

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 102: Time-past (Highharvestide 1222 - Year of the Horn)

Knowing or feeling? Was I dead? Dreaming? I was somewhere else, but not alone. We were traveling, but I could neither remember our destination or our starting point. Zhae walked with me, unconcerned by his lack of knowledge, Cuura, Felina... we were sure we were in some past, but from what future? A battle... Fighting Evil... but more details were like the greenness of distant fields. Kendalan walked up, his bow ever ready. Once again I felt like a pawn in a game of shah. Were was the rook that was Grimwald? Or Nethander? It wouldn't be a matter of chance, nor a matter of lore. A lesson to be learned perhaps?

In the distance we saw two men. One elder, the aura of a wanderer, the other well dressed, the aura of a leader. Like it often goes in dreams we suddenly stood between them, and they no longer were just waiting, instead preparing for combat. Magical combat. We glanced left, right, to determine their intent, and a way to get out in time. The well dressed man had an odd golden gleam in his eye, but no interest in us, while the old vagabond looked annoyed but with the least eye movement indicated where we should go. Some thing do not change even in dreams as Kendalan moved like a disturbed hare. We evaded spell, counter-spell... and suddenly the battle was over with golden captured in an ever shrinking sphere of force. Later I found this creature was named a Malaugrym, but I should not be editing my old notes.

Nothing is more standard than 'an elderly wanderer' turning into a dangerous master, but I had not expected it ever to happen to me in real life. Real? Dream? Cuura cheerfully noticed that we had met/would be meeting this man again. A statement which the old man took in a stride. He walked with us, allowing the mantle of 'harmless old coot', to settle around him. We continued towards... a castle of some sorts, but where it looked rather charming at first glance it took a rather darker aspect at second. It tasted of bones, smelled of forgotten lore... and suddenly I saw it for what it was, the lore from the Tome of Bones helping me. A lich's castle, even through it flew the device of the Harpers... but slightly changed. A crown above the harp. The Court of the Harper King. This was not good.

Going in would be a problem, I expected. Traps, finding secret tunnels, that kind of a thing. Instead we just moved for the main entrance, a group of harpers returning home. Nobody at the gate, but lot's of combat inside. The reason why nobody paid any attention to their rear became obvious: it was a three sided battle between harpers (loosing), cult of the dragon (at least that looked like the most likely culprits), and a mixture of summoned/undead/whatnot which felt as cicrle magic (latest arrival and winning for now). Circle magic meant Red Wizards, as I could not see the Witches doing anything like this. The name of the 'king' one Rundorf Moonsklan was clearly proclaimed, but I heard the old man mention that we were looking for Thavverdasz. Why did he tell us? Pawn, but on which line? What game needed to be played by She Who Listens, and not by the Emperor in Jade? We needed to be in the main hall, so formed a wedge around that 'minster fellow (Cuura named him), and went for it. Here Zhae and Cuura were in their element, so with only a few nasty scratches we reached the main hall. Another threeway combat, but the signs on the wall were that the king (an undead lich disguised as a normal human) was winning here, the amount of in place magic enough to make most attacks on him and his (undead yugh) lieutenants useless. As we entered another, red robed, lich entered, and a new three way standoff appeared even as we shielded our dodger from mundane harm. A decision was made and both newcomers attacked the 'king' returning him to life and then to dust... I still did not understand why we were here...

Human female Paragon/3, Wu-Jen/1, Naturalist/3, Ancestral Hierophant/2, Heartfanner/1