



...continues from [Scene #06](#)

Synopsis

The 10th Day of Ches in the Year of the Sudden Journey
After accepting Blackengorge Town Council's request to find their two missing sons the party headed to the mausoleum on a hill to the north of town, where they found the entrance to an old crypt being used for some form of ritual by an elf and his guardians. Tested to their limits in power the group prevailed, and set off to return for Blackengorge. On the road they were waylaid by a band of kobold and goblin brigands, but managed to defeat them. They now return to Blackengorge as victorious heroes with the two missing children in tow.

- [Celestia Gaia](#) - 2nd Level Female Elven Cleric of Melora
- [Khâlin Grundokri](#) - 2nd Level Male Dwarven Warlord
- [Kireth Majere](#) - 2nd Level Male Half-Elven Wizard
- [Tradden Aversward](#) - 2nd Level Male Human Fighter
- [Zero Uhlit](#) - 2nd Level Male Human Rogue

Scene Length

This scene starts on Friday 12 November 2010 and is expected to be completed by the end of Tuesday 16 November 2010. Players are expected to be able to post at least once a day.

Me: *The group arrived back at the west gate of Blackengorge as dusk turned to night. Clouds had dissipated and the night sky, littered with stars, illuminated their journey.* Nov 12, 2010

The gates were closed and the drawbridge over the moat raised, but soft yellow flames could be seen in the wooden guard towers to either side of the gate.

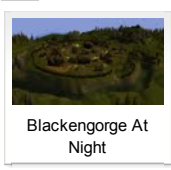
"Ho, there!" *shouted Tradden, trying to attract the attention of a guard. "We've returned with your sons!"*

Shadowy figures could be seen moving about in the tower platforms, and Zero's fingers twitched above his crossbow.

Then, to the relief of Zero's fingers, a guard's face popped over the side of the tower, and after a moment of study he shouted out to his comrades, "It's them, they're back! Get Robert and Aldous, and find the Council, the sons are back."

A great creaking rang out in the still night air, and the drawbridge started lowering on braided ropes.

Me: Nov 12, 2010



Me: *The drawbridge hit the earthen side of the moat nearest the party with a thud, and the wooden palisade gates opened outwards with a guard on either side. Even in the dim light their faces could be seen to be bright, with great smiles on them.* Nov 12, 2010

As the group slowly marched over the drawbridge the guards' smiles turned to looks of worry and concern, though. The party were bedraggled, bloodstained, and weary, and although the two boys were all beams and joy, they two had scars and wealds upon them. The sight of a number of redundant weapons being carried amongst the group was also not a good sign.

Sounds of the drawbridge being raised behind them comforted the group. A certain tiredness started to seep its way into their bodies.

One of the guards stepped forward. He looked more military than the others, dressed in well-kept, but obviously used, scale mail and carrying a large halberd. He looked for the largest in the group, focussing on Tradden.

"What happened here?" *he asked abruptly, noting the weapons the boys were carrying.*

Matt: "Well, where do we start?" began Tradden. Nov 12, 2010

"First of all, sir, I am pleased to say our task was a success!" he continued, walking over to Offa and Bailey and placing a hand on the shoulder of each.

"Go on boys – you must have family that are going out of their minds," he said, shoing them away. "By the way, I don't know who taught them to shoot a bow, but he certainly did a damn fine job!"

"Secondly," he went on, now getting more agitated as he spoke and meeting the chief guard eye to eye, "I am not all sure that you adequately prepared us for the kinds of things that lurk outside your walls! You will note the appearance of both the boys and the party? We look this way because in no particular order we have been attacked with swords, spears, bows, magical spells, gas, wands, claw and tooth by short greenskins, scaly little demons, some bizarre hybrid of greenskin and man, elf, and perhaps most concerning of all the LIVING DEAD!"

Tradden went on to recount the whole journey, including how the tomb was entered, how they discovered the boys, the fight with the mysterious elf and the ambush on the path back. Whoever the guard in charge was his face never changed from its fixed, stony gaze, which riled Tradden more and more as he went on.

"So, in summary, it seems to me that you and your town, which by default now includes us, is in a spot of trouble."

He went on, perhaps inadvisedly pointing a finger right in the face of the chief guard, "Oh, AND, whilst we volunteered, that's right VOLUNTEERED, to go rescue the two boys I thought our welcome on our return might be a little bit WARMER!"

At that point Tradden realised that the whole courtyard was silent, save for the sound of Zero's hand slapping against his own face, and that every pair of eyes was now staring in his direction. Only the chief guard was close enough to see him blush and notice the way he gulped, betraying the fact that the events of the day had got the better of him, and that he now realised he had possible stepped over a veritable ladder of lines.

He coughed quietly and took a step back, for the first time breaking eye contact with the chief guard, who had not even blinked throughout the whole tirade.

"Ahem. Anyway," he mumbled, "we brought these weapons because I thought they were better here than out there."

"I would very much like to go for a lie down now," he finished, limply.

Neil and me: Kireth stood silently within the midst of the group, his hood pulled tightly around his face, partly to guard against the night chill and partly to hide amongst his own thoughts. Nov 12, 2010

He listened to Tradden's explanation of the events and his various displeasures. Unlike Tradden, he expected no thanks for his actions and, even if offered, they would mean nothing to him. The rewards Kireth sought were far beyond anything this miserable hovel could ever hope to offer. And yet... as he looked at the young boys, eager to see their parents, a part of him did feel something, a feeling that he had done some good today, was it pride in his actions? He dismissed it as quickly as he thought of it.

Tradden was explaining his desire to rest and Kireth snapped back in to focus "Yes, my quarters" he reminded himself "I have a couple of interesting books to devour tonight". He shifted impatiently, waiting, not that he needed it, for a signal that he could leave the group.

Me: *The guard stood stoically taking in Tradden's words and distilling them minus the hysteria. The boys looked physically injured, but not badly, and seemed to be fit mentally as they rushed across the guard compound towards their families.* Nov 12, 2010

The short greenskins will be 'goblins'," he stated mechanically. "We've had a few of them before in small numbers, two and threes. Can be vicious little buggers with spears and little slicer knives, but tend to flee when threatened with numbers.

"Judging by the weapons you've returned with this wasn't a band of two or three."

The guard knelt down and started to inspect the weapon pile that the boys had left as they had headed off.

From across the compound through the night came a familiar figure towards the group. One of the members of the Town Council, Barghest the Guard Captain, came hurrying across, puffing slightly.

"Valino, what news?" huffed Barghest.

The guard continued to inspect the weapons, turning them over and judging their potency in the torchlight. Without turning he responded to Barghest, "It seems our adventurers have quite a tale to tell, sir. Not only have they managed to bring back Offa and Bailey relatively unharmed, they seem to have run into an organised band of goblins. Maybe worse."

Barghest looked somewhat surprised. "What do you mean organised?" he asked.

The guard, Valino, stood up carefully, not taking his eyes off of the weapon pile. "These are better weapons than we've seen the goblins use before. More of them too. How many were there?" he asked Tradden.

"Erm, I'm not quite sure," replied Tradden not quite ready to meet eye contact with Valino just yet. "About half a dozen of the goblins, and a similar amount of the demon lizard things."

There was a barely imperceptible flinch on Valino's face as he turned towards Barghest. "We'd better double the guard tonight, sir. This was an organised group."

Barghest nodded at Valino and one of the other guards headed off towards quarters to rouse some of the others.

"The 'demon lizards?'" enquired Barghest of Valino.

"Kobolds," spoke a voice from the darkness. His Radiant Servant, Tremak, appeared from the gloom. "Lizard creatures, short with scaly hides. Crocodile-like heads, cold-blooded. What do we intend to do about this Barghest?"


A scowl crossed Valino's face, hidden from Tremak.

Barghest stuttered, and Valino spoke up. "The guard is doubled tonight, Your Radiance. These men," he waved at the group, "have need of rest. We can discuss our next actions in the morning."

Tremak took his time to reply, seemingly not addressing Valino. "Very well, Barghest. You and your men should alert me if anything else untoward happens tonight." He then disappeared back into the gloom.

Barghest addressed the party. "We thank you for your efforts today with all our hearts. I'm sure you could do with refreshment at the inn. I will see to it that Skillet gets off his lazy arse to supply you with hot water to tend your wounds and food to fill your stomachs. We shall talk more on the morrow."

With that the guards parted, allowing the group to slowly trudge back to the inn for rest, Kireth leading the way.

 Me: The evening at The Bronze Lion passed quite uneventfully in comparison to the day's trials. As Barghest had promised, hot water had already been prepared by the little halfling proprietor, Skillet, and rooms had been made available. Nov 15, 2010 ▼

The Bronze Lion was a fairly simple affair compared to the inns and taverns around Deepingwald, but for a hamlet outpost like Blackengorge it was quite substantial. The bottom floor had a large bar area with a roaring fire, a stuffed head of a giant boar hanging over the mantelpiece staring in silence at any visitors. To the side of the bar area were some larger tables, evidently set aside for people to have grander meals.


As the group entered the inn was relatively quiet, just Skillet hurrying about behind the bar and disappearing into the kitchens beyond and a couple of girls - the ones that had so energetically waved the group off to the mausoleum - sweeping and cleaning. One of these two, introducing herself as Juliet with a blush, showed the party to their rooms.

Celestia had a small room to herself much to her relief and immediately set to the task of removing and cleaning her armour from the grime it had accumulated over the past week. The hot water in a small, but serviceable, tub was a blessed relief.

The rest of the party were a little dismayed to find they were sharing rooms - two twins had been set aside.

Much to Kireth's relief Tradden cheerily slapped Khalin on the back and extolled the virtues of sharing bunks, pushing the dwarf into the first of the rooms, leaving the wizard to share with Zero.

With the nod to meet downstairs for a meal in an hour or so, the adventurers set themselves to wash and remove the foul stench of the mausoleum from their clothing, and to clean and service their weapons and armour as best they could.

 Me: Khalin was the first downstairs. Although he took hygiene seriously, he wasn't one for preening and constantly changing shirts like the young fighter he'd left in the room. A good wash, some simple cotton clothing and the temptation of a warm frothy beer were enough to get the dwarf downstairs and before the fire. Nov 15, 2010 ▼

He was joined not long after by Zero who had come downstairs in frustration after trying to strike up several conversations with Kireth and failing miserably to get more than a few syllables in answer. The wizard seemed to have a lot on his mind, and had kept looking at some dusty old books rather than listening to Zero's engaging and witty remarks.

The pair were brought beers and some fresh bread by Juliet, who blushed every time she came near the table. Khalin dove into the bread and beer like a dwarf possessed, leaving Zero to pick around the edges and sip slowly at the beer as he looked about.

The furniture and fittings within The Bronze Lion were, of course, fairly new, but were already showing signs of being smoothed out around their edges - well used. Most, if not all, were wooden, presumably from timbers cut down close to the village. Zero admired the craftsmanship, energy and commitment that must have gone into all the buildings and pieces of the village in such a short space of time.


The bar itself was a fairly long affair with a smooth well-polished top. It seemed that the halfling behind the bar had a favourite occupation of constantly polishing the woodwork. Above the bar, at a jaunty angle, was a large portrait of another halfling, closely resembling the owner, but older.

The aroma of cooking floated across the inn causing Khalin to look up from his foaming ale and sniff the air.

"Boar, if I'm not mistaken, Master Zero," he spluttered, wide-eyed, breadcrumbs flying across the table. "Hmm, wish they'd hurry up, this bread's nearly done."

Almost if on cue, at the smell of roasting boar, the door to the inn opened, and townsfolk started to drip in. Shaking the chill night air off by the fire they gathered in the bar area near Khalin and Zero, eyeing them nervously and whispering amongst themselves. When Juliet came over to take their orders there were a few hushed questions and a couple of pointed fingers towards the pair, before one of the villagers came over to their table.

The man introduced himself as Kimbel Drax, one of the woodcutters. He thanked the pair heartily for what they had done during the day and passed a couple of coppers across the bar to Skillet, whereupon drinks were hurried to the table by Juliet. Not wishing to offend, Zero raised his newly arrived foaming mug of ale to match the townsfolk and took a small sip. Khalin finished his before Zero had set his down on the table.

 Me: Tradden, finally happy with what he was wearing, headed out onto the landing. He knocked at Kireth's and Zero's door and asked if they were coming down, but with no answer assumed they were already downstairs. He passed Celestia's door, and thought better of knocking at the last minute, just in case it was taken the wrong way. He padded softly into the bar area, pushing back his hair as he went. Nov 15, 2010 ▼

The bar was warm and filled with the aroma of cooking boar and pipeweed. A hubbub surrounded one of the tables, and Tradden tried pushed in to see.

Around ten villagers, men mostly, surrounded the table, Zero off slightly to one side slowly shaking his head. Sat at the table were a rosy-nosed Khalin and one of the villagers engaging in an arm-wrestling match. It was fairly obvious that Khalin was both winning and slightly drunk.

When **Khalin** eventually, after what seemed like a little teasing, pushed the villager's arm down to the table he stood and roared, and another foaming mug was pushed towards him. With a toast to Clangeddin, the ale disappeared down **Khalin's** throat, and another villager sat down at the table.

Tradden eased his way over to **Zero** and asked the rogue how long this had been going on for.

"About six ales, so far," replied **Zero**. "It'll be interesting to see how long he lasts. He's certainly making a lot of friends, though."

Tradden looked over at the ever-growing group - all seemed to be laughing and having much merriment, perhaps some at relief at the return of two of their brethren, and perhaps some at the mere fact that there were new visitors from the mainland.

Celestia arrived in the bar area just as **Khalin** won another round and large platters of sweet-smelling boar were carried into the room by Juliet and the other serving girl. **Celestia** wore a simple gown which accentuated her shape and elven features, causing the general commotion in the room to die down as she crossed the room. However, although she carried the exotic elven maiden tag well, there was something in her eyes that stopped any of the townsfolk from approaching and commenting on her beauty.

As the platters were unloaded onto the tables, the group were left to eat in peace, only the occasional muttered apologies from **Khalin** as he paused from wolfing down the boar to belch.


Tradden commented on **Khalin's** ale intake and the size of their small room for the night. **Khalin** merely winked.

"You think this halfling's brew matches the strength of a good dwarven ale?" **Khalin** retorted. "By Clangeddin's beard, it's like water. I could be here all night without effect, Master Tradden."

With that the other serving girl - known as Calanthe according to **Zero's** 'sources' - appeared laden with more foaming jugs of ale and set them before the group.

"Where's Kireth?" asked **Tradden**. "I knocked at his door, but there was no answer - has he gone out?"

"I left him sat upstairs embroiled in his books," said **Zero**, tucking into the food with considerable manners. "I'm not even sure we'll see him tonight, he was that engrossed."

 Me: **Kireth** didn't even notice the knock at his door. He'd washed and changed quickly, and gotten out of **Zero's** way as fast as he could. Although he was hungry and thirsty, food could wait, he was hungry for something else - knowledge. Nov 15, 2010 ▼

When **Zero** had left the room with a cheery comment, **Kireth** mumbled back something - he wasn't even sure what, he had been too engrossed in the first of the two tomes that he had found in the elf's ritual chamber.

Kireth learnt much from the first book, It's previous owner, the elf, Helvec, had created the book, adding rituals over what appeared to be many years. Some of the rituals were known to **Kireth** - he had heard of them during his schooling, but he had never been given the authority to study them in detail, and now, here in his hands were some of the very rituals he had sought.

There were more, however - some he had trouble in deciphering, some were completely unknown, and many had annotations and comments in the margins of the tome.

From notes and passages towards the rear of the book **Kireth** pieced together some of Helvec's actions. The elf was thirsty for power, using what ever methods that he could find. He had travelled over the course of penning the tome and **Kireth** hissed that there was no map to judge where the places he mentioned were.

Scribbled notes of places such as Bael Turath, Hammerfast, and Vor Rukoth intrigued the wizard, but without a map, directions, or scale he was lost to their location. Something, he decided, that he could put aside just now, but must be investigated later.

The rituals and actions within the tome led **Kireth** to believe that the elf was trying to use the blood of innocent victims to open some sort of portal, though to where and why **Kireth** could not fathom.

In frustration he laid the first tome aside, cursing his tutors for not allowing him access to some of the greater volumes of knowledge.


The second tome was also very intriguing. It was bound with two copper plates, and contained a small lock to prevent prying eyes. The key was clipped into the lock as **Kireth** had found it, and he spent some time examining and carefully looking at the lock.

With a nervous hand betraying him, **Kireth** turned the key and opened the lock. There was an ominous click and a jet of flame raced up **Kireth's** arm, burning his sleeve and almost setting the bedding alight. **Kireth** dropped the book and cursed himself, patting out the flames and grimacing against the pain. However, the book lay open on the bed.

Almost instantly forgetting the pain he scoured the tome, drinking in the notes and diagrams within. This certainly wasn't Helvec's tome, the writing was more ordered and thoughtfully set out, rather than the scribbles and reworkings of a madman.

Knowledge flooded into **Kireth**, his appetite satiated for the moment. But with that knowledge came a price, as **Kireth** felt a small amount of despair and frustration as he realised how much there was yet to learn, and how little amount of time to learn it in.

Wrapping his robe around him, he thoughtfully paced downstairs to satiate his other, less important, hunger.

 Me: The re-joined group ate heartily and drank well that night. In the main, the group were tired, so with the exception of **Khalin** did not over-indulge. Nov 15, 2010 ▼

Many of the villagers thanked the party well and toasted their health, telling them to visit tomorrow where they would "see what they could do" to help the party with provisions.


When they were finally left alone thoughts on the party's table turned to their next steps. **Zero**, seemingly reluctantly, indicated that they had found a number of gold and silver coins, perhaps over a couple of hundred, but not stamped as the Deepingwald ones, so was not sure of their value. **Tradden** had picked up the ornate dagger from the elf's ritual chamber which might be worth something - at least enough to get some provisions.

The group resolved to have the gold pieces valued the next day and distribute them equally, and ask around in the village for what was about in the local environs. Although many of the party had thought of the thrill of exploring the old continent, they hadn't really any firm plans on how to go about it. For now they had no means of travel except by foot, and no real means of sustenance or shelter on the road, let alone a direction of travel.

With full bellies, and at least a simple plan for now, the group resolved to meet on the morrow. They rose as one, with a final toast to themselves. With a clang of their mugs and a cheer, they all sipped at their ale, **Khalin** downing his in one.

As they turned to leave the table they noticed **Khalin** swaying somewhat, but before anyone could react the dwarf fell backwards onto the floor of the inn, unconscious.

From behind the bar a small halfling could be heard chuckling, "My brew's not that strong, eh? Think again."

 Me: The morning was crisp and clear as **Tradden** and **Zero** headed out to the market square. **Tradden** had left **Khalin** snoring away, the excesses of the previous night having left the dwarf completely unconscious and still all night, broken only by the rise and fall of an incessant snore. **Zero** had skipped out of his room leaving **Kireth** to his books - the wizard using a quill in one of his own books, and muttering and shaking his head as he scribed. **Celestia** had been called for, but was nowhere to be found. Nov 15, 2010 ▼

The market square was just across from The Bronze Lion, a grandiose name for a small gathering of some of the villagers in the centre of the village. The market was within the circular pathway that many in the village believed to be the remains of the base of a long lost tower.

The market was busy, considering the size of the village. Furs, lumber, grain, furniture, fruit and vegetables, meats, and even livestock were on offer - either through barter or for sale.

Tradden spotted Tymander Small, one of the Town Council members who had spoken to them first, overseeing the market, trying to encourage trade. He wandered up to Tymander and began to discuss the gold coins they had found.

Tymander turned them over and over, studying the pictures stamped onto each side, and absently weighing them in his hands. **Tradden** explained where the coins had come from and Tymander raised his brow.

"This must mean that there is trade somewhere on this continent," he uttered, somewhat to himself. "Why would someone carry gold coins around if it were not to trade?"

The merchant looked quite pleased at the fact, despite the evidence that the coins once belonged to a sadistic elf that commanded the undead.

"If there is trade," *he continued*, "then there must be other villages, towns, or even cities. This could be great news for us!"

"Or grave news," *added Zero, bursting Tymander's thoughts with a pop*, "depending on whether they are friendly or not. That elf certainly wasn't!"

"Hmm, perhaps you're right," *replied Tymander*. "In any case, we have more pressing matters close at hand such as this band of goblins and kobolds you met last night. Do you think that's the last of them? Barghest and Valino certainly don't think so."


"I wish Gilmorril was around - he could scout out their lair again and determine their numbers. We had a similar problem when we arrived, but there were only goblins then. It's worrying that kobolds are now working with them. Perhaps, in Gilmorril's absence you heroes could take a look for us?"

Tymander looked appealingly at the pair, but after a moment with no answer forthcoming his attention turned back to the gold.

"These coins seem to be true enough - I'll let the other merchants know that they can be spent on a one-for-one basis, I'm sure they'll be overjoyed to get some new revenue into the market."

"You are spending them here, right?" *he added, quickly.*

Zero and Tradden nodded in confirmation that there were several things the group might purchase before heading back to the inn to let the group know of their wealth.

 **Matt**: With his share of the gold in his pouch, Tradden headed back out into the town. The young fighter's muscles were still aching from the exertions of the recent days and weeks, but he was in curiously high spirits – so different from his last overnight stay in the town. Nov 17, 2010 ▼

As he walked around the worn pathways of the circular town he stopped to chat at the townsfolk, working here and there, often just a friendly doff of an imaginary hat. The townsfolk reacted to the smiling, slightly-overdressed youngster in a variety of ways, as often was the case with Tradden, but every raised pair of eyes and hurried excuse about having something to do, was matched by a clasped hand and a warm conversation.

From this Tradden learned nothing of particular note about the plight of the town, but did garner a good understanding about how the people felt – the adventurous and brave spirit that had lead them here, the initial elation at having established such a fine town and the gathering emotional dark clouds as the populace, such as it was, realised that there were dark forces out there that threatened every one of them.

If anything, Tradden was able to bolster the confidence of a good many, telling his tales of the bravery and daring-do of the group (but mostly of his own), and about how many goblins and kobolds had already fallen to their combined might. After all, how many could there be out there?

He had been going to seek out the local smithy to see about getting his armour repaired – he vaguely recalled someone referring to a 'Caldring'. Likely a chap in the mould of the set template of weaponsmith that whatever school they went to turned out – well built, fat in fact, with thick, greasy hair spilling down from a monk-like bald pate, but with arms that could punch down doors. Eye patches were seemingly optional.

He was just rounding a corner of one wooden shack which jutted out onto the path, when he noticed that one of his nails was somewhat cracked. Holding it up to the bright azure sky to see how best to trim it, he completely failed to see a row of makeshift buckets and containers, and the subsequent crash and thunder of the resulting trip and fall could be heard as far away as the west gate.

The guard standing watch on the tower there didn't even turn to see what the sound was.

"*Tch, Islanders!*" he muttered to himself.

At this point, everything was dark for Tradden. He opened his eyes. It was still dark. Scrambling to his knees, which he could now feel were wet through his stylish lilac leggings (which had been all the rage the previous season in Deepingwald), he reached up to try and pull whatever it was that was stuck on his head. It felt for all the world like a metal bucket!

His hearing was also slightly off, because all he could hear was a high pitched wailing sound. Fortunately the sound was slightly muffled due to the cold metal pressing on either side of his head. Tradden was starting to get a bit worried about the whole thing.

"*Erm,*" was all he managed before he suddenly felt one firm hand on his shoulder, and suddenly, the world became a lot brighter.

Squinting to regain his vision in the bright light as he refocused, a vision appeared before him. At first he thought it was Celestia, but in fact another elf now stood in front of him holding the bucket at her side. Tradden had difficulty seeing her in any great detail as he was still knelt down, and as he looked up at her the sun was directly behind her hair, giving her a halo of bright yellow, which only accentuated the golden auburn of her hair, which was mostly tied back, but was also hanging down in wisps from the places where it had come away from the plain metal band that held it back. The overall effect was only slightly spoiled by what Tradden could only describe as 'black bits' in her hair, that seemed almost burned on here and there. Her skin seemed dark for an elf – it had a smudgy, slightly grease like complexion to it. One eyebrow was raised as she looked the young human up and down.

"*You should be more careful,*" she said simply, and walked away before Tradden had even had chance to think about saying anything.

He watched her lithe, well toned form disappear into a nearby doorway.

"*Who was that?*" he said to no-one in particular. It was at that point that he realised that the shrieking noise had never gone away, and was in fact now louder than ever. Looking to his right to see what it was, he was presented with an angry hag, who for some reason was thrusting a damp handful of pathetic looking flowers in his face.

Ignoring her, he stood up and looked around as he dusted himself off. It appeared that he had walked around the corner and blundered into this old woman's flower stall, flattening it in the process.

"*Ah,*" he said, and tried to remonstrate with the old dear.

A small crowd of people were starting to congregate to watch the proceedings, the old woman now buzzing around like a fly trying to put her stall back together whilst constantly harassing the fop-esque and now mostly wet young man. Tradden tried to sooth her with some jolly banter, but to no effect.

Stopping to think, he then quietly said to her, "*Would it help if I bought some flowers?*"

This had the desired effect, as the old woman stopped in her tracks. She fished about in the detritus that was the remains of her stall, and thrust a rather sad looking bouquet at Tradden.

"*Two copper!*" she shouted.

That was very pricey for what they were, but on the basis that they were not the worst flowers in the world and that it would get him away as quickly as possible, he fumbled around to find the payment, eventually offering her a silver coin as it was the smallest he had.

A gnarled hand with a vice-like grip grabbed hold of Tradden's palm as he offered the coin, and two piercing black eyes held his gaze. In a low croaking voice, out of earshot of any onlookers, she spoke to the young fighter.


*"With doors open and dark behind
The one who ruled lost their mind
At midnight began the terrible slaughter
Wife and son, brother and daughter*

*Cannot be forced into defeat
Driven back and down into defeat
Above the fell yet stuck therein
Wails of anguish fill the ruin"*

Tradden looked confusingly at the old hag, not quite knowing what to say. "*Very, erm, pleasant,*" was all he could muster, and as his hand was released, he ducked into one of the nearby doorways to get away from the laughing crowd.

Wherever he was it was very dark and he struggled to make anything out in the dim interior. He turned to peer out of the door, standing up against the frame to hide himself, and holding his arm, complete with flowers, behind his back.

"The flowers are nice, but an unnecessary thank you," sighed a familiar, melodic elven voice from the back of the room. It was quickly followed by the unmistakable sound of a hammer crashing down onto an anvil.

 Matt: Thus began what Tradden hoped would be a developing relationship between himself and the Elf, Caldring.

Nov 17, 2010 ▼

In truth, the relationship was pretty much one sided at that point. The smith was not unkind, but was all about her work and so simply carried on whilst a jabbering Tradden did his best to try and introduce himself and to, well, basically make her notice him.

Thoughts of all other women were now pushed to one side – the young fighter was entranced by the elven craftswoman. Yes, she may be slightly more muscular than a typical elven maid, and yes her sooty, sweaty, greasy appearance was suggestive that she was untypical in her views on aesthetics – most elves would not be seen dead looking so – but he saw through all that. There was true beauty underneath. Well, he thought there was – she would need a good bath for him to be 100% sure about what was under that layer of smothered coal and grease, but he was 99% sure.

She only perked up when he, essentially in desperation to try get some interaction, mentioned that he was looking to get a repair on his armour.

Turning the old chain mail over in her hands she was a little perkier, although she was clearly unimpressed with its actual defensive capabilities.

"Are you sure you don't want something a bit more substantive?" she asked, "I have a nice set of scale I could tailor to your size - it will be a fine set once I remove the hole from the goblin spear."


Tradden explained that anything heavier than chain would hamper his movement in battle and his ability to strike with his two swords. She didn't seem thoroughly convinced, but the young fighter sensed a slight shift in her attitude towards him - maybe he wasn't quite as daft as he outwardly seemed?

Always thinking, Tradden realised that talk of weapons and armour was opening Caldring up, so that prompted him to mention the dagger he had found in the ancient ruins, which he was happy to note sparked a bit more out of her. With some more prompting she let slip that she had come to the mainland to try and better her pursuit of her craft - perhaps there were techniques and skills possessed by the peoples of this land that had been forgotten about, or ancient forges in which to work? The dagger itself was clearly disappointing to her, although she offered the fighter a small amount to take it off his hands, which he accepted.

"My lady - I believe I shall be again venturing forth into the wilds at some point soon. I shall keep a keen eye abroad for any weapons or texts that you may be of interest to your fair self and they shall be yours - that is my promise you!" blurted Tradden, but it served only to raise the eyebrow of the smith.

Having taken his measurements and, under some pressure, put the flowers in a helmet of water, she shoed the manling out of her workshop – there was work to do. His repairs would be completed by sunrise the next day and she would send his chain onto the Inn for him.

Talk of the inn gave Tradden opportunity for one last parting shot. Whether his plea for her to join him for a drink in The Bronze Lion later that evening would be heeded the young fighter could not say, but he didn't feel at all confident as he trudged back to the inn to see if Khalin or Zero were up to anything. That said, the young fighter did not see the elf's eyebrow raise once again as she watched him trail back across the road.

 Me: Kireth slipped out of the inn later that morning. He had studied his new tomes well and although had found some of the answers he was looking for, they had opened up so many more questions.

Nov 17, 2010 ▼

He had asked Celestia for the marble vial they had found in the mausoleum, the one the Shadow had pointed out to them hidden in a compartment under the lowest stair. It intrigued him a little that he was unsure of its origin or use, and intended to find out.

Everyone had been talking in the inn last night, introducing themselves, what they did, and what they could do for the party. Most of the faces and names Kireth immediately ignored - he had no use for trappers or furriers, or masons or bakers. However, there were a couple of individuals he did decide to remember and had resolved to seek them out.

The first was the local wizard, Lucius Drax. He was an old man, stooped with a long beard and flowing cape. He had introduced himself as a minor mage, but Kireth could tell that he held some power just from his eyes. According to the smalltalk that Kireth endured it seemed that Lucius owned a small wooden house just opposite the inn.

As villagers went about their business near the small market, Kireth knocked softly on Lucius' door, and waited for the old man to answer. After what seemed an age the door creaked open, and without a word the mage beckoned Kireth to enter.

The house was small, but serviceable, built of solid wood and had a homely feel. A small living area opened up to a tiny kitchen, littered with bulbous glass vials filled with liquids of all colours. A short staircase to the side led away to what Kireth presumed was a bedroom.

As his opening gambit Kireth politely asked Lucius if he could identify the contents of the marble vial, using it as a gauge of the mage's talents. Lucius retired to the kitchen area and began to organise some vials and drew a flame to heat some foul smelling purple liquid.

Uncorking the vial he allowed three colourless drops to fall into the purple liquid, which almost immediately turned green. Corking the vial he handed it back to Kireth.

"That, my lad, is a *Potion of Healing* - a rare and wondrous item. It will refresh your vigour and knit your bones if used in the right way."

Kireth took back the vial and slipped it into the folds of his robes, taking his time to think of his next move.

"Just as I thought," replied Kireth. "Our healer was not fully sure, despite my assurances."

Lucius nodded back at Kireth, explaining that people did not often listen to educated people these days, and how it was not like it was in the old days. Kireth ensured that he agreed with the old man and began to strike up quite an open conversation.


Kireth left some two hours later, some more answers, but yet more questions to ask.

The Town Council were fully aware of the threat from the kobolds and goblins, and had been for some weeks. The tracker, Gilmorri, had located their lair some time ago, a pitiful cave behind a waterfall in the cliffs of the gorge to the south, but there had only been a small and weak tribe of goblins. Lately, though, Gilmorri had reported a growth in numbers, added to by kobolds muscling their way into the tribe somehow. The full extent kept from the townsfolk so as not to create panic, whilst the Town Council planned their actions.

The tracker had wanted to let people know so that they could prepare in case of an assault, but the Town Council had sent him away on an errand to the east with the dwarf Rindall to investigate some far-flung fancy of a dragon's graveyard.

Kireth also learnt of the futility of using scrying magics - all attempts by Lucius had failed so far to either contact The Islands or to remote view across the Old Continent.

Deep in his own thoughts, Kireth returned to the inn. Retiring to his room he once more picked up his quill and began scribbling notes furiously in his book.

 Me: After waking with a start, Khalin realised that the sun was shining brightly through the shutters on the inn's room window and he had slept in. Most of the previous night's memories seemed to be lost in a fuzzy banging inside his head, and it took a little while to compose himself and rise.

Nov 18, 2010 ▼

Standing was a challenge, but he soon got his legs to work in the right order and overcame that obstacle. Dressing was another matter, and took a few attempts before he felt ordered enough to head downstairs.

He ordered quite a breakfast, and set too devouring it with plenty of cool water, freshly brought up from the well in the town. It didn't take too long for his dwarven constitution to remedy itself and with a short walk he felt more like himself.

His stroll took him towards the west gate where he noticed one of the guards to be a dwarf. Heading over he greeted his fellow with bluster and joy.

"Hail there!" he bellowed, raising one hand in greeting. "Good to see a strong dwarf protecting this town. Khalin is the name, from kel-Moradin, traveller from The Islands."

"Hammers high to you also," responded the dwarf. "Grundar Stonestrow at your service."

Conversation between the two went on for some time, most conducted in loud voices and bellows. Grundar enquired after the state of the Border Watch on The Islands, and Khalin probed about the defences of the town and the state of any enemies. Both drew theories about whether dwarves existed somewhere out there on the old continent.

"Well, there's a few of us around town," stated Grundar. "There's myself, Beloin and Brubendear in the guard. They'll be asleep, they were on duty last night. Fafnir and his wife Freyr will be up at the mine to the north, and their son Hannar will be round at the temple, dressing the stone. Rindall's gone of to the east, with that shady elf, Gilmorri, to scout out some burial site or something."

"As for 'native' dwarves, I've not seen any evidence around here, yet. I'd be keen to get a good foothold first, so that explorations can take place, but the guard is too small to go out in numbers, as it would leave the village undefended. We've been desperate for adventurers to arrive, but with the sinking of The Guiding Fire I'm not sure how many will now come.

"Still, I've been up to the mausoleum on a clear day, and I reckon you can see some snow-capped peaks to the northeast. If there's dwarves to be had, there they'll be."

After pledges to join him for a drink in the evening to discuss all things dwarven in detail, Khalin headed back slowly towards The Bronze Lion, his excesses from the night before all forgotten.

As he reached the door of the inn he was accosted by an elf female. Well, he assumed it was a female - it was hard to tell under all the soot and grime and the well-built frame. He looked again, but couldn't make up his mind.

"Yes, can I help you?" he boomed, suddenly irritated that she had grabbed his arm at the door.


"You are friends with the tall fighter, yes?" she asked. It was definitely a she, the voice gave that away.

"Indeed, he is a good friend and good warrior," stated the dwarf plainly.

"I have a proposition for him," she continued. "Do you know where he is?"

"I imagine he's in here, if you'd let me in!" retorted Khalin, looking at the hand on his arm, trying not to wince at the vice-like grip of the smith.

The elf let go of Khalin's arm and stood to the side as the dwarf opened the door and entered the inn.

 Me and Matt: **Tradden** was sat at one of the tables in The Bronze Lion, casually leaning back in his chair thinking on how he should use the new crossbow he had ordered and whether going back to the smithy in the afternoon to see how far Caldring had got on with it would be too soon. Lost in his thoughts he didn't notice **Khalin** approach with the object of his desire behind him until they were at the table. Nov 18, 2010 ▼

Snapping out of his reverie he tipped all of the way back and fell to the wooden floor with a crash.

Red with embarrassment, he picked himself up, trying to explain how he was testing his reflexes against being bowled over by eight-foot hobgoblins, and how he intended to recover with a roll and sweep at their hamstrings.

Khalin remained impassive - letting **Tradden** talk until he ran out of things to say - before he indicated that the lady had a proposition. **Tradden** was all ears.

*To the east, some couple of leagues beyond the lake was a swamp. Gilmorril, the elf tracker in the town, had skirted around it on one of his excursions and had seemingly gone that way with Rindall three or four days ago. Gilmorril had brought back a worked band of iron from the swamp, indicating that he'd seen more there. She enquired whether **Tradden** and **Khalin** would accompany her to the swamp to bring back some of the iron, perhaps finding Gilmorril and Rindall at the same time.*

Tradden was keen to agree - spending time with Caldring, and getting the opportunity to explore at the same time was high on his agenda. **Khalin** seemed to agree that finding the missing dwarf would be a good use of his time. With **Zero** firmly ensconced with the ladies around town and the inn, **Kireth** devoted to his books, and **Celestia** spending time at the temple, the pair would be on their own.

"Then it is sealed. We set off at first moon - no sense in travelling during the day when we will be spotted by wandering goblins or kobolds or worse! We shall meet at the east gate. I shall bring your crossbow and armour, Tradden."

As she left the inn, all that could be heard was the sound of a fist punching the air, and a cry of "Yes!"

 Me: [...continued in [Chapter #02, Scene #01...](#)]

Nov 18, 2010 ▼

Tags:

Images ▼

Next wave ➡