

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 128: Two Celebrations (2nd ride of Mirtul 1371)

*F*irst things first, we raised Nethander, although Grimwald had to check if this was the proper thing to do. Sometimes he aggravated me to the bone! Could he not feel that his fate was intertwined with ours? Cuura was calm and tried to keep me under control. She always did that when I went off. Hmm, perhaps we should couple her to a real crazy person; she always got wise being in those circumstances... Still I didn't quite understand why I could not have feelings. Every time I felt strongly about something, they told me to calm down, and when I was circumspect, in case of Zhae, they told me to act. Why? I tried to strive for the good of all, but if I couldn't care what would be the point? There is no error in feeling strongly, just in acting rashly.

*I*n the mean time the Waterdhavian had arranged for 'peace' with the Confederacy. Not a true peace, because only a few profited: the merchants of Waterdeep and a few courtiers. The true reason for the instability was still there, they were offering the tribes that had fought on our side to the new Lord of the Confederacy (my friend the minotaur), the Zhentarim would profit because the League of Lord showed that they were bad allies... Why the lord Piergeiron, a paladin of Tyr, would ever agree to this? Probably because he had assigned somebody to take care of this matter and he was now rule bound to his solution. Rules are often good, but this showed their danger. We, however, were not bound by this. Or even if Grimwald would insist I would have to stop this. We tried to allow Cuura to leave with the tribes to the south, but it went far from smoothly. Felina and Nethander managed to get the courtiers not to oppose to much, Cuura did not have much luck with the populace, and I sank into a quagmire of money talks. Somethings was definitely off. Very much so. They only wanted to talk about exact worth of turning in the lost tribes versus possible loss because the lady Iliana might impose road taxes. It felt like they had been primed against me. Hmmm, the hand of the fiend was long, and the Red Wizards too were masters in manipulation. Only my knowledge from the Scripture of the Sun allowed me to move them away from anger to a kind of sullen acceptance. Had I lost my way with people? Was I too convinced, too arrogant?

*N*ext item was the celebrations on Evermeet. Quite a different show, and as well run as a stage production in its second year. It was clear that we were honored guests, and our caretakers were smooth and subtly adamant about our standing. True, lots of elves were not happy to see us, but they weren't going to loose face by showing it outwardly. I think my personal acceptance score was about fifty-fifty with the moon elves, and about one in ten with the gold elves. The denizens of the forest were more open. Even if I was from the far east, they welcomed me as a druid and one touched by the Seely. The age spread was interesting though, the elder who remembered fighting along humans to protect the forest, and the younger generation craving to return to the mainland to restore their birthright, these were the people that spoke with us. The ceremony to thank those who fought (and often died) protecting their land was impressive. The elf queen spoke little, but what she said was spot on. It reminded me of granny, and of the enormous difference between an elf queen and her. So much pain, so much compassion, so much needle sharp truth. Guan Yin was followed here in action and spirit.

I didn't see much of Zhae, and Cuura/Grimwald were mostly busy with the tribes and the Greenfields. Felina got down to some serious partying, with satyr's no less! I considered to run some interference – satyr's being who they were – but then I felt that I shouldn't. Felina had acted for the good of all, more so than I would have expected, and nature was willing to repay her. Not in my slow way, but certainly in the playful ways of the satyr. I was happy she found her connection to nature, a more raunchy way than mine, but not the killer pattern of Lyria. Poor girl... Kendalan was looking for answers about his parents and busy getting a temporary bow. Nethander... I kind of lost track as I was busy getting acquainted with my ward the wyrmling Draenimaullair (although she saw the reverse), learning how to anchor spells in a body, and let magic flow freely, even if changed by stance or substance. My second set of change, this time insight into lore, meant I also spent a lot of time considering my previous actions. Perhaps it would be best to let others lead for a bit. In any case I asked the lady

Iliana to make sure that the March of Celimbryr stayed wet (and wrote it down for her), and gave her the gems and gold from the underground temple. She almost cried at that! I quickly took my leave and dropped the Calishite runic equipment of an elven enchanter who was willing to take a look at it. The list didn't get shorter:

- x Return to the dwarf/elven underground place used by the orcs to attack those caravans;
- x See how things were with the ex Ettin priest of Lathander;
- x Revisit the pool of the Twelve and the cave of the Twelve; Actually, that whole Twelve thing;
- x Visit the Glass City in the Woods of Sharp Teeth;
- x Find out what attracted Felina and Nethander near the Cloud Peaks;
- x Revisit the Fortress of Light and see how things are going;
- x Learn from the Netherese underground halls and revisit the Deep dragon;
- x Find the remaining pages of the Elven Tome;
- x Find the lich Azatoth, convince him his world view is wrong (tricky), and learn about the Daemon;
- x Discover the background story of our lieutenant Tamara Landis and her 'aunt' Tamalandis.
- x Discover what was going on with the elder medusa, and the Netherese floating city;
- x See how Rebecca was doing;
- x Prepare for the next assassin to make his move;
- x Find out what the flute was all about;
- x Return to the Giant place and read some history;
- x See if the elven enchanter figured out the calishite runic enchantment;
- x Find the book for the Fiend to free several forest creatures;
- x The tale of the lost planet;
- x Check on my no longer family: they're still blood;
- x See what my aunt meant by binding her closer to our group;

Shou Lung was to be our next target. I decided to spend some funds and goodwill and have a set of rings created that would give my companions the Shou tongue. Clothing too was of the essence, and clothing meant roles. A shugenja of the Red Earth was proper for Grimwald, and a kensai the best approximation I could create for Nethander. Felina would be a noble – I better make sure her standing was indeterminate – and Cuura a barbarian mercenary captain. Kendalan was tricky so I selected a storm monks outfit. They had a dark reputation, but few would dare to cross him and he could well play the part.

Her highness informed me that Zhae had accepted training by a elven master of the sublime path... I had known this for some time. The halfling we had saved proposed to join us. Who was he working for? What did he want to discover? I saw no malice, and there were several hints he had hidden power. Not arcane, nor do I detect any priestly power even though he was likely a follower of Tyr. His personality precluded a natural power so the only remaining choice was a psionisist. I might learn from him, but before I did I knew some time, and rather more excitement would pass.

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