the Jellyton is gone forever, but it can slowly climb walls, so it WILL come back at some point. I'll add it to the Wandering Monster List but also check 1-in-6 at random times during a Scene.

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.

They exchange a few worried looks. If they're now in an area with INVULNERABLE monsters, perhaps they have come too far!

Duthor says “a thing that powerful must be guarding some sort of legendary treasure, let's go look”.

SCENE 06 – Area 25

Outer Halls (22–26)

Dressed stone, slightly damp, mold and slime on the lower walls. The air is cold, especially close to the chasm. Some dry and dusty areas. Everything has carved or painted snakes on it.

*This level also contains **Wandering Monsters**. They are attracted to noise, light, and heat. They won't move to the upper levels of the dungeon unless the **Stone Cobra Guardian** is defeated.*

Check every 30 minutes on Level 3, or whenever the PCs make a lot of noise.

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Duthor leads the way past where the Jellyton came from. He's eager for treasure so won't be as cautious and slow as before.

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

25: PIT TRAP

<i>This room has a false floor made of thin stone tiles. A 1' wide ring around the walls is safe, but all other tiles are held up by sticks and thin metal bars. Any PC stepping into the center of the room must Save to Dodge or take 1d6 damage from the fall and Save again or take a further 1d6 from the spikes at the bottom. The false tiles are easy to spot: one is even missing.</i>

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

Avoiding the trap. As the description says it's Easy, I'll say it's DC9.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

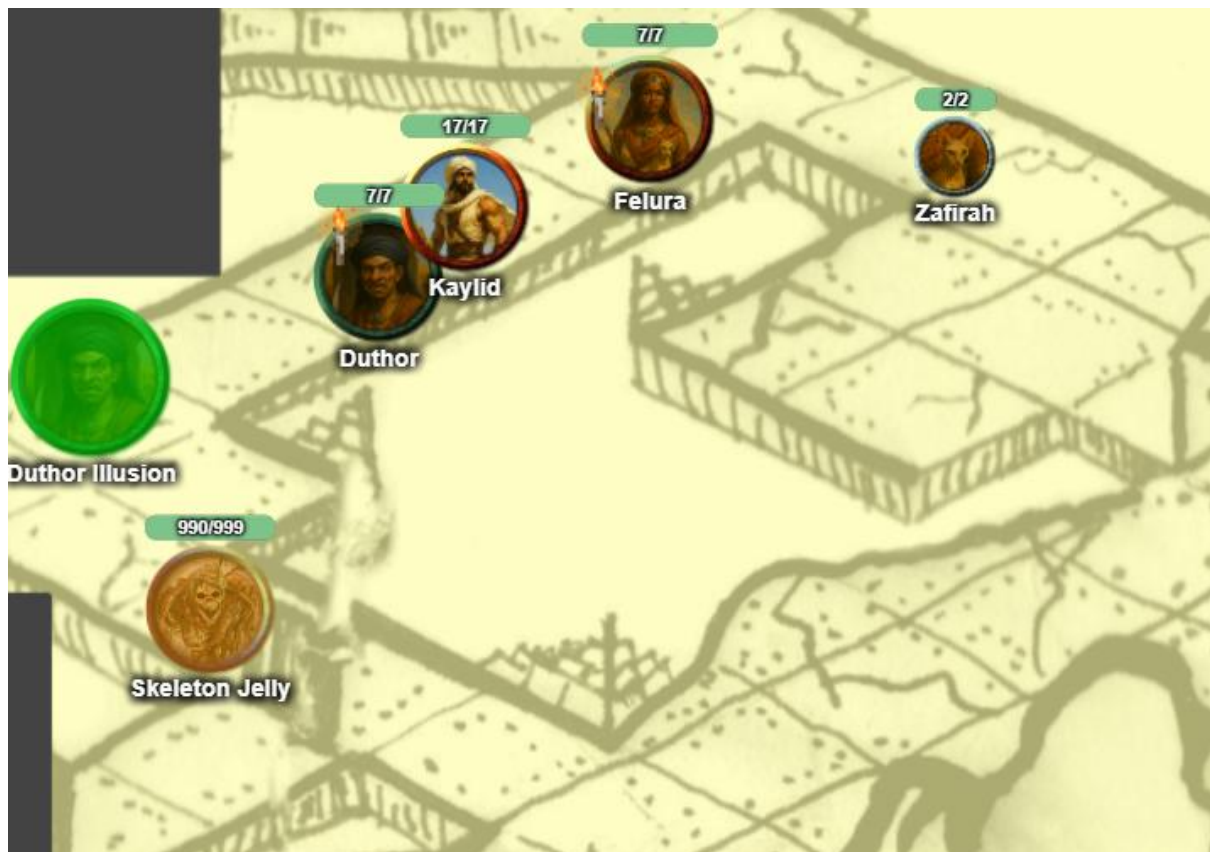
Duthor INT (+1) vs DC9 = 13. Success.

He spots the few loose tiles and prods with a longspear to knock away chunks of the false floor.

1-in-6 chance of the Jellyton returning = 1!

As they've only just got rid of this thing, I'll say they hear it coming, and if Felura can manage another illusion, they can tempt it to fall into the trap and be delayed for a while.

Felura SHADOWDANCE (+5) DC11 = 14.



The almost mindless thing rushes across the chamber at the illusion and falls through the false floor.

As there seems to be no way to kill this thing, they will back away and try the second tunnel with stairs going up. First Felura will advance and have the illusion clearly leave via the southern tunnel in order to tempt the thing to follow that way.

Zafirah will lurk behind them to warn them if the monster shambles their way.

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 07 – Area 31

Step 1. Describe the Party's actions and intentions

Duthor leads the way up the stairs, carefully checking the third step from the bottom and the top for triggers/traps but otherwise not being too cautious as they are trying to get away from an invincible skeleton!

Step 2. Read some of the Area Description

31: GUARDED HALL

Two incredibly life-like snake-man statues stand in the bottom corners of this elaborately carved hall. The statues are much finer than any other carving in the tomb. They are, in fact, petrified snake-men, placed here as punishment. If de-petrified, they will fly into a murderous rage for 10 minutes, then slowly give in to despair. The statues are worth 50gp each if sold in a major city, or 10x more to a wizard who recognizes their nature.

Lessons: look for explanations for things that are out of place..

Step 3. Distil the nature of the Area Challenge

No obvious challenge but Duthor will waste some time expecting the elaborate “statues” to come to life. A DC15 INT (from any in the party) will discern they are petrified “real” Snakemen.

Step 4. Play out the Scene

Duthor INT (+1) vs DC15 = 6. Fail

Kaylid INT (-1) vs DC15 = 3. Fail

Felura INT (+1) vs DC15 = 8. Fail



1-in-6 chance of the Jellyton returning = 3

1-in-6 chance of the Torches going out = 2

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

They still haven't found any MAJOR loot, so will want to keep searching despite the increasing danger.

I'm going to award 3 more XP for dealing with the unstoppable Skeleton (twice).

That's enough to get them all to 20XP and ready to advance to 3rd Level.

I usually make characters complete a Rest before Levelling Up. They COULD go back out to the camp and try to rest, although now the Stone Cobra Guardian has been destroyed, the Wandering Monsters COULD make it out of the dungeon. They would probably bar the door to the main stairs to prevent that.

They ideally need to find a lockable door to imprison the Jelly Skeleton behind.

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.