



The region of Ornst was a roaring port of trade. An endless stream of huge galleons sailed in and out, piling their crates up onto the worker-crowded docks and often picking up just as many on their way out.

Strangely, Castle Ornst was nowhere near any of the frantic towns that dotted the coastline. I had to board a barge travelling inland up the narrow winding river, and found myself chatting with a company of respectably-dressed merchants.

“The castle? The ruler of Ornst does not enjoy the business of ship trade,” one of them told me. He had eerily pale white skin, covered in fine garments and jewellery, and spoke with a heavy accent. “The castle prefers to keep itself separate from our affairs.”

“That is not what I heard,” said another. “Whoever dwells in Castle Ornst has a mortal fear of water. Something related to a terrible ordeal from youth.”

“No, no, no,” one of the women interrupted. She had dyed green hair, filled with gold and silver ornaments. “It is because of Lord Rylus. He rules the heart of Yorovash, and has quite the ruthless reputation. Ornst put its castle as close to his land as possible.”

“I do not know where you hear these things, Lyciel,” said the first man with a grin.

“I take it that none of you have any idea who rules that castle,” I said.

The six of them shook their heads, laughing. The rest of our journey was filled with tales of foreign lands, and warm memories of younger times.

