

Night had fallen.

It was dark on the road and darker still among the trees. Aeron trudged down the road, his pack slung across his back, his sword at his hip. He was tired and he needed a place to rest. After a few minutes of consideration, he walked over to the side of the road and placed his pack on a rock. Unbuckling his sword belt, he placed it next to the rock. Kneeling down on the grass, he drew out the map and spread it out. He pulled out his flint and a small stick. The stick flared to life as the flint caught. With the help of the glowing flame, he perused the map. There were still five miles left to the nearest rest-house.

Sighing, Aeron blew out the flame. He rolled up the map and replaced it in his pack. Sighing again, he sat down on the grass. He looked up at the sky, strewn with stars. The moon was a small sliver in the blackness of the sky. It was the night of the new moon tomorrow. The trees stood silent. There was no wind and the leaves hardly stirred in the night. It was a picture of peace.

Considering his options, Aeron finally decided to keep walking. On a busy road like this, there were chances of meeting someone else.

Aeron picked up his sword belt and strapped it around his waist again. Slinging up the pack, he started back out on the road. The silence of the night unnerved him just a little, so he started to whistle 'The Wife Who Was a Goat.'

After fifteen minutes of walking, Aeron finally spied a light further down the road. He walked closer and realized that the light was actually a campfire, glowing off the side of the road. As he closed the distance, shapes dissolved out of the blackness. He spied around five tents, two wagons, a few horses and most importantly, about ten people sitting around the campfire.

Aeron pulled out the stick and flint again. The stick flared to life. The shapes around the campfire stirred.

As he approached, one of the shapes detached itself from the gathering and came towards him, carrying a flaming stick of his own.

Aeron stopped and waited, smiling a friendly smile.

The shape dissolved into a stocky well-built man. Aeron sighed in relief when he saw that he was wearing the grey robes of the Travelling Hospitaliers. He had a long scar running from his right temple to his cheekbone.

"Greetings traveller," he called out. "*Trisfar alar et aum.*"

According to Hospitalier custom, any man seeking shelter with the Hospitaliers were always greeted such. "*Trisfar alar et aum*" translated into "May we offer you relief from the weary road."

Aeron smiled.

"*Falar serum truant,*" he replied. It was the customary reply to a Hospitalier, translating into "The relief is gladly accepted."

The man smiled back.

"We are heading towards the Yorn Mountains," he said.