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TIMES OF LORE™

By Chris Roberts



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A Tale of Lore



Merideth Lamby stood on her tiptoes, her hands gripping the wooden edge of the half-door as she strained to see over it. Today her grandfather was traveling from Rhyder for a visit. He always brought her, and her brother Stephan, the most wonderful wooden toys carved by his own hands. She peered down the cobbled path for any sign of his arrival. He had always seemed like a fabled giant to her; swaying side to side while his cheeks puffed in and out with the effort of his stride. She spied the large oak tree at the end of the path and thought back on the times she and Stephan had spent beneath its boughs listening to enchanting tales in their grandfather's arms. Each visit brought a new story under the tree with their grandfather's warm deep voice reciting a fantastic tale. Suddenly she heard the hollow snapping of small twigs followed by a heavy puffing and grunting which grew louder by the second.

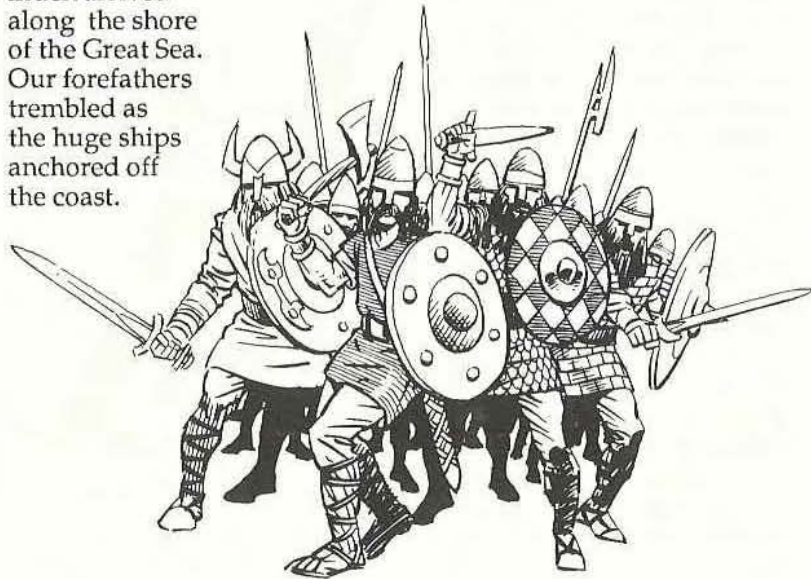
"Grandpa!" she screamed as she ran to meet him at the end of the path. "Hello Meri!" he chortled as he swept her up in his arms. "How's my little Wisp?" he asked, rocking her like a baby in his arms. With a rustling and a thump, Stephan plunged onto the old man's back from the tree overhead. "Aha, and



hello to you as well my feisty Stephan!" he said as he lovingly lifted the boy down from his shoulders.

"Please Grandpa, a story, tell us a story!", Stephan shouted, jumping with excitement. "Yes Grandpa, do!" Merideth joined in. The old man paused a moment, rubbing his bearded jaw, "Ah yes, I will tell you a tale; one of mystery, villains, and heroes! But first fetch me some of your father's tobacco for my pipe!" Merideth and Stephan leapt from his arms and ran to the house, re-appearing moments later with two fluffy pillows and Stephan bearing a leather pouch. They met the old man under the tree, climbed into his arms, and snuggled deep into their pillows. Digging a hand into the contents of the pouch, the old man drew out a loose pinch of dark fibers causing a few of the looser strands to tumble to the ground. Stuffing the strands into his pipe, he sat back and gazed up at the sky, "Let me see if I can remember...oh yes."

"There was once a time when chaos roamed the land and the common folk abandoned their hope of ever living in a peaceful kingdom again. A time when no High King sat upon the throne of Albareth!" Smiling, Grandfather lit his pipe and waited for the shocked expressions of the grandchildren to subside. "But first a little history. Almost eight hundred years ago, the first of the Elden arrived along the shore of the Great Sea. Our forefathers trembled as the huge ships anchored off the coast.



You see, back then our forefathers fought amongst themselves over little matters, such as whose land lay under the fences, or which of two farmers should draw water from the river that divided their land. There were no grand cities, no brave castles, only small groups of people living in fear of one another. It wouldn't surprise you then that our forefathers, seeing the Eldens as invaders, attacked them."

Stephan stopped playing with the old man's thumb and looked up at him, "You mean we attacked the Eldens?"

"Yes, Stephan. Those who would eventually instruct us in building cities and establishing fair leadership, were at first our foes! It took time, much time, but after a hundred years of patience and learning, the Kingdom of Albareth finally began to prosper.

"Over the years, the Elden became respected leaders and guides for Albareth. The newly unified kingdom needed a king, and about seven hundred years ago, a much revered Elden prince assumed the position of High King of Albareth with the people's hope and blessing.

"The original High King brought with him three Powers from the homelands. They were mighty artifacts of magic created by wizards to aid in the governing of the realm. These artifacts were the Tablet of Truth, the Foretelling Stones, and greatest of all - the golden Medallion of Power.

"With the Tablet of Truth, the High King had the power to answer any question of great importance to the kingdom.



Only Eldens of the purest blood could employ the powers of the Tablet. It was given to the Warden of the Southern Marches, who was such a man.

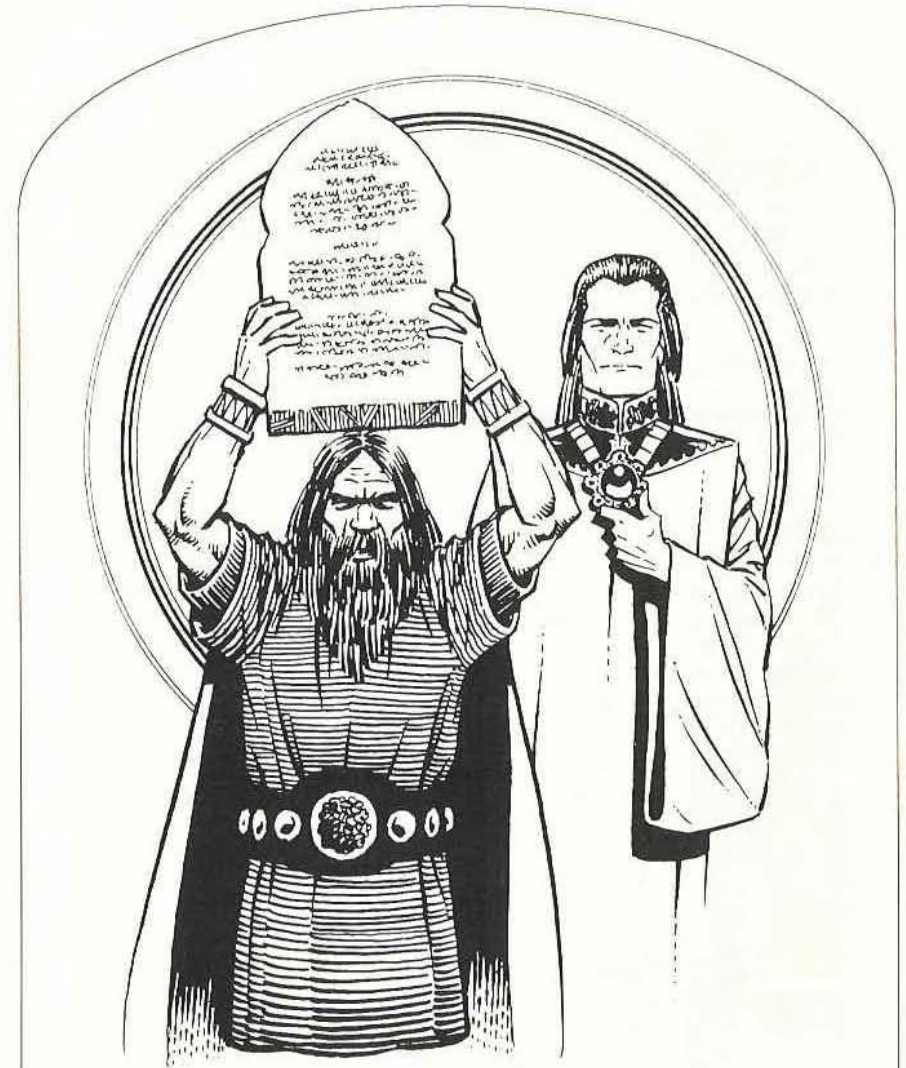
"The Foretelling Stones were imbued with the ability to show visions of places and times far away, to aid any Elden or native with worthy cause. The Stones, the High King left in the care of the Prior of Marabout, the great monastery near Rhyder in the North.

"Most sacred of the three wizardly artifacts was the King's own Medallion of Power. No High King can hold the throne of Albareth who does not wear the Medallion, and none may wear the Medallion without being recognized by its own mystic essence as a true descendant of High King Strebor. The Medallion's power gave the wearer the ability to command whole armies; to lead them as one to victory against the darkest of odds. But the Medallion's strength must come from within its wielder's heart, and therefore only an Elden with the blood of a King may use it.

"The kingdom was content for a time, but that was to end with the coming of the Barbarians. Immense warriors charged up from the South and overran the outpost of Ganestor. The armies of Albareth marched forth and met the aggressors in the rocky foothills of the Ganestor mountains. For ten years the armies fought, and each day the war raged on. The High King Valwyn's sorrow grew...

"Finally, the King himself gathered the flower of Elden knighthood and headed south to confront the Barbarian hordes in what would come to be known as the Battle of Ganestor. The Medallion sang for victory, and Valwyn's forces seemed ten times the number they actually were. They opened up gaping breaches in the Barbarians' ragged lines, but there seemed no end to their reinforcements. Never had Albareth's knights fought so mightily, but there was a limit to what even they could do. Neither side could break the stalemate.

"At last the High King used the power of the Medallion to halt the battle so he could talk with Heidric, the Barbarian leader. They talked for many days and finally the two came to an agreement. Ganestor was given to the Barbarians, but they, in return, had to swear allegiance to the throne. The two men grew to respect each other over the years that followed, and on the anniversary of



the truce, Valwyn presented Heidric with the Tablet of Truth granting him the title of Warden of Ganestor.

"Valwyn had grown old and his spirit was all but drained of life. The Ten Year war had taxed his inner strength dearly, and no longer could he use the Medallion to the zenith of its might.

"So it was that he took up his Medallion and his infant child and departed for the Elden folk's homelands, where he would rest and renew his powers of High Kingship. Valwyn, leaving his trusted steward, an Elden lord called Dariel, in charge of the king-

dom, promised to return in one score years."

"Did he come back?" questioned Merideth looking at her grandfather with big green eyes.

"I'm coming to that part, Wisp." He drew a long puff on his pipe and gazed up at the orange, evening sky.

"With Valwyn's leadership gone, Dariel was expected to deal with all of Albareth's problems by himself."

"But I thought the troubles were over when the Barbarians had signed the truce!" interrupted Stephan as he twisted to face the old man.

"Ah, but there were many Elden lords from the South who disagreed with the pact Valwyn had made with the Barbarians in giving up Ganestor. Over time this disagreement grew into hatred and the Elden lords attacked Ganestor hoping to wrest it from Prince Avar, Heidric's son and leader of the Ganestor garrison.

"The steward Dariel found himself unable to gain acceptance among the other high lords of Albareth, and his rule was an ineffectual one. He became a prisoner in his own castle. Rarely would Dariel set foot outside Eralan's protection, and it was often rumored that the man was ill with fear of his enemies in the outside world. Without strong leadership, the kingdom once again fell into chaos. Few traders dared to travel the old roads for fear of being ambushed by bandits or ruffians. To make matters worse, orcs began to cross over the mountains to the north of Albareth. The Kingdom was desperately in need of a saviour..."

A call came from a woman who stood in the door of the cottage. "Father! You're here at last. Come and tell me of your journey, over dinner. Stephan, Merideth! Inside!"

"But Mother, Grandpa hasn't finished his story!" cried the children as they clung to his arms.

"Hurry and wash up. Now!" came their answer.

"Come along little ones, let us go and I will finish the tale later." With that they made their way into the cottage, Grandfather following behind.

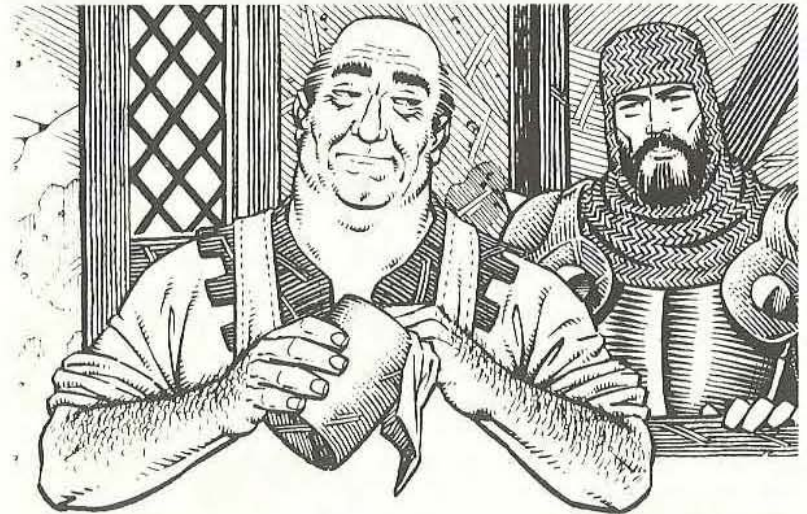
The Beginning...

Getting Started



In your first glimpse of the rich and vast kingdom of Albareth, your character is standing in an upper-story guest chamber of Eralan's renowned Frothing Slosh Tavern. Eralan is Albareth's capital city; on the map in your game package, it is centrally situated in the westernmost part of the continent, just south of the Dark Forest and some leagues inland from the shore of the Great Sea. Albareth is a vast land of high mountains, great forests, sprawling plains and deserts, so your first few ventures out of the tavern should be devoted to wandering around in Eralan and making yourself comfortable with the game's commands and features.

Before proceeding, read the REFERENCE CARD for instructions on starting Times of Lore and how to select commands.



Conversation



Many of the inhabitants of Albareth's towns and cities can offer you advice or assistance in your travels, and some may even send you on great quests of valor and fortune. To speak with a villager, select the TALK symbol and a menu of conversation options will

appear (see the REFERENCE CARD for selecting command options). Characters may initiate conversation with you as well. When someone asks you a question, the TALK command will be activated in anticipation of your reply.

It is the established custom in the Kingdom of Albareth to greet one's acquaintances with a cheery "Nice weather we're having!" or perhaps "I hope all is well with you." To hail a wayfarer in such a manner, choose the **Start chitchat** option. Before long you will notice that such a casual greeting is likely to set the mood for the exchange of a word or two of friendly gossip, or even the imparting of vital knowledge.

Ask question, the second choice on the menu, allows you to pose a specific question to your acquaintance. After selecting this option, the desired question must be chosen from a list of subjects that you currently "know about" in the game. You can always ask about **Rumors**, but the person you are talking to may or may not be able to answer your query meaningfully. The list of other subjects you may ask about is made up of important "key words" from prior conversations. Whenever a person mentions a matter of obvious weight, a soft bell will sound and that subject will be added to your character's list of "known" question topics.

Some people, depending on the situation, may have additional options in their conversation menus. Innkeepers, for example, have much more to offer than the standard fare of pleasantries. If you have the money to spend, they will give you a chance to replenish your provisions or check into their hostel for a good night's rest. When you **Ask for lodging** at an inn, your character's current position and status in the game are saved to disk. The next time you boot up the game, you will begin play in that same inn with all your possessions and "key words" intact. It is usually a good idea to check into an inn at the end of a long journey, or after you've accomplished a difficult or dangerous task. During game play, you may revert to your last saved position by selecting the **Load game option**.

You should make a habit of chatting with everyone you meet in the cities and outposts of Albareth, king and knave alike. Subtle, but important, events in the game can be triggered by talking with some major figures, and vital key words may be lost by neglecting to save the game before ending a session of play.

All conversation and other game messages will appear in the message window near the bottom of the screen.

In a fictitious example of **Times of Lore** interaction, you might approach a serf's wife as she busily plows her field.

*Activating the TALK option, you select **Start chitchat** from the menu.*

Gesturing at the serf's wife, you say, "You're looking rather well today!"

Looking you in the eyes, the serf's wife says, "Why thank you. Oh, and by the way, my husband's off fighting trolls somewhere."

*At this point a bell sounds, indicating that you now have a new "key word" to ask about. You select the **Ask question** option from the menu and you see that your question topics now include **Rumors** and **Trolls**. You pick **Trolls**.*

Looking at the serf's wife you say, "What do you know about trolls?"

The serf's wife faces you and says, "My husband's spent a lot of time away from home of late. He claims the trolls have stolen a treasure beyond price, and he means to reclaim it!"

*The bell gongs again. Your **Ask question** menu now includes **Rumors** and the new word **Treasure**, which you select. The word **Trolls** has been removed, since you now have all the information you need about the trolls.*

Looking at the serf's wife you say, "What do you know about treasure?"

The serf's wife says, "Sorry, but I can't help you there. Would you like to come in for some nice warm turnip soup?"

*On the menu now are two more options, **Reply yes** and **Reply no**. Eager to get on with the treasure-hunting, you select the latter choice.*

Peering into the eyes of the serf's wife you reply, "No thanks."

The serf's wife says, "Oh, well."

You exit TALK mode and walk away.

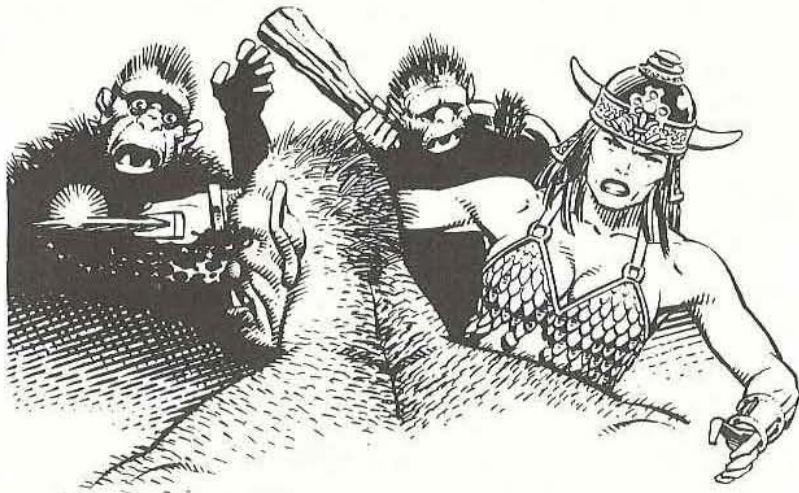
Since the serf's wife was unable to elaborate on the subject of **treasure**, you must now seek out other likely sources of information. A visit to the tavern may be in order, or you might want to look around for villagers who can tell you more.

Combat



Depending on which character class you've chosen and how tough your opponent is, two or three solid hits will often be enough to dispatch your foe. In the beginning you'll do your fighting with a common hand weapon, but who's to say what a hardy adventurer might stumble across in these treacherous times?

During the daylight hours in fortified towns and most of the more civilized villages, you will rarely encounter any of the wandering monsters that plague the countryside. Until you are



certain of an approaching person's intent, stay your arms. Besides, attempting to take over cities by slaughtering the peasants is one sure way to be ostracized from society. When you venture out into the world, though, it's a different story. Creatures ranging from ordinary brigands to supernatural spec- ters will confront you, turning a simple journey from one town to the next into a deadly challenge. Don't hesitate to attack

— the monsters won't wait!

The following is a list of the characters you are likely to encounter in Albareth:



Guard — The Guards in castles and larger cities are brawny sorts, armed to the teeth. You'll have no trouble with these mercenaries, as long as you stay on their good side.

Peasant — Albareth's humble, cheerful Peasants are the lifeblood of the kingdom's towns and cities. Talk to everyone you meet — the common folk usually welcome the chance to share their folklore and companionship.



Innkeeper — The Innkeepers of Albareth can be very accommo- dating, especially when you're in need of a stiff drink or a quick game-save.



Rogue — Archers of lethal skill, these cloaked highwaymen are the nightmare of every tradesman and caravan leader. Beware, for in these troubled times many strong men have joined their ranks.

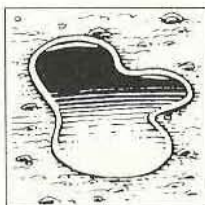


Orc — In the not-too-distant past, these un- washed, pig-visaged barbarians were seldom encountered outside their territories in the northern mountains, but in recent times, the hated Orcs have begun to invade Albareth's forests. They have since become the nightmare of every traveller and caravan scout.

Skeleton — The living Skeletons that haunt the land, viciously hurling their daggers at wayfarers, are said to be magically animated by malevolent wizards who seek to spread disorder and evil throughout the kingdom. Skeletons are formidable opponents in battle, for they feel neither pain nor mercy.



Ghost — Shades of evil men and monsters once slain in battle, Ghosts can be the most difficult to overcome of all dark creatures... they have more to prove!



Slime — No one knows the origin of this hideous creature. Though unarmed, this creeping fungus can still pose a deadly threat to careless adventurers. A Slime creeps along dungeon walls toward its enemies, secreting a corrosive fluid that turns swords and daggers into tasty hors d'oeuvres. Then it goes after its main course.

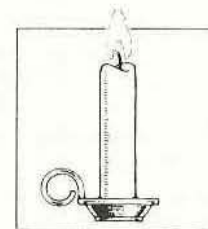


Cleric — The good Clerics of Albareth are renowned for their devotion to the preservation and sanctity of life, while the evil ones tend to attack first and ask for donations later.

Survival

Be sure to keep an eye on the candle in the lower right part of your screen. The candle will burn down as you grow weak from battle wounds or lack of food. If the flame ever goes out, your character will die, and you will have to start over from your last saved position. Sleeping at an inn will restore your health. Standing still to rest in a safe place will also restore your strength, although it will be long in returning. Certain magical items can help as well.

Don't be afraid to experiment with the effects of various potions.



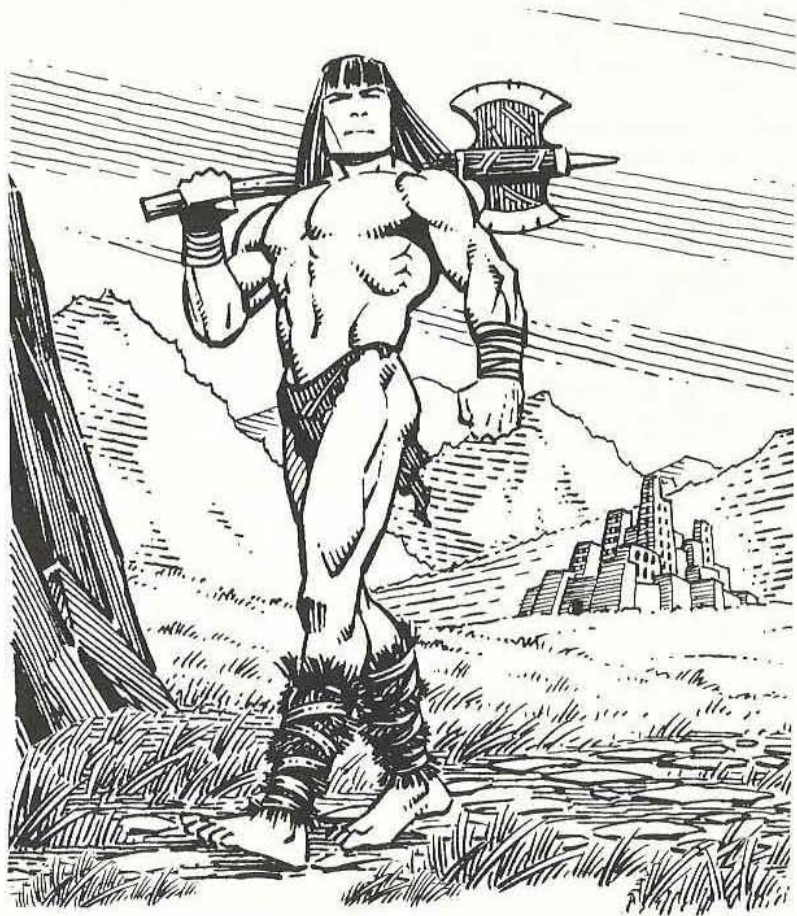
Treasure

Monsters sometimes carry assorted and sundry treasures, which they will readily give to you as long as you kill them first. Gold, food, magic potions, and scrolls may be found lying about in the bloody aftermath of a battle. A peculiar property of magical treasures is that only one scroll or potion of each kind can be carried at a time. This means that if you're carrying a blue potion, you won't run across any more blue potions until after you drink the one you've got. Some of these arcane items are very hard to come by, so you should always use discretion when employing their effects.



Leaving Home

For now, try taking the stairs down to the tavern's common room. Walk over to the counter, between the barkeep's ale kegs and the massive stone fireplace. Is someone talking to you? Take the time to chat with everyone in sight, and be patient. Often, a person who has something interesting to say may prefer not to share it all with you at once. Even in the mornings the Frothing Slosh is a busy place, and who knows? One of the motley crowd of customers might just have some business for a young and enterprising adventurer such as yourself!



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