

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 101: Just not Enough (1st ride of Tarsakh 1371)

It was very unlikely that the units we were fighting now were all those assigned to attacking the rear. For one, even if they had overrun us with no losses, then three hundred was bit on the meager side to pin a force of a thousand. Nethander, in the mean time, anticipated my battle plan and struck then disengaged from the enemy. I ordered my right sergeant to assist his colleague – he got my curing wand – while the squad itself charged into the barbarian's left side. The five of the left squad held steadily, and pummeled the ranks in front. Bear attacked too, and their return attacks, lacking the speed of a charge, bounced off the shield wall. I called upon nature and a **plant growth** in a huge half circle pinned eighty or so orcs, the worgs, and the remaining goblins. Kendalan turned and his archers released a volley on the barbarians fighting the swordsmen, while he pinned an orc platoon in an **entangle**. This bought us some serious time.

My action was noticed, however. I should read it as a success that we forced the Fiend to intervene directly, but it meant that our chances of survival just dropped. Considerably. Which wasn't bad, but for the fact the life of the army depended on us. For a moment I worried. Was it real? The orcs thought so. He appeared behind the wall of fire, and his presence restored a lot of confidence – more specific: fear – in the troops. Felina's harassers released a volley that thinned our right flank's barbarians to non-existence, then fell back behind the swordsmen. Grimwald tried to get his balistas to shoot him, but they were too shaken. The barbarians on our right flank fled, less than a quarter left. Our problems were worse, for in the distance another eight platoons of orcs appeared, and I picked up the howls of multiple squads of wolves and worgs. This was a no-win situation. I destroyed the last remnants of the barbarian platoon – I could not see any other option, to my eternal shame – then ordered the pikemen to disperse and asked the sky to hit the fiend with a **lightning** strike. Nethander tried to restore order in his unit, while Kendalan hit the Fiend with a **call lightning** too, while his unit released one last volley before dispersing.

The fiend stepped forward into the wall of fire, showing his resistance, and he threw a **fireball**. All my doubts about this being an illusion were gone. He targeted the sappers, probably because the archers had spread out. Why hadn't Grimwald dispersed as we did? Kendalan and I were, of course, intimately familiar with area spells, and Grimwald, for all his knowledge, had a priest's view, not an arcane. There was no way that our soldiers could withstand these attacks. If they dispersed they would be easy pickings for the orcs, if they did not they would be obliterated. With pain in my heart I gave the order that the pikemen retreat, Kendalan followed suit. I knew the others would do too. We would need to fight him, a fight we could hardly win. Cuura appeared on our right flank with twenty odd harassers, and another unit of riders perhaps half a minute distant.

It never rains but it pours. A horned devil – the horned devil? – appeared. I should have learned and cast my **protection from teleportation** spell. This fight would likely be our doom. Yet on the positive side, if both of them were here they were incapable of attacking the vanguard, making the escape of the army much more likely. I had been too effective with my defenses, forcing them to intervene. Should I have let them attack the vanguard, let the orcs kill the men from Neverwinter? Like that was a choice. Cuura started her attack, but she kept her unit open, and I recognized the signs: they were going for ride by shooting.

The Fiend showed he understood little about druidic magic, trying to **dispel** natural growth, but it went badly after that. True, both Kendalan's and my **call lightning** did damage them, but the damage was not permanent. He regenerated almost as quickly as we damaged him. I suspect only holy weapons and spells would stop him. Nethander and Felina moved towards us as Cuura had slowed the attack on our right flank. Nethander tried to run the horned devil through, but instead he got hit by that creature's chain, and could fight no more. Luckily Rock saved him. Grimwald and Kendalan held the Fiend at bay, Bear chewed on an orc platoon, but I knew that my powers weren't strong enough to beat the horned devil.

I tried to fall back to the growth when his flail hit me.