



My shackles had mysteriously vanished. I stood up from the chair, grabbed my pack, sword, and knife from underneath it, and followed my captor out. As I had expected, she was nowhere in sight, leaving me standing alone in a yellow field next to the abandoned windmill that I had just emerged from.

I consulted my map for windmills, and found a stretch of them in Quellshire. She had not been lying about that, at least. I decided to find the coastline again, and follow it to Sildrim.

The border between Quellshire and Sildrim was the first I'd found that was actually marked: a stone wall, easily climbed, but symbolic of the vigilance (perhaps paranoia) that I found beyond.

Sildrim was huge, but despite its size, I encountered regular outposts of guards along the paved road. Somehow, whenever I passed one, their silent stares failed to reassure me that I was safe from rogues and predators.

I paid for a room in an inn, still fifty leagues from Castle Sildrim, but I was desperate for my first voluntary rest since leaving the needletrees behind in Lyre. The innkeeper was as reserved as the guards outside and refused to tell me anything, but a cheerful young man sitting by the fireplace across from her desk was more welcoming.

“Ah, I can tell you're not from Sildrim either, friend,” he said, looking up at me from his saggy chair. “Strong and silent would be their motto, if we had those in Yorovash.”

I took the empty seat next to him, and tried to avoid thinking about the fire I'd seen back in Durmstrog. “Where are you from?”

“Nightail. Name's Tomas. My beloved lives in Castle Sildrim. She trained the guards outside, actually.” He sighed. “One day I'll convince her to cross that wall and join me in Nightail.”

“You wouldn't know anything about who rules Sildrim or Nightail, would you?” I asked.

He shook his head, still lost to memory. “No, but I do know this. Not a single castle in Yorovash starts with the same letter as its ruler. Strange, right? Well, with all the wars going on, that'll probably change soon. Anyway, I'm off to bed. May you enjoy your travels, friend.” I said the same back to him, then he wandered off in search of his room.

Act II
Scene 4

Coordination

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