



Blackengorge - The Road Eastwards - The Old Road Gate - Chapter #05, Scene #02

Feb 9

...continues from [Chapter #05, Scene #01](#)

Synopsis

The 17th Day of Ches in the Year of the Sudden Journey

With spirits high and adventure on the wind the group have set out eastwards on the old road towards the gate in the gorge wall, with their final destination being a burial site off to the east. Going has been fairly easy and they have approached the ruins of the old road gate. However, someone or something has been watching and laying in wait. As the party get closer, it chooses its moment to attack!

- [Khálin Grundokri](#) - 3rd Level Male Dwarven Warlord
- [Kireth Majere](#) - 3rd Level Male Half-Elven Wizard
- [Tradden Aversward](#) - 3rd Level Male Human Fighter
- [Zero Uhlit](#) - 3rd Level Male Human Rogue
- Rindall Blackstout - 3rd Level Male Dwarven Paladin of Moradin (NPC)

Scene Length

This scene starts on Thursday 10 February 2011 and is expected to be completed by the end of Tuesday 15 February 2011. Players are expected to be able to post at least once a day.

Me and Random:

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INITIATIVE BLOCK

Round #05

Combat Encounter Complete

01) [29] Kireth - **1d20+7+2: 29** - HP 9/31 (plus 8 temp hp) (Bloodied)

02) [24] Khalin - **1d20+2+2: 24** - HP 21/36 (Slowed)

03) [18] Zero - **1d20+4+2: 18** - HP 32/35

04) [14] Adult Silk Wym - **1d20+7: 14** - Dmg: 14+16+14+13+18+27+21+10+4+4+6+10+10+10+9=175 (Bloodied) (Marked by Tradden)

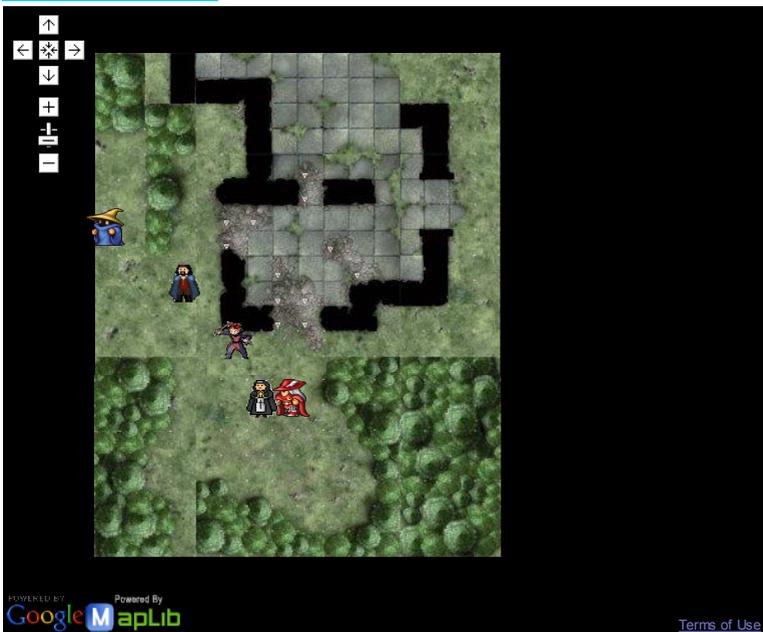
05) [09] Tradden - **1d20+3+2: 9** - HP 24/38

06) [07] Rindall - **1d20+1+2: 6** - HP 12/41 (-2 to defences until end of wym's turn) (Bloodied)

Me, Matt and 3 others:

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BATTLE MAP



Me:

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FEATURES OF THE AREA

All squares that contain a small triangle in the bottom left hand corner are marked as difficult terrain.

Illumination: Bright light.

Trees: Trees are difficult terrain, and cost 2 movement. They can provide cover and concealment.

Matt: The swift appearance of the snake-thing had seemingly taken everyone by surprise.

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Well, not everyone. Maybe it was the way the trees moved slightly in the wind, maybe it was the way the ground trembled ever so slightly, maybe it was simply the strange feeling that had come over the young fighter just prior to the attack but he had been ... ready!

Only Kireth, who he could now hear mumbling the first words of a spell, had similarly been unsurprised.

In the blink of an eye Tradden realised that the speed the snake-thing was moving meant that it was going to get to Khalin & Rindall before anything else could happen. Maybe Kireth could get a spell off, maybe, but that still left the Dwarves in danger.

Without thought for himself, the young fighter launched forward from the bushes he and Zero were hiding in and started to run towards the thing, waving his swords as he did so.

"Hey – Goodlooking! Over here!"

 Neil, me and Random: "Templa Koron" The mage had wasted no time and the spell was set free from his lips, now so well practiced it was instinct.

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[Force Orb vs Adult Silk Wyrms Reflex: **1d20+1+5: 17**] - hits!
[Damage: **2d8+5: 14**]

The ball of energy slammed into the nose of the wyrm and crackled back over the top of its head. Smarting, the creature shook its head from side to side, shaking off the effects, its piercing eyes searched for the source.

 Me and Random: *The creature hissed as the energy struck the top of its maw and opened its jaws wide, quickly darting at Khalin with bared fangs, striking from distance with deadly speed.*

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[Silk Wyrms Bite: **1d20+8+2: 23** vs Khalin's AC(20)] - hits!
[Damage: **1d10+6: 13**] and [Slowed] (Poison, Save Ends)

The wyrm's fangs tore past Khalin's shield and into his arm easily, causing the dwarf to feel sluggish.

 Matt: Too late!

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Tradden had only covered half the ground between him and the thing before it snapped viciously at Khalin – he heard the Warlord grunt in pain.

Reaching the strange creature he readied himself to attack, but as fast as Tradden had moved, Kireth had moved faster, and the young fighter had to duck as another magical attack came flying past!

 Neil, me and Random: Kireth's eyes had glazed, feverishly his mouth was moving at pace, completing with "Val Morgil". The mage thrust his staff towards the sky, which to the observant seemed to have darkened, there was a flash as something seemed to strike the staff and channel through the mage's body. Kireth blinked, his eyes returning to normal, "Val Morgil" he repeated, smiling.

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[Shock Sphere vs Adult Silk Wyrms Reflex: **1d20+1+6: 23**] - hits!

Kireth hurled yet another ball of light at the creature but, to those able to pick it out in flight, this was something different. Striking the Wyrms with a deafening boom, lightning engulfed the writhing creature.

[Damage: **2d6+5: 16**]

 Mark, me and Random: Khalin steeled himself against the pain from the monster's bite. His plan had succeeded in one respect at least - he'd drawn the attack away from his companions. But now the beast was turning towards Tradden. Shrugging off the growing effects of the venom in his veins, the dwarf struck back at the beast...

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[Warlord's Strike vs Silk Wyrms: **1d20+6: 23**] - hits!

[Damage if hits: **2d10+5: 14**]

[+2 to allies' damage rolls vs target until end of next turn]

The blow struck home with a satisfying crunch against the serpent's chitinous hide.

As the hammer struck chitin, however, it seemed to unleash a strand of spiralling silk, straight at Khalin, trying to wrap itself around the dwarf as the wyrm pulled itself closer. [Shift]

[Silk Strands: **1d20+6: 10** vs Khalin's Reflex(13)] - misses!

The warlord managed to squirm out of the way of the strands before they could take hold.

Buoyed by the successful strike, Khalin remanaged his energies.

[Minor action: Second Wind - 9hp regained]
[+2 bonus to defences until start of next turn]

[Save vs poison: **1d20+5: 19**] - success!

 The.brainbuster@googlewave.com, me and Random: Zero, feeling quite happy hidden in the bushes, took aim at the serpentine creature and squeezed the trigger.

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[Gloaming Cut: **1d20+8+2: 28**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d6+1+2d8+2: 13**]

He was only visible for a moment before he ducked back down in the trees and tried to drift out of view.

[Stealth Check: **1d20+12: 16**] - failure!

However, a number of branches caught on his cloak, and kept him out in the open somewhat.

He cursed under his breath and prayed the thing wouldn't head his way.

 Me and Random: *Most of the attacks at the wyrm seemed to have pierced its chitinous outer shell but the beast did not seem to have been affected too much. Instead, the attacks seemed to have just made the creature more angry!*

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Rising up on its snakelike body the wyrm opened its maw and hissed at the entire group, its head swaying slightly from side to side and its black eyes like pools of darkness. It was hard for the party not to stare at the swaying movements and not be drawn into the eyes.

[Mesmerising Dread (Minor Action)]

[Dread: **1d20+6: 16** vs Khalin's Will(15+2)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6-2: 13** vs Kireth's Will(13)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 13**] and [-2 to defences]

[Dread: **1d20+6: 20** vs Rindall's Will(15)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 10**] and [-2 to defences]

[Dread: **1d20+6: 10** vs Tradden's Will(14)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6-2: 13** vs Zero's Will(14)] - misses!

With a numbness exploding in their minds, Kireth and Rindall started lurching towards the wyrm, oblivious it seemed to the danger. As they got closer and closer to the wyrm it finally stopped swaying. The beast then snapped out, jaws wide, at the two dwarves.

[Wyrms Strike]

[Bite: **1d20+8: 14** vs Khalin's AC(20+2)] - misses!

[Bite: **1d20+8: 19** vs Rindall's AC(24-2)] - misses!

The wyrm's jaws couldn't snap through the heavily armoured dwarves, though, and it drew back a little, changing its plans.

 Matt, me and Random: Once again keeping a firm grip on the events at hand Tradden showed iron will in the face of the wyrm's hypnotic gaze. Seeing that even the mighty Kireth was not immune to the creature's stare, the young fighter allowed himself the smallest of cynical smiles as he advanced [Standard Move Action].

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"I thought..." he said, waving his longsword out to one side as a distraction, "... that I said you should look at me!", he finished, taking the split second opportunity to stab sideways with his short sword.

[Surprising Stab vs Wyrms Reflex: **1d20+9: 26**] - hits!
[Damage: **4**] and [Marked] and [Grants **Combat Advantage**]

[2nd attack vs Wyrms: **1d20+9+2: 20**] - hits!
[Damage: **2d6+7+2: 14**]

Both hits sparked against the chitinous shell, drawing long scores down the wyrm's body.

The thing roared loudly.

"NOW do I have your attention?" laughed Tradden, albeit through gritted teeth - it looked like the beast did now have him in his sights...

 Me and Random: *Shaking his head, trying to remove the effect of the wyrm's stare, Rindall raised his pick and plunged it into the side of the beast's body.*

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[Righteous Smite vs Wyrms: **1d20+7: 12**] - misses!

But the pick couldn't find purchase, and it skittered off the side.

 Neil, me and Random: It was Kireth's turn to shake his head clear. "Impressive" admired the half-elf. But this was no time for analysing the skill of his opponent, now was the time to get the hell away. No clumsy bookworm, Kireth again deftly backtracked, putting a little distance between himself and the beast. [Shift]

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"Rauko Rutha"

[Hellish Rebuke vs Adult Silk Wyrms Reflex: **1d20+3: 14**] - misses!

A small flame appeared on the chitinous shell of the serpent, but couldn't find a hold.

 Matt: Tradden, always thinking, suddenly realised something. The words of magic were a mystery to him, and likely always would be. However, there was a recognisable pattern of language to listen to as a bystander, and Tradden did indeed recognise some of the words used - he had certainly heard "Rauko Rutha" before in previous battles, and the net effect always seemed to be the same ...

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"Has that spell EVER worked...?" he enquired at the now retreating Kireth?

 Neil: "Not yet" snapped the Mage. "Perhaps you can help me perfect it?"

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 Matt: Tradden dodged a flailing tail, but was also now dodging barbed comments from the mage.

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"Bah - Use the fiery dart one - thats always a good one!"

 Mark, me and Random: For once Khalin was content to leave the mid-battle wisecracking to the others and shifted into a flanking position opposite Tradden. Raising his shield to protect himself and his countryman Rindall he swung again with his hammer...

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[Shielded Assault vs Silk Wyrms: **1d20+6+2: 28**] - critical hit!
[Damage: **2d10+5: 25**] plus [1d6: 2 flame damage]
[+2 AC to self and Rindall while adjacent]

The hammer crashed down on the chitinous shell, cracking some of the plates and sending chitin dust into the air. [Bloodied] The serpent writhed and let out a horrific scream, whipping its head around to face the dwarf with a hiss. Several strands of silken thread sprang out towards the dwarf.

[Silk Strands: **1d20+6: 8** vs Khalin's Reflex(13+2)] - misses!

But Khalin easily moved to one side and watched the strands hit the earth and dissipate without harm.

 Matt: Clearly in an ebullient mood, Tradden piped up again.

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"Nice hit Khalin!" he followed it up with a war cry he knew the two Dwarves would appreciate.

"They shall sing of our deeds at the feast tables of ..." Tradden jumped the flailing tail this time, "... Erackinor!"

 The.brainbuster@googlewave.com, me and Random: Zero sneaked through the bushes and took aim again at the wounded beast, hoping it had lost track of him amid the chaos of battle.

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[Fleeting Spirit Strike]

[Stealth Check: **1d20+12: 23**] - success!

[Entrapping Hand Crossbow vs Wyrms: **1d20+8+2: 18**] - hits!

[Damage: **2d6+4+2d8: 21**]

[Stealth Check: **1d20+12: 23**] - success!

The rogue skipped from shadow to shadow in the treeline and unleashed a bolt that struck right between two chitinous plates, drawing another hiss from the beast.

 Me and Random: *The wyrm rose up and hissed at the group preparing itself for another attack.*

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[Mesmerising Dread - Recharge: **1d6: 6**] - success!

Once again it began swaying with its maw open wide and its eyes staring intently at members of the group, drawing them in to its hypnotic gaze.

[Mesmerising Dread (Minor Action)]

[Dread: **1d20+6: 14** vs Khalin's Will(15)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6: 10** vs Kireth's Will(13-2)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6: 9** vs Rindall's Will(15-2)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6: 17** vs Tradden's Will(14)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 9**] and [-2 to defences]

[Dread: **1d20+6-5: 19** vs Zero's Will(14)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 8**] and [-2 to defences]

As if in a dream Zero walked forwards out of the treeline, becoming visible once more, drawn in by the wyrm's gaze, his defences down. Khalin shouted words of warning, but they went unheeded. Tradden also walked as if in a dream, but this time he wandered away from the beast, his challenge to the wyrm forgotten.

From its heightened position the wyrm struck down, maw still open, on the mesmerised Zero and then just as quickly turned its attention to Kireth.

[Wyrms Strike]

[Bite: **1d20+8: 23** vs Zero's AC(16-2)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d10+6: 15**] and [Slowed] (Save Ends)

[Bite: **1d20+8-2: 20** vs Kireth's AC(16-2)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d10+6: 11**] and [Slowed] (Save Ends)

Both bites clamped down hard and Zero shrieked with pain. Kireth bit back on his lip.

Both axes clamped down and zero shrieked with pain. Kireth on back on his tip.

Then with a twist of its chitinous body is snapped down at the two dwarves. [Action Point]

[Wyrms Strike]

[Bite: **1d20+8: 10** vs Khalin's AC(20+2)] - misses!

[Bite: **1d20+8: 24** vs Rindall's AC(24-2+2)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d10+6: 14**] and [Slowed] (Save Ends)

Khalin once more managed to get his shield in the way, but the wyrm managed to get its fangs into Rindall.

With a shudder the wyrm then 'fell' into shadow, its body shifting and writhing wreathed in darkness, the stones of the gate visible through it.

[Shadow Form] (Minor Action)

Wyrms is [Insubstantial] and [Phasing]

 Matt, me and Random: "What the?" Tradden suddenly came to his senses, and turned back with a low growl. This beastie was cleverer than he had given credit for, and what was worse - Feb 13 ▼
it ... still ... wasn't... paying any attention to him!

"Right, your for it now!" he cried, charging back into the battle, and nicely into a flanking position.

[Charge Attack vs Wyrms: **1d20+9+2+2+1: 24**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 14**] plus [Use Daily Power Frost Damage: **1d8: 7**] and [Marked]

[Insubstantial Half Damage = **10**]

The blade cut through the shadowy form of the wym, causing some damage Tradden hoped, but perhaps not as much as he would have liked. As the blade came out of the other side, wrapped around the edge were strands of silk connecting it to the wyrm.

[Silk Strands: **1d20+6: 19** vs Tradden's Reflex (14-2)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d6+8: 10**] and [Restrained] (Save Ends)

Drips of acid squirted down the lines onto Tradden's hands, stinging the flesh. Even with a great heave Tradden couldn't break free!

[Action Point: Second Wind As Standard Action, +9 HP & +2 to Defences until end of next Turn]

Mark: "Kireth! Zero! Try get back to the treeline!" yelled Khalin to his bloodied companions. The duo had taken the worst of the beast's attacks and would be lucky to survive another strike. The warlord knew they would have to be careful not to provoke it further while retreating, but they'd still be an attacking threat to the wyrm if they could make it to cover. Feb 12 ▼

 Me and Random: Rindall raised his war pick and it flashed with divine light as at struck down into the hide of the beast. Feb 17 ▼

[Strike of Hope vs Wyrms: **1d20+5: 12**] - misses!

But the pick glanced harmlessly off the tough scales. He turned briefly to Zero, clasping him on the back before pointing at Kireth, providing a soft glow around the wizard.

[Lay on Hands: Zero regains **8+3** hit points]

[Divine Mettle: Kireth makes Saving throw: **1d20+3: 11**] - success!

Zero looked refreshed, and Kireth jolted out of his stupor.

 Neil, me and Mark: Groggy and bloodied, Kireth, leaning on his staff for support, staggered away. His mind racing from the effects of the Wyrms he still had presence to draw sarcasm to the forefront "Good job we didn't bring the priest," he thought to himself. "I'd hate to get healed right now". Feb 15 ▼

The sarcastic thought did it's trick and the mage wheeled in anger firing a hate filled bolt.

[Magic Missile Adult Silk Wyrms: Damage **2+4+2: 8**] - automatic hit!

[Insubstantial Half Damage = **4**]

The bolt burst into the wyrm's shadowy body and drew a hiss of pain.

 Mark, me and Random: Khalin scowled as the serpent seemed to slip in and out of existence in front of him. If he swung with his hammer, he'd most likely get snagged like Tradden. Dismissing reaching for his dagger, he decided the nettle must simply be grasped, and he swung once more with his warhammer, hoping to draw the beast's attention away from the others... Feb 15 ▼

[Brash Assault vs Silk Wyrms: **1d20+6+2: 25**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d10+5: 9**]

[Insubstantial Half Damage = **4**]

[Optional free attack to Wyrms with combat advantage. If taken, Rindall gets free attack in return with combat advantage]

[Silk Strands **1d20+6: 19** vs Khalin's Reflex(13)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d6+8: 9**] and [Restrained] (Save Ends)

Again the silk strands lashed out, and this time Khalin wasn't so lucky, as the tendrils snagged him. The Wyrms narrowed its eyes as it gazed balefully at the dwarf, pointedly refusing to take the bait and strike back immediately.

Ensnared but defiant, the warlord called to his comrades: "Heads up! We're not going down that easy!"

[Minor Action - Inspiring Word: Target Zero: spends healing surge **1d6+8: 9** hp regained]

 The.brainbuster@googlewave.com, me and Random: Khalin's words snapped Zero to. He realised he was far too close for comfort to the formidable wyrm. Picking his moment, he slipped from its line of sight. [Shift] and [Fleeting Ghost] Feb 15 ▼

[Fleeting Ghost - Stealth Check: **1d20+12: 22**] - failure!

[Saving Throw vs Slowed: **1d20+1: 20**] - success!

 Me: Stinging from several hits and blood starting to pour out of wounds, even its insubstantial form, the serpent started to withdraw a little, regrouping and weighing up its options. [Shift: NW] Feb 17 ▼

[Mesmerising Dread - Recharge: **1d6: 4**] - success!

As the wyrm started to move away, Tradden managed to free his sword from the silken threads for a moment and struck with what he hoped was a devastating blow.

[Tradden Combat Superiority vs Wyrms: **1d20+9+2+2-2: 22**] - hits!

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

[Insubstantial Half Damage = **6**]

The blow swept through the creature's shadowy form and although it didn't have the impact he was hoping, it did stop the wyrm in its tracks. [Movement Stopped]

If the wyrm couldn't move, it could at least try to move its enemies. It opened its maw wide and all around it the party could feel themselves being drawn to its will, as the serpent's body faded back

into material form. [No longer Insubstantial]

[Mesmerising Dread (Minor Action)]

[Dread: **1d20+6: 14** vs Khalin's Will(15)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6: 16** vs Rindall's Will(15)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+7: 15**] and [-2 to defences]

[Dread: **1d20+6: 12** vs Tradden's Will(14-2+2)] - misses!

[Dread: **1d20+6: 10** vs Zero's Will(14-2)] - misses!

Only Rindall appeared to succumb to the effects and found himself wandering off towards the treeline.

With a hiss the creature then snapped down quickly on Tradden and Khalin in front of it.

[Wym Strike]

[Bite: **1d20+8: 21** vs Khalin's AC(20)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d10+6: 11**] and [**Slowed**] (Save Ends)

[Bite: **1d20+8: 16** vs Tradden's AC(18+2-2-2)] - hits!

[Damage: **1d10+6: 13**] and [**Slowed**] (Save Ends)

It then followed up the strike by staring at Tradden with its deep black eyes, trying to draw the very life essence out of him. [Action Point]

[Feed: **1d20+6: 17** vs Tradden's Fortitude (18+2-2-2)] - hits!

[Tradden loses 1 healing surge, and Silk Wym regains **10** hp]

The young fighter felt sluggish and now drawn, as if stretched thinly.

 Matt, me and Random: Tradden was dazed and confused. The last few moments had been like a blur – he had been ready and had tried to avoid the wicked attacks of the Wym, and had been a hair's breadth away from avoiding both, but that hadn't been enough and effects were plain to see. He had to focus, and that meant starting with regaining full movement... Feb 17 ▼

[Escape - Athletics Check vs Wym's Fortitude: **1d20+9+1: 29**] - success!

Vaulting up into the air in a trademark half-pike, Tradden landed in the same spot, now free, although still muzzy.

It gave him a second to consider the battle. Damn! Things were looking grim – he and his comrades were wilting fast under the repeated attacks of the beast.

The actions he and his friends would have to take in the next few minutes would be important – it was life or death time, and Tradden stepped up to do his bit...

The young fighter gave one, last battle cry whilst whirling his frost longsword in a figure of eight motion above his head. Sparks of frost seemed to spill from the blade as the rain came down.

[Sweeping Slash]

[Longsword vs Wym's Reflex: **1d20+9+2: 28**] - hits!

Wym is [**Pushed**] 1 square (can't move, nowhere to go) and [**Marked**]

[Shortsword vs Wym: **1d20+9+2: 19**] - hits!

[Damage: **2d6+7+4: 19**]

Tradden drove the wym back a little, but it had nowhere to go, with Khalin flanking it behind. As the serpent's neck reared up, the young fighter struck quickly with his shortsword.

[Saving Throw vs Slowed: **1d20+1: 19**] - success!

Having given himself some space and now free from the Wym's clutches, Tradden echoed the bravado demonstrated by his Warlord companion.

"That's right - you are going to have to do better than that!"

He twirled his swords in his hands impressively to accentuate his cry.

 Me and Random: Rindall took a deep breath, composing himself against the many bites and wounds he had taken. Feb 17 ▼

(Minor Action)

[Dwarven Resilience: Rindall spends a healing surge and gains **10** hp]

His countryman, Khalin, appeared to be tangled somewhat but was faring well. The young fighter was wielding his swords well, but was taking many bites. Rindall muttered a prayer to Moradin and the hammer insignia on his breastplate began to shine, its radiance extending past the wym onto Tradden.

(Minor Action)

[Plate Armour of Sacrifice: Tradden regains **9** hp]

With the group looking healthier, the dwarf turned its attentions back to the wym, striking at the body with his war pick.

[Strike of Hope vs Wym: **1d20+5: 21**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+2: 10**] and [Kireth gains **8** temporary hit points]

The pick lodged itself in the serpent's plates and flashed with divine light that gave Kireth renewed vigour and energy.

[Saving Throw vs Slowed: **1d20+5: 17**] - success!

 Neil, me and Random: Kireth continued to be impressed by the Wym. Its abilities were something to behold. Understanding foes such as this would be integral to his development. And, thinking along these lines, the mage had an idea. Feb 18 ▼

"So, your body may only be half here but how about your mind?" he mused.

"Gorga Amin"

[Nightmare Eruption vs Wym's Will: **1d20+6: 19**] - hits!

[Damage: **1d8+5: 9**]

As Kireth spoke the wym's attention focused on the mage. For a moment the two were locked in defiant stares. Then the serpent began to thrash its head from side to side, the silken threads entangling Khalin falling away. After a few brief seconds the life went out of the serpent's eyes and its head fell to the floor with an almighty crash. [Dead]

 Mark, me and Random: Feb 18 ▼

[...Combat Encounter Complete...]

Kireth spends 3 healing surges (now on 30/31 hp)

Khalin spends 2 healing surges (now on 36/36 hp)

Zero spends 1 healing surge (now on 35/35 hp)

Tradden spends 2 healing surges (now on 38/38 hp)

Rindall spends 3 healing surges (now on 41/41 hp)



Me: Tradden, who was used to having seven shades of ... various unpleasantness type things beaten out of him, looked a little disappointed and nudged the chitinous corpse with his boot.

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"Bah - I was just getting started!" he grinned, replying to the Dwarf.

Nodding towards the Mage and Paladin, both of whom looked very much the worse for wear, Tradden jogged over to Zero.

"You see to these two Khalin, me and Zero will go, secure the gate and keep a lookout. Maybe there is somewhere here we can hole up and rest?"

He looked up at the still grey skies, the rain making him narrow his eyes. "Somewhere out of the rain would be nice.... come on Z!"

And with that the two humans lightly stalked their way up the stairs to the gate, wary of further attacks and keeping a low profile. As they arrived they flanked the two sides to the gate and took time to look through, out onto the other side...



Neil: Before following, Kireth allowed himself a wry smile. Intelligence had won where brute strength was failing... again.

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Me: The stairs were broken and uneven in places, but the pair made it safely to the top and looked through the minor arch at the lands beyond.

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The height of the stairs gave a fairly good vantage point to view the surrounding countryside, probably the point of the gate when it was built. Ahead of them, away to the east, the scrubland and lightly wooded gorge continued, rising slowly upwards into the distance. It was difficult to see too far in the heavy drizzle and through the gloom of the blackened clouds, but Zero thought he could spy a mountain range on the horizon.

To the northeast a large forest could be seen, stretching away to meet the gorge cliffs. And to the southeast the clouds hung low and dark, possibly over the marshlands that Tradden and Khalin had already visited.

Looking carefully out to the east it was possible to see the track of the Old Road, although overgrown now, winding its way through the valley.

The remains of the archway, stairs, and wall provided no covered shelter for the group, except perhaps from the wind at the eastern side. Tradden and Zero descended the stairway and reported their findings to the rest of the group.



Matt: "Seems to me that a short rest here is in order - I am starving! After that we may as well press on given there is nowhere out of the rain here. Maybe we can find somewhere before nightfall?"

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He turned to the now better-looking Paladin. "Rindall - do you recall seeing anywhere that might make a better camp nearer the burial site?"



Me: "We'll need to travel through some woods, north off the Old Road once we get close. I don't remember seeing anything that stands out, but I'm sure we could find something."

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The paladin started to clean his war pick as he talked to Tradden. "At least within the woods we might get out of this infernal rain," he added.

"How far before the woods?" asked Zero, keen to get warm and dry.

Rindall looked off towards the east, almost wistfully, "Three or four hours, lad."

"Oh," replied Zero a little dejectedly.



Matt and me: The group's short stay at the gate was a dour one. Huddled up against the wall as best they could to avoid the wind and rain, they ate and rested in virtual silence, the fight with the wym having taken its toll. There was talk of a fire, but Rindall diplomatically pointed out that in this location, with this weather, it was going to be a losing battle.

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At one point the ever energetic Tradden went to investigate the wym's carcass, mumbling something about getting a plate of its scales to see if Caldring could turn it into armour. He soon returned with his shortsword stuck to his shoulder with the now familiar sticky silk. He pronounced the job impossible and instead slunk off to have a quick scout around the locale, but found nothing but crumbling walls, long since abandoned.

In short order Khalin stood up, girded his loins, grabbed his large pack and rallied everyone to start off again. This time the party formation was slightly different - they all now acutely realised that this was a dangerous land, and they travelled appropriately, with Khalin again out front, Rindall and Tradden as outriders on either side or Kireth, and with the ever vigilant Zero bringing up the rear, ensuring no-one could surprise them from behind.

As they continued east, the rain was not heavy, but had a permeating effect that caused all of them to shiver as they walked. Once past the gate, the road quickly deteriorated into nothing but an overgrown dirt track, which meant for slow going. The overall mood was not improved by a turn for the worse in the weather, black clouds coming from over the eastern mountains saw drizzle turn to rain and rain turn to a downpour.

Visibility was poor, and it was only the tracking skills and abilities of the two Dwarves that kept them on the road. It occurred to more than one of them that they could be surrounded by wyrms and wouldn't know it until it was far too late.

After a few more hours of tiring, trudging travel, they took a welcome break in what Kireth derisively snorted was the "shelter" of a bush by the side of the road. The others agreed it did little to stop the rain, but it was better than nothing. Aching, wet feet were rested and it was another chance for food and drink to be consumed. Again, there was almost complete silence, the mood dropping to an all time low.



Me: The group wearily continued along the road for another few minutes until it wound around a corner and ventured close towards a small wood. Rindall stopped and clambered up onto a nearby rock. Looking away to the north trying to see over the treeline, and through the rain and growing darkness, he pointed off into the distance.

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"We turn north now," he said flatly, his jet black hair and beard matted and dripping from his face. "Let's get some distance into the wood and try and find a little shelter."

As if on cue a low rumble of a thunderclap echoed down the gorge and the group hurried into the wood.



Me: The wood provided a little shelter from the driving rain, but brought its own hazards. The late afternoon gloom gave way to dusk and visibility amongst the trees became quite limited - pace of the group slowed, and tree roots, vines, and brambles all contributed to the frustration. The trees weren't densely packed so at least picking a path amongst them wasn't too difficult.

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As darkness overcame the woods the sounds of birds and animals became muted for a while, then replaced by the nocturnal creatures. Every once in a while the sound of larger beasts could be heard moving about in the depths of the trees, and the group waited with bated breath for the sounds to move away. The patter of the rain on the leaves of the trees became an incessant noise, only broken occasionally by the far off howl of a wolf.

"So when do we stop?" enquired a breathless Zero from the rear of the party, spending most of his time checking over his shoulder into the darkness and then hurrying up to catch the party.

"When we find shelter," replied Khalin, weary of the rogue's repeated questions. "We need to get dry and warm and there's no chance of it unless we find somewhere we can get a fire lit. At this rate we're going to need Kireth to find a way of providing a flame to..."

Khalin stopped mid-sentence as he barged into the back of a stationary Rindall. Tradden, Kireth, and Zero saw the warlord's abrupt halt and matched his position.

"What is it?" whispered Tradden, trying to peer into the darkness without much success.

"I'm not sure," replied Rindall softly, his keen dwarven eyesight sensing something out there in the darkness. "There's a clearing with something in it. It's big and angular, and it's certainly not a tree."

"What do you think it is?" asked Zero, his curiosity piqued.

"Not sure. Perhaps myself and Khalin should go take a look?"

"Enough of this," spat Kireth, impatiently shaking water from his robes and pointing his staff into the darkness. "Kalina!"

A ball of light sped from the end of the wizard's staff towards the bulk of the clearing ahead and opened up in size to illuminate the clearing.

In the brilliant white light the adventurers could see a wide clearing, some sixty or so feet across. In the middle sat a tumbledown shack, window shutters hanging limply in the rain and a half-broken front door knocking backwards and forwards in the breeze.

"I don't like the look of this," said **Khalin** warily.

"At least it might be dry in there," offered **Zero**, "and warm."

 **Matt:** Zero clearly wanted in, as did Khalin. Kireth had not created a bright light just to sit and admire the building from the outside. Rindall had not committed either way, but Tradden also considered it was worth getting any shelter they could on what was one of the grimmest nights he had ever experienced. Feb 18 ▼

Two swords were pulled easily from over-lubricated sheaths. "*Me and Khalin will take a look - Rindall you just be ready to charge in with that pick and all the force Moradin can lend you if there is anything unfriendly inside*", he winked at the Paladin. "*Crossbows and spells, that work, at the ready also chaps.*"

With that, the Warlord and the fighter nodded at each other, verbal communication starting to become unnecessary between the duo. The two figures, both very different in size and shape, moved towards the door, running lightly and as quietly as their armoured bulks could manage.

They covered the 30 or so metres to the cabin swiftly, and as one their backs slammed into the wall eitherside of the door, their heads turned towards the opening, weapons held ready.

Both paused, half expecting the other to act next. Taking the lead, and doing exactly what Khalin would *not* have done, Tradden reached out with one, sword laden hand, and knocked politely on what was left of the door.

"*Anyone home?*" he asked, peering around the corner. Khalin's shield rose as his hand within reached up to slap his forehead...

 **Me:** *The worn door creaked open invitingly.* Feb 19 ▼

 **Me:** **The Abandoned Shack** Feb 19 ▼



 **Matt:** Khalin signalled silently that he would go first - shield and Warhammer at the ready. Feb 20 ▼
Tradden waved for the others to join them at the door, and as they scurried over, the young fighter took the opportunity to ease along the wall to the nearest window to the west, and peered in whilst there was still some of Kireth's magical light to shine through the gap.

 **The.brainbuster@googlewave.com:** Zero poked his head in through the door and scanned about cautiously. Feb 20 ▼

 **Me and Random:** **Zero** couldn't see much inside the door, the wizard light illuminating the exterior of the shack, but not within. Still, it was a good sign that there weren't huge holes in the roof, and the inside might be warm and dry. Feb 21 ▼

[Zero Nature Check: **1d20+2: 3**]

The shacky smelt a little musty, but nothing that might indicate feral beasts making their home inside.

Khalin pushed softly past the rogue, keeping his shield before him, his eyes a little more suited to the dark. He still couldn't see much, just dim shapes of a corridor in front of him, but nothing had jumped out at him yet.

As he brushed past, **Zero** bumped against the door, which creaked once, snapped, and fell off the hinges, crashing against the floor. **Khalin** could feel the furrowed brows of **Kireth** burning into him, but continued down the corridor nonetheless.

Further along the shack, **Tradden** peered in through the open window, being careful to avoid the broken shutters hanging limply down. A little of the wizard light penetrated through the open window and inside he could see a tumbledown room, perhaps once cosy and warm, and now in tatters and wreck, old pieces of broken furniture spilled across the floor, and leaves and windswept debris piled in corners.

[Tradden Perception Check: **1d20+3: 11**]

The shack appeared to be empty, but whole and sound. A perfect respite from the storm for the night.

 **Me:** Calling the others, **Tradden** cautiously climbed in through the window and held a defensive position just inside. **Khalin** followed the corridor and came into the main room, with **Zero** just behind him. Feb 21 ▼

The shack was quiet inside compared to the wind and rain in the woods. The silence was broken only by the incessant patter of the rain against the roof above, and the gentle knocking of another door to the rear of the shack, also hanging limply off the hinges.

Kireth strode towards the now empty frame of the door and with a flourish from his hand the small ball of light shot with angular momentum through the window that **Tradden** had entered and filled the shack with bright light.

*The trio inside squinted at the light, covering their eyes and hissing at **Kireth** to reduce its glare. After a moment of contemplation the wizard lowered the intensity of the light until it was just a soft glow across the inside of the shack.*

 **Me:** With the light more amenable the heroes looked around. The shack indeed seemed to be vacant, and had been for some time. Bare comforts of furniture lay broken and strewn around the floor, with leaves and debris from the wood outside adorning them, blown through the unshuttered windows and swirled into the corners of the room. Feb 21 ▼

The shack was a simple affair - a single room, with a flimsy partition of crossed wooden poles creating a smaller chamber within, perhaps once a bedroom. On the eastern wall, nearest the northern door was a large stone fireplace, the only non-wooden structure within the shack. The roof appeared to be in good repair, with no moisture on the floor, and no sound of drips. In all, barring the broken doors and shutters, the shack was in a good state.

Zero began to strip off his outer clothing, his cloak and boots sodden, and **Tradden** began fishing in his pack for a torch and his flint and steel.

"Where's Rindall?" flashed a question from **Khalin**. "He was with you, Kireth, yes?"

*The wizard looked over at the dwarf. "I was concentrating on providing you with vision, not playing nursemaid. I assumed the dwarf," **Kireth** spouted, emphasis on the paladin's race, "was with Zero cowering in the trees."*

"Hey, I wasn't cowering," shouted back **Zero**. "Someone has to provide ranged cover for when Tradden goes blustering about without any sort of finesse!"

"Blustering!?" *retorted Tradden.* "I think you'll find I do no such thing!"

"Quiet!" *snapped Khalin.* "All of you. We're cold, wet, and tired - stop arguing. We need to work out where Rindall is, not fight amongst ourselves!"



Matt: "That's right", said Tradden, solemnly, lighting up a torch, blowing on it to get it really going and then laying it carefully on the mantelpiece where it's light would give some benefit to the room.

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"He can't be far - probably just poking around outside." He re-drew one sword, and his head jerked up at the same time as a more positive thought struck him. "Hey, he probably saw a rabbit, or somesuch, to catch and eat for dinner!"

He started for the door. "Come on Kireth, provide us with some more vision outside whilst these two get a fire going!"

With that the two strode over to the door again, Tradden taking the lead and peering back out into the darkness.



Me: **Tradden** almost bumped into Rindall as he left the shelter of the shack. The dwarf came to the shack entrance with a bundle of sticks and smaller logs.

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"Firewood," the paladin said. "I guess we'll need it, yes?"

He brushed past **Tradden** into the room, looked around briefly, and laid the sticks within the fireplace.

"They're the driest I could find, although that's not saying much," he said. "Let's just hope we can get a fire going with them, I'm frozen."

Kireth looked at the pile of sticks almost disdainfully. "Runya!" he uttered, and turned his back as the makeshift fire sprang into life, casting a warming glow across the room. The wizard continued checking all of his gear with precision.

Zero grabbed one of the pieces of broken furniture, turned it round and over a couple of times, found a balance, and placed it in front of the fire. He sat down on it and thrust his palms towards the fire, rubbing them every so often. His usual jovial grin began to form on his face.

"Right, I guess we're here for the night, then," said **Khalin**, watching **Zero's** antics. "How do we want to do this?"



Me: With torches lit and the fire going strong **Kireth** dropped his concentration on the magical light and the room changed to the soft glow of the fires.

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"Let's see if we can find anything to block the doors," suggested **Tradden**. "No sense in having the wind blow through all night."

The group set to looking for anything salvagable to block the entrances, but none of the pieces of furniture looked big or sturdy enough to do the job much justice.

"How long do you reckon this place has been abandoned?" asked Tradden.

[Khalin Nature Check: **1d20+1: 15**]

[Kireth Nature Check: **1d20+1: 16**]

[Tradden Nature Check: **1d20+3: 18**]

[Zero Nature Check: **1d20+2: 6**]

[Rindall Nature Check: **1d20+4: 11**]

"I bet it's at least a couple of years, no more," continued the fighter to mumbled agreement from **Khalin**.

"It depends on any protections against the inexorable onslaught of nature," stated **Kireth** with a snort. "Could be hundreds of years, but the protection has waned over time, or has been broken recently as you suggest in the past couple of years."

The group continued to look through the remains of the broken furniture to find anything that would be suitable to place on the fire to keep it burning through the night, or indeed to find anything else unusual within the shack.

[Khalin Perception Check: **1d20+1: 14**]

[Kireth Perception Check: **1d20+1: 11**]

[Tradden Perception Check: **1d20+3: 12**]

[Zero Perception Check: **1d20+7: 15**]

[Rindall Perception Check: **1d20+4: 17**]

Zero had entered the bedroom area, and was picking through the moss-covered remains of what he believed to be a bed when he spied something a little more unusual than the rest.

Reaching down through the wooden slats, moss covered and broken, he retrieved a short length of wood, beautifully carved. Black feathers were entwined around the short shaft, about a foot in length, highlighting carvings of exceptional quality. Most of the carvings were of birds of one form or another, their eyes wide and staring out, as though watchful for all actions.

The rogue brought the wooden shaft back into the central chamber, closer to the light to get a better look. It made him shiver somewhat as the birds stared into or through him, but not so much in fear. What the shaft was though, or what it was used for escaped him.



Matt: Removing his armour and placing it over the frost sword Narcissus that was now stuck upright between two floorboards, Tradden voiced his thoughts on the order of taking watch. After some

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discussion a consensus was reached. Zero had the honour of first watch - the contents of the small hip flask secreted on his person may well not live to see the second.

That done, the young fighter rolled out the materials he had brought with him that passed for a bed, and tried to get comfy on the floor next to Zero in his chair. Looking up to the rogue, who was sat looking at the wierd stick thing, Tradden gave it no further thought, assuming it to be a child's toy.

"Yaawwwwwn", he yawned. "Maybe there were kids here at one point?" He rolled over, the last bit being half obscured and muffled by blankets. "Wake me in a couple of hours Z."



The.brainbuster@googlewave.com: "Hmm?" Zero murmured, shaken from his musings. "Oh, yes. Sweet dreams, my friend," he chuckled.

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What was this odd curio?

He had to remind himself to pay at least a little attention to his surroundings. He stood up, brushed himself into a semi-respectable state and paced about the shack as softly as he could. Before long, the snoring started; not surprising given the activity of the day.

What did tomorrow have in store? Was a hot bath, a roast beef dinner and a soft, ohhhhhhhhhh so soft bed, too much to ask?

He wandered to the door and peered outside vigilantly, then he walked the perimeter of the shack and once again checked the interior. All the while he toyed with the creepy-looking stick. It didn't even cross his mind that his watch might be interrupted by intruders.



Me: **Zero** spent a lot of his watch undecided on whether it was more comfortable sat in the makeshift chair near the fire or walking about. Certain areas of the shack's floorboards creaked more than others and towards the end of the watch he'd worked out a route to walk around the inside of the shack quietly and keep his spirits up. All the while he kept the curious stick close by, feeling the carvings with his fingers, trying to gauge their meaning.

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Not long before the end of his shift the rain outside ceased and thin shafts of moonlight started to play out in the clearing around the shack. As clouds parted a chill grew in the air, and **Zero** found himself getting closer to the fire. He'd almost dozed off when a far off howl reminded him it was time to get the next lucky victim up, and that he could get his head down for a while.

It took a few moments to wake **Tradden**, who bleary-eyed rose and started stretching. **Zero** retired into the bedroom area near **Kireth**, and clambered into his bedroll and pulled his blanket tight, complaining about the quality of the room and the distinct lack of service.



Me: After only a few minutes at his watch **Tradden** decided discretion was the better part of valour and ducked back to his bedroll to grab his blanket. Wrapping the thick material around his shoulders he got a little warmer and began the long process of keeping himself awake.

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Staring through the remains of the northern door **Tradden** could see the treeline quite clearly in the moonlight, the clouds now almost disappeared and a huge bulbous moon hanging in the sky. Every

once in a while the trees rustled and **Tradden** twitched, but soon relaxed when nothing burst through but a rabbit or badger, who soon returned within the trees.

The young fighter found many of the noises of the night quite soothing - the warm crackle of the fire, the rustle of the leaves in the now gentle wind, the occasional hoot of an owl, and even the howling of wolves in the distance all culminated to make **Tradden** feel at peace. He was almost reluctant to go wake up **Kireth**, whose usual scowl told **Tradden** the mage was already awake at the appointed time, and then get back to his own bedroll.

  Me and Random: **Kireth** gathered his robes around himself tightly and sat staring into the fire, concentrating on the peaks and troughs of the flame. He knew that within the Wizard's School of Deepingwald there were books and treatises with rituals of warding and alerting but he had spent his time researching 'other' areas. The tome he had found on the elf within the mausoleum had one such ward, but frustratingly the power to use it was still beyond him. Feb 22 ▼

The noises of the night, so soothing to **Tradden**, were an annoyance to **Kireth**, breaking his concentration at every hoot or howl. Both were becoming more frequent to the point that the wizard rose from the makeshift chair and padded softly across to the doorway to look out.

Most of the background animal noises - the rustling of leaves, faint droning of insects, and scratching and burrowing had stopped. Even the hoots from the owl had seemed to have died down. **Kireth** squinted out into the blackness, straining his half-elven eyes to see into the dark.

Amongst the trees the mage managed to spy two or three pairs of yellow eyes, staring back at him, a shadowy figure of a body behind them.

[Kireth Nature Check: 1d20+1: 6]

A low growling began out in the treeline, and then from the south, behind him was a long howl. **Kireth's** heart began to race as wolves burst through the treeline.

[Zero succeeds at Passive Perception check and wakes]

 Me: [...continued in [Chapter #05, Scene #03...](#)] Feb 22 ▼

Tags:   