



Blackengorge - The Doors Beyond - A Soot Laden Cellar - Chapter #03, Scene #04

Jan 3

...continues from [Scene #03](#)

Synopsis

The 14th Day of Ches in the Year of the Sudden Journey

Khalin and Tradden have set off for the island in the middle of the lake to explore the Tower of the Mists in the hope to bring Kireth some further texts to translate.

No sooner have they stepped on the island when they are attacked from above! After a brief battle with some stirges they enter the ruins of the tower, only to be confronted by a clutch of spiders. With no luck investigating the upper floors of the tower the pair find an entrance to a basement where they are immediately attacked by yet another strange creature.

- [Khálin Grundokri](#) - 2nd Level Male Dwarven Warlord
- [Tradden Aversward](#) - 3rd Level Male Human Fighter

Scene Length

This scene starts on Monday 3 January 2011 and is expected to be completed by the end of Friday 7 January 2011. Players are expected to be able to post at least once a day.

Me and Random:

Jan 5

INITIATIVE BLOCK

Combat Encounter Complete

01) [28] [Rust Monster](#) - ~~1d20+10: 28~~ - Dmg: 11+27+13+18=60 (Marked by Tradden) (Bloodied)

02) [18] Tradden - 1d20+3+2: 18 - HP 38/38 (Longsword Rusting, -3 to hit)

03) [17] Khalin - 1d20+2+2: 17 - HP -3/31 (Scale destroyed) (Stable)

Me and Matt:

Jan 7

BATTLE MAP



Me and Random: *The creature charged forward, skittering through the soot and sending small clouds of it into the air, intent on the dwarf.*

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[Creature Charge Bite: 1d20+11: 27 vs Khalin's AC(19)] - hits!
[Damage: 2d8+5: 17] and [Scale Mail begins Rusting]

As the creature's fangs bit down and through Khalin's armour, both of the party heard a most unusual sound, as the metal pieces on the scale mail creaked and groaned.

When the creature withdrew, Khalin glanced down for a moment, and saw rings of rust extending from the puncture marks in the metal. Then the pain hit him! [Bloodied]

The creature's feelers shivered along the length of its body and it eyed the dwarf's mail with glinting black eyes.

Matt, me and Random: *"Whoa! Don't let that thing near my armour - Caldring would have a fit!"* shouted Tradden as he dropped the torch and drew his remaining sheathed blade [Minor Action]. It was exactly the kind of remark which was well intentioned, the young fighter trying to bolster spirits, but badly executed. Still, it was better than some in the past.

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He stepped up, side by side with Khalin. The creature seemed to be intelligent, and so a show of strength was needed – it would rue the day it attacked these two surface dwellers!

Shouting a battle cry that echoed around the chamber, Tradden struck out.

[Reaping Strike vs Creature: 1d20+9: 26] - hits!
[Damage: 1d8+7: 11] and [Marked]

Tradden felt his sword hit with a crunching blow, but to his horror he heard the same creaking and popping sound, and the frost blade began the same process as Khalin's armour. [Rusting]

Mark, me and Random: Khalin thought for a heartbeat about unleashing another caustic yet witty quip, but after glancing at the wound in his torso he felt the surge of adrenaline through his veins.

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Minor Action - Heroic Effort: +3 to Tradden's damage rolls till Khalin no longer bloodied, Khalin gains 5 temporary hp]

Raising his shield once more to defend his comrade, the warlord unleashed a blood-curdling roar as he struck back at the beast...

[Shielded Assault vs Creature: **1d20+6: 26**] - critical hit!

[Damage: **2d10+5: 25**] plus [Flame Bracers: **1d6: 2**] and [+2 AC to self and adjacent allies until end of next turn]

The warhammer crashed into the beast's strange hide with a crunch and yellow and orange flames danced down Khalin's arms and covered it. It's feelers twitched wildly and an eerie shriek came from its mouth. [Bloodied]

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 15**] - success!

Khalin quickly realised this creature seemed to be something from the tales of the old dwarven miners - a creature that lived deep in the mountains and consumed metal itself, rusting it first to help digest it - a Rust Monster. With ore and metal plentiful in mines, the creatures were drawn to the dug shafts to feed. Surely it would be after whatever contained the greatest degree of metal. Unfortunately, this would be the armour tightly strapped to Khalin's body.

Khalin weighed up the situation in an instant, then, as befitted his headstrong instincts, hurled his hefty metal hammer towards and past the beast...

[Spends Action Point]

...in the hope the metal-craving monster would follow it.

The hammer crashed into the table, sending clouds of soot into the air.

 Me: The creature seemed hurt and injured by the attacks, but also seemed determined to continue with its lust for the metal on Khalin's armour, regardless of the hammer thrown above its head. Jan 4 ▼

[Bite: **1d20+11: 27** vs Khalin's AC(19-1+2)] - hits!

[Damage: **2d8+5: 14**]

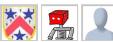
The blow struck Khalin hard, as the creature tore through his armour, concentric circles of rust spreading from the punctures. [Rusting]

As the creature attacked it had reared up somewhat, presenting an easy target for Tradden to attack.

[Tradden Combat Superiority: **1d20+9-1: 20**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 13**]

Tradden's sword sliced through the creature's back spilling further blood.

 Matt, me and Random: Although Khalin's inspired attempt to distract the beast had failed, Tradden took heart from his effort, and the fact that it had left the insecty thing open for another slice to its abdomen. Jan 4 ▼

That done, Tradden looked to follow up with a carefully chosen strike...

[Surestrike with Frostsword vs Creature: **1d20+11-1: 13**] - misses!

[Marked]

The creature seemed to have a 6th sense for the blade of steel heading towards it though, and it flinched at a critical moment, causing the sword to harmlessly bounce off its chitinous hide, the creaking and cracking of rust attacking steel making Tradden wince. [Rusting]

Mindful of the fact that this 'thing' was affecting the very tools of combat that he and Khalin used, Tradden looked to attack again, inspired by Khalin's bravura.

[Use Action Point in conjunction with Khalin's Bravura Presence]

[Surestrike with Frostsword vs Creature: **1d20+11-2: 16**] - misses!

[Marked]

However, the creature once again seemed to anticipate his move, and the blade slid off its platelike exterior once more. The young fighter took a moment to hold his blade up in front of his face, just to check it was actually still there, and the rust hadn't decimated it completely. [Rusting] This was foolish, as it left him flatfooted.

[Tradden grants Combat Advantage]

 Mark, me and Random: As Tradden attacked, Khalin bellowed a string of colourful dwarven expletives. There seemed to be little left of the dwarf's armour, and his hammer now lay yards away. It had been an audacious gamble, but one that reminded Khalin why he wasn't a betting man. Jan 5 ▼

Perhaps only moments from losing consciousness, and perhaps even his life, the dwarf drew his dagger [Minor Action] and hacked at the face and mandibles of the Rust Monster.

[Dagger vs Rust Monster: **1d20+7: 14**] - misses!

Khalin cursed once more, his skill with the dagger not matching that of his hammer.

[Inspiring Word: Khalin regains **1d6+7: 9** hp]

 Me and Random: The rust monster, oblivious to Khalin's pain opened its jaws wide once more to satiate its appetite on the dwarf's armour. Jan 5 ▼

[Bite: **1d20+11: 18** vs Khalin's AC(19-2)] - hits!

[Damage: **2d8+5: 17**]

The jaws snapped through Khalin's armour, spilling scales over the floor, and as the pieces fell into the soot so did the dwarf. [Dying]

As the creature pounced onto the spilled metal, Tradden struck as hard as he could.

[Tradden Combat Superiority: **1d20+9-3: 25**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7+3: 18**]

Tradden's sword sliced through the back of the creature's neck, and with a satisfying squelch parted the head from the body.

 Matt, me and Random: Sheathing his swords, Tradden rushed over to his fallen companion, kicking the head of the creature with his (leather) boot into the darkness around the edge of the chamber. Jan 5 ▼

"Oh ... *cripes!*" he muttered, seeing that his friend was in a bad way. He needed the attentions of either a priest or an apothecary that was for sure, but right now he needed first aid. The young fighter rolled up his sleeves, tried to remember all he could about his rudimentary healing training as well as dwarven anatomy.

[Stabilise the Dying attempt: **1d20+8: 20**] - success!

Tradden quickly stopped the blood flow and bound the nasty wounds on Khalin's chest as well as he could. The dwarf was still in bad shape, but at least he was stable for now.

   Matt, me and Random: Tradden sat back and collected his thoughts.

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"Cool heads win the day," he said softly to himself, repeating a mantra often told to him by Mr Ironfoot. It was one which he suspected his friend, now breathing an uneasy, wheezing, unconscious set of breaths beside him would probably agree with,

That epiphany reached, Tradden coolly stood up, picked up the torch, still smouldering on the floor, and had a tentative look around. He wanted to establish whether there was any likely remaining danger from other creatures.

[Perception Check: **1d20+3: 18**] - success!

With a good look round Tradden determined that there were no creatures on, under, or beside things in the room.

He also looked to whether there were any other entry or exit points from this chamber, or just the one they had used to come down.

[Perception Check: **1d20+3: 23**] - critical success!

There didn't appear to be any other exits or entrances to the room.

The light was not bright, but perhaps a brighter light was not required now - hardly conducive to sleep!

   Matt, me and Random: Content that the immediate danger was over, Tradden went over to the table. He methodically and carefully picked up each item and placed them on the floor to one side, as close to how they had been laid out as he could. Jan 5

He then took his time dragging the table to the entrance way where they had come in, and tipped it on its end, pushing it to barricade the bottom of the stairs as best he could. It wouldn't stop anything determined, but it would at least stop anything, or anyone, sneaking in or surprising them. He didn't intend to sleep for the next few hours, so he would be ready.

That done, he spent the following hours investigating the chamber and tending to Khalin. Thankfully, the Dwarf didn't seem to be getting any worse, and there was no sign of fever or infection. He was just sleeping very, very soundly. The young fighter actually cheered up when the Warlord started snoring loudly, as he took this as a good sign.

Anyone looking on at the chamber over the next few hours would have observed, in addition to Tradden tending to Khalin from time to time, him doing the following:

Inspecting the alcoves, which contained the flames which gave the room its eerie glow, and also gave off the heat. This was not his forte, but who knew when one might gain some insight or clue as to what they, and this room, were for?

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 14**]

They appeared to be lit by flame of some sort, but Tradden wasn't sure what. These didn't appear to be the source of heat, however, as they seemed to be unusually cool.

Carefully checking through the pile of garbage on the floor - he figured it was the remains of the bizarre creature's previous mealtimes. It clearly had a fancy for metals, but perhaps it had left non-metal items that might be of some worth? He had heard, for instance, of various types of armour that were not metal, but were just as strong. Books and parchments might also be mixed up in the detritus - he had time to make a thorough search, as distasteful as it may be.

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 22**]

There were no books or parchments in the garbage, although after a while Tradden stood back a distance from the pile and puzzled over how it was such a neat shape of a pile. Much of the leather or other materials was well preserved and would be quite serviceable if used for the right purpose.

Going back to the items taken down from the table to see firstly if there was anything that was apparently and obviously of use now, but also for items that might interest the others back at town.

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 12**]

The items on the table were instantly odd. Many were pieces of metal, which were a big surprise to the young fighter considering the creature that had been loose in the chamber. Most were unfathomable, although perhaps Khalin with his tinkering background, or more definitely Caldring might shed some light on them. One item did catch Tradden's eye, however, was a chain shirt, sparkling even in the soft glow. He had never seen such workmanship.

Similarly pondering over the bookcase/cabinet to see if it had any books or items that matched the description given by Kireth, or that might otherwise be useful. He did quickly move on when he saw a copy of "How To Excel With Sword And Shield".

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 19**]

Most of the books appeared to be in excellent condition although a lot of them made no sense to the young fighter. Many contained diagrams, which helped somewhat, depicting construction of armour or weaponry, or at least that's what Tradden assumed. Alas, none of them were treatises on martial prowess. The contents of the books were probably best left to Kireth to decipher.

He also looked to see if there were any hidden compartments.

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 11**]

There didn't appear to be any.

He poked around the body of the creature a bit with his boot as well - just because he was getting bored at one point.

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 4**]

[Nature check: **1d20+3: 15**]

The best that Tradden could tell was that it was dead, it was beginning to smell, and that it was one ugly brute.

He also collected up as many pieces of Khalin's armour as he could, as well as his dagger and hammer. Ensuring that no pieces touched any unaffected bits of his own metal possessions he took off his cloak and made a make-shift bag to keep them all in. Hopefully Caldring could do something with them, but the young fighter feared the armour would be too far gone.

Finally, he went over to the strange gate-looking thing. He had been putting this off as it gave him the creeps, but he forced himself to have a look.

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 18**]

The gate was the warmest place within the room and appeared to be a single sheet of metal (again confusing the youth) about ten feet wide and stretching almost the way up to the ceiling. Soot was heavier around the base of the gate and almost obscured a large lever to the left hand side. Tradden balked from pulling it at this point, however tempting it was.

Eventually, he rested, had lunch and waited to see if Khalin was going to wake. He hoped he would, if for no other reason he didn't fancy dragging the heavy fellow up the stairs, onto the boat and rowing back with no assistance...

[Rest - 6 Hours]

After what seemed an eternity in the dim light to Tradden, Khalin awoke with a snort. The dwarf padded his chest in panic for a moment, and then relaxed.

"Is it gone?" the dwarf asked, through a parched throat.

"Yes," replied Tradden. "Although it's starting to smell a bit."

"Good," was the only reply. Lying still he continued to wonder why he had ever thrown his hammer away.

   Mark, me and Random: Khalin propped himself up gingerly on his hands, "Mind you, that was quite a smite wasn't it?" He inspected the bracers on his forearms, they looked like they needed a polish but seemed otherwise undamaged. Then looking once again at the slightly scruffy but nevertheless effective bindings across his chest, he added, "Thank you again my boy!" Jan 7

The dwarf tried to get up, but winced at a pang of pain. Taking it a little more slowly he pulled himself to his feet. "Now then, what have we got here?"

Tradden quickly brought his comrade up to speed on what he'd found.

Khalin inspected the carcass of the beast. He showed it grudging respect - an impressive beast, and a fellow subterranean dweller and appreciator of fine metals that it was.

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 5**]

[History check: **1d20+6: 23**]

Khalin had heard a couple of tales handed down over generations from some of the miners at Kel-Morndin about monsters similar to these. He'd thought they were scare-stories to keep the miners focused and concentration on what they were doing rather than true stories, but here was one such monster that fitted the bill. In the stories they were called Rust Monsters, and came hunting for metal to eat, somehow rusting it on touch to more easily digest the metal. The stories also told that if such a beast ate metal that had been imbued with magical power it may leave some of this power in the form of a special dust in its stomach for quite some time.

"Interesting." Khalin headed over to the table to inspect the various items there.

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 14**]

The items were not that unusual to Khalin, he'd seen many similar trinkets in his past crafting life. A lot of the items were apprentice pieces for a smith - a jeweller by the looks of the style and shape of them, and a good one at that, although the pieces were mainly unfinished and basically worthless. The metals were light and obviously some form of alloy, but Khalin was unsure of what sort. One piece did catch his eye, however, more for its unusual shape than anything else. The piece was made up of exceptionally thin wires of metal that to Khalin's surprise were extremely strong and rigid. These wires, twelve in all, formed the outline of a block, each wire representing an edge of the block. The block was about two feet wide, by one foot high, and one foot deep. Excellent craftsmanship, but an unusual shape.

Before inspecting the bizarre selection of detritus piled on the floor.

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 21**]

Nothing seemed to stand out to the dwarf - bits of old leather, cloth, and wood.

And finally studiously appraising the array of books, muttering about maps, runes and what have you.

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 6**]

Many of the tomes were as Tradden had explained - techniques for crafting various pieces of armour, weaponry, or jewellery. To his dismay Khalin didn't find any maps of the region, but did find one parchment with a map of the local area and numerous ink marks and lines. Khalin showed the parchment to Tradden, and between the pair they decided it appeared to be some form of tactical plan for the defence of the area - lines had been added for a defensive wall stretching from gorge wall to gorge wall and arrows and detail had been added to show to flow of combat troops. However, to what battle or when was not revealed. Khalin picked two or three of the tomes he thought best that Kireth may want to examine and put them to one side.

The dwarf inspected the fine armour with an artisan's eye, checking its workmanship and potential effectiveness, as well as sizing up which of the two of them it might best fit.

The mail was a little tight around the sides for the dwarf, obviously meant for someone a little thinner. It didn't appear to be fully finished, perhaps another prentice piece, but it was the construction that somehow worried the dwarf, raising the hairs on the back of his neck. He had never seen anything like it - the delicacy and finesse of the chain links were incredible and way beyond any artisan he had ever encountered. There was something about the piece that he didn't like, though, something gnawing at the back of his mind as though the workmanship shouldn't be possible in this world. He set the mail back down on the table and shuddered visibly.

 Matt: Tradden geared up for the trip back to the boat whilst Khalin did his own inspections of the various contents of the chamber. As he did so, his gaze kept being drawn back to the lever next to the strange gate thing...

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 Matt: The young fighter was also much heartened to see Khalin not only back on his feet, but excited about the contents of the room. He had grinned to himself as the Dwarf flicked through some of the books, murmuring to himself about "Maps, Maps of the Mainland!"

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In short order the two started to plan their journey back and what would be taken, their packs and makeshift sacks filling up with the things they had agreed to take back with them, always mindful that the boat was only going to take so much!

"Ahem" Tradden cleared his throat. "This lever ..."

 Mark, me and Random: "Hehe, all in good time my friend," chuckled Khalin knowingly, looking forward to reminding Tradden that it would be his turn to go first given the dwarfs lack of serviceable armour. "First I have a little theory about this beast..."

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Khalin was feeling better already, almost as if he'd grown a little from taking on such a magnificent creature (even though it'd nearly been the end of him).

The warlord quickly brought Tradden up to speed on the rumours of old regarding rust monsters and the potential gift that may lie inside. The dwarf rubbed his bearded chin thoughtfully, trying to work out quite the best way to approach the problem, given the rusting effect that had manifested itself earlier - not to mention where the beast's stomach or stomachs might be.

[Nature check: **1d20+1: 19**]

Khalin's best guess was that the stomach would be where it would be expected to be on a normal mammal. He also assumed that now the creature was dead, that it's rusting effects would probably no longer take effect. He uttered a soft plea to Moradin and then went to work slicing the belly of the beast open with his dagger. Putrid smells wafted into the room from the creature's guts, and Tradden went quite pale, retiring to the far side of the room muttering about checking something out. Khalin finished his work, with gore and ichor up to his elbows and finally sliced open the stomach.

To his disappointment the stomach was empty - no wonder the beast had been so ravenous to attack the dwarf so fiercely.

 Matt, me and Random: Whilst that was going on, still curious about the lever, Tradden took a closer look at the lever mechanism to see if there was any clue as to whether it had been used recently. If there was soot and grime around, presumably that would allow for indications if it had been scraped or touched? There might even be foot or hand prints?

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[Perception check: **1d20+3: 11**]

Indeed, it seemed prudent to check for signs of any recent humanoid activity around the chamber - had this 'Rustmonster', as Khalin called it, been here on its own for sometime? Was there dust over the various things left in the room or any signs that someone had been here recently? Tradden remembered that the way they had come down did not seem like it had been disturbed recently...

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 13**]

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 17**]

The area around the lever and gates did not appear to have been disturbed, except where the young fighter had wandered around.

 Mark and Random: Khalin's brow creased into a now all-too-familiar scowl at the lack of treasure within the rust monster - his latest dream of gold popped. Still, it took a lot to keep the gregarious warlord's spirit down, and presently, having wiped the goo and gore from his limbs, he rose and joined Tradden by the lever.

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"Let me have a look, lad," he said as he peered at the mechanism, looking for clues as to whether pulling it would turn out to be a wise move. "Heh, this would be child's play for Mister Nothing no doubt..."

[Dungeoneering check: **1d20+3: 13**]

"Hmm," he mused, trying to sound like he knew more about it than he did. Tradden's barely concealed smile betrayed the fact that the dwarf was clearly stumped.

"Oh well, we're just going to be wondering if we don't pull it aren't we?" Khalin concluded, before stepping back well out of the way, and slightly to the side, then raising his shield.

"Off you go then!" he quipped, smiling as Tradden's eyebrows rose for just an instant in what might be interpreted as surprise.

 **Matt:** Tradden drew his one remaining blade, tossing it from hand to hand for a moment, unused to just having one sword on the go. When he was ready, he used the other hand to pull the lever, and then stepped back, and to one side.

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Anyone watching from the viewpoint of the gate would have seen Khalin's head appearing at about chest height to Tradden's side, peering around his better-armoured fellow to see what might happen...

 **Me:** *As the lever clicked into place there was a satisfying clunk and then the grate of metal on metal echoed around the chamber despite the dampening effect of the soot. A billow of soot puffed into the room from the far side of the gate from the lever and the pair could see the gate visibly moving sideways across the room on some form of inset rail.*

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The pair readied their weapons and fell into a martial stance, ready for whatever was behind the gate.

"It's taking its bloody time," muttered Khalin, nervously rotating his warhammer in his hand.

The gate inched inexorably across and both of the heroes could already feel the heat begin to rise in the chamber.

"I said this wasn't a good idea," said Tradden.

The pair edged across the room trying to get a better look at what was beyond the gate. They were greeted by a ruddy glow and a lot of heat. In the corner of the small annexe, seemingly clear of soot, Khalin spotted an anvil and a whole host of tools, gleaming in the flickering glow. As the gate moved fully across it seemed obvious to the dwarf.

"It's... a... forge..." whispered Khalin, half to himself. Then, more boldly, as the full realisation hit him he moved in front of Tradden to get a better look.

"It's a bloody forge," the dwarf bellowed, "and by Moradin's Hammer, they've harnessed an earth fire!"

The dwarf began to beam, stammering over his sentences as his excitement visibly grew. "They've got a channel down there directly to an earth fire - the heat you get for manipulating metals bests any fire man-made," he instructed. "But what man or beast could work in there so close to the heat?"

At the back of the annexe was a huge fire grate with a number of shelves, troughs, levers and wheels. It seemed alive with the flickering glow, subdued by the grate. Khalin surmised that the right combination of the levers and wheels would release the full potential of the earth fire.

"Shut the gate, Tradden," the dwarf uttered. "This is beyond us at the moment - I don't fancy meddling in there!"

Tradden simply nodded, not fully understanding what was going on, but understanding enough that to make some form of mistake here could be fatal. He licked his lips and wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Right you are," he managed, and pushed the lever back to where it had been. "Let's get our things and get out of here."

The pair only relaxed once the gate was fully back in place once more.

 **Me and Matt:** *With all haste the pair started to ensure they'd gathered what they had found. Selected tomes from the bookcase were put into sacks alongside the strange chain mail wrapped in some of the larger pieces of leather from the rubbish pile.*

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The parchment map was rolled and wrapped in some of the softer, more supple, leather from the rubbish pile and added to the sack.

Tradden handed a sack containing the remains of Khalin's armour to the dwarf, almost apologetically.

Khalin safely stowed some of the prentice pieces, including the odd wired one, into a further sack and then the pair looked at each other.

"Ready?" offered Tradden

"As I will ever be," responded the dwarf.

"Right, let's get out of here," sighed Tradden, and kicked the barricade away from the bottom of the stairs, and headed up back into fresh air.

As he exited, he had one wry glance over his shoulder at the now covered again forge.

"Caldring's gonna love me!" he said to himself, unable to suppress a grin.

"What?" came Dwarfven tones from the stairs above.

"Nothing!" said Tradden, following him up.

 **Me:** *The journey back to Blackengorge was uneventful if long. Heaving the sacks back to town took longer than the pair thought, and it was beyond dusk when they arrived at the gates.*

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With some intrigued looks from the guards they were ushered in and set straight to The Bronze Lion to share their bounty.

 **Matt and me:** It was late, so *The Bronze Lion* was fairly busy. By now the townsfolk knew the group of adventurers, or at least knew of them, so perhaps it was to be expected that after an initial bunch of looks-over-shoulders and stares, most folk went back to their drinks.

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However, many eyes stayed on the young lad and Dwarf - the sight of them lugging various bags and items into the inn piqued many an interest.

Any tension was quickly diffused by one of Tradden's more inspired moments: He dumped his own bag on the table occupied by Zero and today's young lady, and exclaimed to the room at large.

"Hark - another successful trip into the wilds for the benefit of the good people of Blackengorge!"

Seeing one of the guards, clearly off duty but still in uniform, the young fighter turned to address him. "Pray, my fine fellow, send word to the Council that we should meet with them at once, should they still be up at this hour - we have important business with them!"

Words like 'Hark' and 'Pray' were wholly unnecessary, and only really made Tradden look like a berk, but the folk in the inn seemed to accept what he was saying generally. The guard gave him a "*who in the nine hells are you?*" look, but quaffed what remained of his ale and sloped out, likely to find Valino and report what the annoying adventurers were up to now.

Whilst this had been going on Khalin had sat down on the other side of Zero, and surreptitiously bundled the package of books for Kireth at the feet of the rogue. "These need to find their way to the polite young mage no doubt upstairs in his room practicing his comedy routine." hissed the dwarf to the human. Zero, whose eyes never left his goblet of wine, nodded almost imperceptibly. After a few seconds, he stood up.

"*My dear...*" he held out his arm to his female companion who giggled ferociously, and acted perhaps more drunkenly than he actually was. "*I tire of this company almost immediately, and the rigours of the day call for a good bath - would you be so kind as to accompany me? I find it very hard to reach the middle of my back.*"

The two laughed and cavorted in a playful mood all of the way across the room and up the stairs, the rogue managing to flick, wrap and billow his cloak around the girl as they moved. Many an eye was raised to the ceiling - they had seen this kind of behaviour from Mr Uhlit before, so it was getting old news. However, none of them noticed that in all the fun, the package of books had been expertly hidden from view the whole time, and it also made its way up the stairs with the two lovers.

 **Matt and me:** Skillet, at the bar, a trained eye, perhaps saw more than most as to what was going on, but could only guess at what the group were up to. He did his duty by making sure that a set of drinks were taken over to the boy and the dwarf, including an extra large tankard for the Warford - the halfling was good at his day job.

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Tradden's previous guess was right - before too long Valino and the first guard entered the inn. The Guard Captain marched coolly up to their table, and gave them a suitably uncomfortable silence before speaking.

"The Council," Valino spat, not appreciating being a messenger boy, "will see you now." And with that he strode out.

With impeccable timing, Kireth, Celestia and Zero, now without anyone on his arm, and not looking any cleaner (although only Skillet noted it) came down the stairs, the former two roused from their rooms by the rogue. Together the five adventurers went forth to meet the Council, lugging their new items with them.

 Me: As the adventurers passed the smithy on the way to see the Council at the Town Hall, Tradden and Khalin indicated for the others to wait a moment and knocked at the sturdy wooden door. After a moment or two it creaked open a few inches and the surprised face of Caldring the smith greeted the pair, then glanced at the trio beyond. Jan 9 ▾

"Hi. Brought you a present," beamed Tradden, smiling a little too forcefully as he thrust the sack forward. Caldring loosened the opening just enough to spy the contents, and raised one elegant elvish eyebrow. Casting a furtive glance up and down the street she beckoned the group inside.

Tradden quickly described how the pair had headed across to the Tower of Mists - remembering to omit the primary reason for their little sojourn, lest he feel the crack of Kireth's staff on the back of his head. He paused and looked to Khalin when he'd spoken of the gate, and the dwarf swiftly took up the narrative.

"A forge, a ruddy forge harnessing an earth-fire. Can you imagine?" the dwarf gushed. "What do you make of it? And this armour," the burly warlord shuddered again as he pointed quickly at the sack, "by Clangeddin's beard I've never seen anything like it."

Caldring pulled the mail from the sack with a flourish, and cast an expert eye over it...

 Me: The smith turned the mail over and over in her arms and then walked over to the window shutters and flung them open. Night had drawn in and a baleful moon hung low in the sky - Caldring held up the mail to inspect it in the moonlight. From where the group was stood they could see all of the colours of the rainbow sparkling across the mail, even in the moonlight. Jan 9 ▾

Caldring frowned, muttering to herself, as she crossed the room to her anvil, laying the mail down carefully. Before Tradden could stop her she picked up one of her larger hammers and slammed it down onto the mail with all her might! A single note issued, clear and true.

"What manner of trick is this?" she hissed at the group.

They looked at one another, and protested their innocence. Khalin offered that the mail had simply been found and that there was no trick and went on to explain his unease at the mail.

"It is not right!" exclaimed the elf. "How can this be?"

She didn't appear to be making much sense to the group, so Tradden took the conversation on another path, explaining the problem with his sword and Khalin's armour.

Caldring did not take her eyes off the mail as Tradden spoke and simply uttered that if they left them she would have them sorted by the morning, waving her hand at a table in the corner for the items to be left. Tradden drew his sword and left it, almost reluctantly, but reverently, at the table and deposited the remains of Khalin's armour next to it.

"I have work to do," the elfuttered, effectively dismissing the group.

"Er, right," was all that Tradden could manage and the group started to leave.

"There are other pieces in those sacks," offered Khalin, but with not much of a reply, the group closed the door behind them and continued on their way to the Council.

 Me: "Well, she didn't sound too grateful," said Zero as they ambled across the main plaza toward the Town Hall. "Not as much as you expected, eh?" he continued, nudging Tradden in the ribs. Jan 9 ▾

"Yes," interrupted Kireth, vocal for the first time all night. "One would think that she'd never seen anything like it on this earth before." He smiled wryly, somewhat to himself.

As the group turned to face the wizard, trying to understand his comment, Kireth opened the door to the Town Hall.

"Shall we?" he smiled.

 Me: [...continued in [Scene #05](#)...] Jan 9 ▾