



Blackengorge - The Doors Beyond - Choices - Chapter #03, Scene #01

Dec 9, 2010

...continues from [Chapter #02, Scene #04](#)

Synopsis

The 13th Day of Ches in the Year of the Sudden Journey

The group have reconvened in *The Bronze Lion*, and Tradden and Khalin share their tale of their journey to the Gloom Marshes.

- [Celestia Gaja](#) - 2nd Level Female Elven Cleric of Melora
- [Khalin Grundokri](#) - 2nd Level Male Dwarfen 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 Thursday 9 December 2010 and is expected to be completed by the end of Wednesday 15 December 2010. Players are expected to be able to post at least once a day.

Me: After taking their time to get some rest in a comfortable bed and to clean their gear **Khalin** and **Tradden** made their way downstairs to the bar in The Bronze Lion. The rest of the group were already there, talking amongst themselves conspiratorially, each with a drink and a small plate of food. Dec 9, 2010

The pair joined the group and began to tell their tale - **Tradden** taking great delight in recounting **Khalin** falling asleep on guard duty a number of times.

Tradden and **Khalin** hadn't been the only ones busy, however. **Celestia** had spent some time talking to the Initiates of Pelor, and with their scribe, Beltak. Although she hadn't been granted an audience with their leader, who always seemed to be referred to as His Radiant Servant, which quite amused the elf, she had managed to learn about a couple of books that had been found by the townsfolk - one at a stone circle about a league to the northeast, and another in a ruined tower on an island on the lake to the southwest.

When **Celestia** had told the other two, **Kireth** was very interested, **Zero** less so. However, **Kireth** managed to convince **Zero** to use his charms on the female initiates to get **Kireth** access to the books, even if for only a few minutes.

In the late hours of the previous day, **Kireth** had managed to examine the books in private for fifteen minutes whilst **Zero** kept Dania, one of the younger initiates, 'busy'.

Unfortunately, **Kireth** had reported back to the group that the writing therein was of a foreign tongue that he couldn't decipher, and seemed to have spent the rest of the evening in his room, sulking.

The group pondered what their next move could be.

Matt and me: Once his part in telling the tale of his and Khalin's earlier exploits had finished, Tradden sat mostly in silence, his brow furrowed and his gaze often fixed on the light from the torches shimmering on the top of his frothy ale. An earlier attempt to go and check up on Caldring had been foiled by the initiates at the Temple, who refused all access on the basis that she was resting there until the morrow. That did nothing to improve the young fighter's mood. Dec 10, 2010

As the conversation about what to do next bandied back and forth the others started to notice that the young man clearly had something to say, but every time he seemed about to out with it, a member of the bar staff or a local was within earshot of the table, and so he was clearly biting his tongue. However, at one point the group seemed alone, and the teen leant forward, unable to hold back no longer.

"It's all wrong!" he hissed.

Not for the first time, Kireth's eyes raised to the heavens.

"What is?" hissed back Zero in friendly mockery, the accompanying giggle betraying the strength of the wine in his cup.

"Well, look - these people have been here what, nine months or so? In that time they have built this place, started a farming operation and a mine, scouted a lot of the local area and generally had a big "Hello Mainland from the Free People" flag flying from the top of the temple."

He took a swig from his ale and carried on. "And in all that time, they say all they have had is a few measly little goblins throwing themselves against the city walls, all of which were easily dispatched by that arrogant bastard Valino and the guards. However, we have been here a few days, and when we so much as take one step outside the walls we are attacked by large numbers of Goblins, Kobolds, Skeletons, Elven Mages, the Undead and weird, weird green slime!"

He took another swig, in full swing now. "Doesn't that seem strange to you? I am not enlightened in the ways of magic or the gods", he waived towards Kireth and Celestia with his free hand, "and neither am I trained in the ways of battle or the ways of ... whatever ...", Zero seemed content to let that one go, but at the same time Tradden wasn't going to get back those 2 gold pieces he wasn't even aware he had been separated from.

"But, I tell you this - it doesn't feel right! The townsfolk seem to buy into this story of there being just a few wild creatures kicking about the woods, but I for one don't!"

The group, as one, sat back in their places. If any of them had harboured any such thoughts, the young fighter had brought them to the forefront of their thinking. If they hadn't been thinking that way at all, well, they had something to mull over now.

Suddenly the inn seemed slightly darker and drawn in.

Khalin was the first to speak, although whilst his next words were clearly delivered to the table, his focus seemed to be elsewhere. "Careful, Master Tradden. If you are right, and I say 'if', we should be careful - you never know who is listening. In fact...." Quick as a flash the Dwarf's hand went from his tankard and snaked down under the table.

There was a moment of grabbing around, and then just as quickly up his hand came again, this time grasping a Halfling by the scruff of its neck, instantly recognisable as Skillet. The Warlord plonked him down between himself and Zero, who lazily, but deliberately, reached out an arm to rest on the back of the dwarf's chair, his cloak thereby screening the presence within the group of the now nervously grinning Halfling from the rest of the tavern.

"Erm - drink anyone?" he managed feebly.

Matt: "Care to explain yourself?" growled Khalin, releasing his grip, but very deliberately keeping his hands on the table, showing that they were ready to move if needed. Dec 14, 2010

Skillet hastily composed himself, brushing down one shoulder and pulling forward his lapels. "Very difficult running an establishment like this," he said confidently, "lots to do - can't stop from sweeping the floor on account of guests."

"Oh?" interjected Kireth, leaning forward and resting his chin on steepled fingers. "I commend you Halfling, for undertaking such a job without an actual broom."

"Ah, yes, well", said Skillet, pulling at his collar, "As I say, lots to do - my mind goes a mile a minute I can tell you - easy to forget a little detail like that. Drink anyone?"

"You were listening into us!" said Tradden, aghast. "Why?"

The Halfling took a deep breath, ready to speak, but Kireth again spoke up before he could.

"Oh, I think that is fairly obvious - clearly he is a trusted agent of the Council here. They must hold him in very high esteem to trust him to come and risk his life in spying on a new group of dangerous warriors."

Skillet looked speechless, his jaw firstly dropping and then wobbling ever so slightly.

Matt: "What!?" the halfling nearly shrieked, then remembered where he was. "Those jumped up fools? They don't know true talent when they see it! Washing tables and fetching wine indeed!" Dec 15, 2010

"Surely we are not talking about the same people here?" queried Celestia carefully. "We have spoken to the Council and they appear to be men of great integrity, with only the best interests of the town at heart."

Oh, they have, no doubts about that," the halfling taunted haughtily. "But politics takes it place. Luck also – they certainly got lucky with those magic stones."

"Magic?" whispered Kireth, now fully engaged.

"There have been plenty of attacks, but whatever is in those stones acts as a defensive barrier. I have seen with me own eyes large scale attacks in the middle of the night ... erm, I am a light sleeper, ... all of which have been repulsed by Valino and his cronies with reasonable ease. The dwarf Fafnir knows more than he lets on, as do the Council, 'course. However, they don't tell the townfolk, oh, no. Only way Skillet 'ere knows is because I know how to keep my ears to the ground and can slip in and out of the shadows like a good 'un."

Zero laughed, choking on his wine a little. "You? My little fellow, are you telling us that you, YOU are a master of the shadow arts?" He chortled into his wine. "I think not!"

The halfling narrowed his eyes at the rogue, who sipped his wine with a big grin on his face.

"Well, clearly we have detained the bark here long enough", interjected Kireth, coolly. "He is only sweeping the floor, after all."


Khalin notably relaxed at this, and took a much anticipated quaff of his ale.

"Not a problem gents, lady," said the halfling, hopping down. "Misunderstandings are frequent around here. Think nothing of it."

"Oh, and you," he continued, dusting himself off and raising an eyebrow to Zero. "You are not as good as you think you are."

As he turned to walk back to the bar he tossed a coinurse towards Zero, who caught it with surprise – it was his, and worse, it was the one he kept in his inner robes that no one knew about.

The bar, previously quiet, was suddenly filled by the raucous laughter of both Tradden and Khalin.

 Me and Matt: *Kireth watched the halfling with intent until he was satisfied that eyes and ears were no longer on the table. Muttering a few arcane words he leaned forward into the group and waited. Gradually the group stopped talking amongst themselves as they acknowledged Kireth's sign and leaned forward themselves to hear what he had to say.* Dec 21, 2010 ▼

"It seems that there is valuable knowledge to be had here," *the wizard whispered, barely audibly.* "I'm not sure these people understand what they may have found."

Kireth took a good look around before he continued.

"Although I have not been fully successful in deciphering some of the texts we have acquired, I do believe that they can be understood. However, I would need more writings to further any investigation. The only writings I believe exist are the ones that the clergy now hold, which we have seen, or any that remain in the tower where they were found."

Fearful of intrusion, he took another look around before continuing. "I suggest that some of us go there and take a look, to see if we can find anything of use."

"You mean to that island in the lake they talk about?" *queried Zero, a furrowed look on his brow.* "Well, I'm not going on any water again, not after last time!"

The rogue sat back in his chair with a huff and crossed his arms.

Kireth turned and looked at Celestia, who shook her head, counting herself out.

"Well, maybe it was just a bad idea," *Kireth began, pointedly ignoring Tradden and Khalin.*

Tradden just couldn't help himself. "I'll go!" *he exclaimed boldly, standing up suddenly, hand on the hilt of one sword, his tied back hair flicking over his shoulder in what he hoped was an impressive fashion (it wasn't). This somewhat predictable turn of events drew scowls from all around the table.* "I fear not water, nor mists. In any event, there's nothing on that island anyway, apart from a bit of a ruin - the guard have been there and found nothing."

"Aye," *sighed Khalin, not sure if this was a good move or not.* "I'll accompany the boy. Someone's got to try to keep him out of trouble."

"Are you sure?" *asked Kireth, his sudden caring demeanour somewhat out of character.* "I myself will unfortunately have to remain here to study the current manuscripts. I'm afraid this time I will not be able to join you."

There was a barely imperceptible wink from Kireth aimed at Zero.

"Yeah, yeah," *said Tradden, already impatient to leave.* "Not a problem. Consider it done already! Khalin and I will be back before dark, eh?"


"Indeed," *replied the dwarf, somewhat warily, realising that he was in for a day of Tradden looking to rack up any kind of action that might he would be able to try and impress a certain elven blacksmith with on his return.* "We'll see what we can find, Kireth. You just work on the translations."

"It will be dark soon," *interrupted Zero.* "No sense in going now. Have another round and join me in a game of Three-Dragon Ante. See if you can win back your silver."

The rogue produced a deck of cards seemingly from nowhere, and Tradden faltered.

"Alright, we'll wait until the morrow," *the young fighter decided.* "We'll head off at first light."

With that, the group settled back down for the evening, with plans for the next day being drawn.

 Me and Matt: *The sky was overcast with ominous clouds gathering as Khalin and Tradden headed toward the east gate. Checking their gear a last time, they nodded to the guards as they passed out and across the moat. Following the rough trail they wound their way once more to the southeast towards the boathouse.* Dec 21, 2010 ▼

They proceeded cautiously - wary of any goblin attack - but arrived at the boathouse within the half-hour without incident.


The boathouse was barred and shuttered as before, neither Aaron nor Fortune there at the present time.

In the early morning light the lake seemed dark and foreboding, small black waves cresting and crashing onto the rocky shoreline. A dull mist curling and roiling toward the shore from the centre drew shivers down Khalin's neck.

Tied up next to a small wooden jetty was a large rowboat with two carefully stowed oars, a large fishing net carefully folded in the bottom.


Tradden, hands on hips, and sticking his jaw out in an attempt to look heroic, peered out across the lake, trying to squint through the mist.

"Well, the island is out there somewhere, Khalin," *he said.* "Erm, you any good at rowing?" *The young fighter prodded the side of the boat with one boot – it seemed sturdy enough, with no obvious holes or cracks.*

 Matt: *"Right, let's not mess about!" he said, gingerly leaping in and assuming a position in the main rowing seat and jostling them into position.* Dec 21, 2010 ▼

He took a few practice swings in the air. "How hard can it be?" he asked of no one in particular.


"You coming?" he queried of the Warlord, gesturing to the bow of the boat. "We can take it in turns if you like?"


 Mark and me: *"Aye," grumbled Khalin wearily. Dwarves and water didn't tend to mix, but having survived the epic journey from The Islands, this looked like a mere exercise. The warlord sized up the small craft with an artisan's eye, and having seen the fishermen in Deepingwald harbour piloting such-like, figured this rowing lark must be fairly straightforward. He quickly took a confident stride into the boat before wobbling and falling flat on his front with a yelp. The small launch rocked but fortunately the dwarf stayed dry.* Dec 21, 2010 ▼

 Matt and me: *Tradden could not completely suppress his chuckle.* Dec 21, 2010 ▼

"Standfast ye landlubber!" he cried, reminding the banner aboard *The Guiding Fire*, before throwing the mooring rope back onto the shore, and took a large pull on the oars to get them going.

Tradden's rangey arms and well hidden strength soon had them gliding away from the boathouse and into the mists...

 Mark: Khalin gazed out into the gloom before breaking the eerie silence. "Strange that our companions didn't want to join us." The mists seemed to draw in closer. "Or maybe not so strange," Dec 21, 2010 ▼
he added with a shiver. "What do you think Kireth expects us to find? I'm afraid I don't fully trust that one. Seems a bit too quick to let others do the donkey work. But then he is an elf I suppose!" he added with a chuckle, trying to keep the mood light.

 Matt and me: "Yes," replied Tradden - if the effort of rowing in the slightly choppy mid-lake was affecting him, it didn't show. Dec 22, 2010 ▼
"He is learned but ... I don't know. I know what you mean. I don't think he thinks much of me. I know we volunteered for this, but the more I think about it, well, did you ever feel like you were running errands for someone?"


Taking a look around as he rowed, Tradden suddenly realised that they were in the middle of a vast expanse of water. Suddenly he started to see large, slimy purple tentacles sliding over the side of the boat, ready to grab them and pull them to their watery doom.
Gritting his teeth, he suppressed his fears and carried on. The tentacles disappeared.

"Can you see anything yet?" he asked of the Dwarf.

 Mark, me and Random: Khalin strained his eyesight into the gloom... Dec 21, 2010 ▼
[Perception check: **1d20+1: 10**] - failure!

...before taking his bearings relative to where they'd set off - it felt like they'd not deviated from a straight line.

[Nature check: **1d20+1: 12**] - failure!

 Matt, me and Random: Hearing Khalin "hmmmm" to himself, Tradden pulled the oars in and turned around in his seat, speaking as he turned. Dec 22, 2010 ▼
"Oh, come on - its a big island, how hard can it oh."

He saw what Khalin saw - a wall of mist. The boat started to turn slowly.

"Hmmm," echoed the young fighter, "perhaps we should have ... set a course ... I think it is called? Maybe we should head back and ask someone?"

He turned back, to look behind him - the wall of mist was there as well. "Ah. Right. Hmmm."

He scratched at his chin, thinking hard. He licked one finger and held it up in the air. He had no idea what he was doing, but he had seen someone do it once.

[Perception check: **1d20+3: 14**] - failure!

Nothing.

He stood up, looking to see if there was any break in the mists that might give them a bearing, or even if there was anything to read in the way the waves flowed around the boat.

[Nature check: **1d20+3: 19**] - success!


Nothing again. Tradden was a city boy, and if the way the little waves and spray flowed and ebbed had anything to tell him, it was lost on the young fighter. Just as he had given up hope he saw a bird fly above the boat - he nearly missed it in the mists. He followed its path, and whilst it quickly disappeared he kept on staring in that direction. Just as Khalin was about to ask what on earth he was doing, staring like an idiot like that, Tradden saw, for the briefest of moments, the glimpse of some rocks in the mist.

"There!" he cried, laughing with relief. He jumped back down with a dangerous sounding 'thump', and pulled on the oars. "It's not far actually - have us there in no time Master Dwarf!" The jolt of the boat starting forward again nearly causing the Warlords helmet to spill off.

"Careful, laddie - if I am going to meet Moradin today I would like it to be in battle with some beastie, not having been drowned by an over enthusiastic amateur sailor!" he snapped.

Tradden's bearings were sound, and his now practised rowing action soon had them in sight of the island, or at least they assumed it was the island, through the mist. At first all that could be seen were jagged, wet rocks, but having skirted around the coastline for a few minutes they found a little alcove, which whilst rocky, had gentle slope fit to bring in the boat.


Before long, they felt a comforting 'crunch' as the boat touched up on the pebbled shore.

 Me and Random: The pair remained motionless in the rowboat for a few moments, listening for any noises penetrating the mist. Then, slowly enough not to rock the boat, Dec 22, 2010 ▼
they both clambered out and tried to find their bearings.

The mists were thick here, swirling to and fro, and seeing much beyond twenty feet or so was difficult.

[Khalin Perception Check: **1d20+1: 8**] - failure!

[Tradden Perception Check: **1d20+3: 13**] - failure!


 Me and Random: The ground was firm, so at least that didn't seem a problem, and rose away from the water on a shallow incline. After checking that the boat was secure Dec 22, 2010 ▼
the pair moved up the slope cautiously.

Within a few yards they came across grasses and trees growing, rather than just shale and rock. Pushing their way past the trees they came into a small opening where through the mists they could see what appeared to be the ruins of a tower.

"Well, this looks to be it, my dwarven friend," said **Tradden** in hushed tones.

[Khalin Perception Check: **1d20+1: 12**] - failure!

[Tradden Perception Check: **1d20+3: 4**] - critical failure!

 Me and Random: As **Tradden** turned to face **Khalin** to discuss how to proceed, the pair heard a low droning noise from somewhere within the mists. Before they had much Dec 22, 2010 ▼
time to prepare two creatures flew towards them rapidly!

[Khalin Nature Check: **1d20+1: 13**] - failure!

[Tradden Nature Check: **1d20+3: 6**] - failure!

 Me: [...continued in [Scene #02](#)...] Dec 22, 2010 ▼

Tags: 

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