

## *The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed) as told by Draenimaullair*

### *Chapter 135: What is Good? (3rd ride of Mirtul 1371 - Feast of Lanterns)*

**R**eturning to the inn we heard how the barbarian created a wall of fire to stop several wasp swarm attacking melee warriors. An effective attack to be sure: non dragons would be hard pressed to defend against them, and I understood that no spell casters would be expected to be present. Except for the halfelf Felina... hmm... If she did so she was a better caster than I thought... but secrecy was her weapon, so she very well might. Yet that also meant that there were no Desert Wind warriors. At least that was the only martial school I knew which focused on area attacks. Another thing I should find out about: which schools were present? So much to learn!

**E**verybody worried about Reed and her sister. I did not understand why. She had warned her sibling, talked to Norbert, and had not acted in any hostile way. I did consider the possibility that some assassin would try to kill my companion. Most of them were trained in evading breath weapons, so I should concentrate on doing more physical damage. It would be a good training target: when I got a hoard there were bound to be thieves.

**F**or sure we were not finished for the day. A kid with a yellow sash entered, asking if the demon human Nethander would be inclined to meet the matriarch of one of the organizing families. The advantage of a bird is that almost nobody notices, so I accompanied him, with halfelf Felina and halfling Norbert trailing. Ah, much was explained: there was a curse every few hundreds moons that originated from a taboo place on the other side of the ridge. With the elf seen as an Oni, she tried to get it out of the city and to vent its aggression on a cursed location. The demon human was attentive, and even his questions were just to get as much information as possible. At least he was polite to his elders.

**I** had to admit that I was in agreement with that Nethander fellow when he proposed to discuss this with the magistrate and his Wu-Jen. It turned out that there were several sources in agreement with a 1000 moon pattern. My companion agreed, as did four old scrolls with the cities history. Nethander pressed for the most details, but the dwarf Grimwald made the most progress by asking, and getting, permission to check the cemetery. The magistrate needed to reflect if he would allow us to go to the cursed palace of the man who tried treason when the empire needed him most. Nethander expressed his doubts about the Wu-Jen again, losing all my goodwill he had gained. The cemetery turned out to be thoroughly desecrated. Something we would need to act upon when we had time. But the elf Kendalan returned with the news we were allowed to clean the cursed place. Doing good plus the chance for my first hoard items. What more could I wish.

**R**easoning that we could still use the evening to get closer and perhaps get a first glimpse at that cursed place we left and arrived at the top of the hill close to midnight. There was a small shrine there, as a kind of watch-post, manned by a single elderly monk. He was less than talkative, although he knew we would be coming. Next morning, after our casters prepared their spells (my companion reading five different tomes) we went down into the valley. Both my companion and Kendalan insisted that there were three 'circles' in the woods which separated us from the spires still rising out of the foliage.

**E**very time I thought I could predict the problems at it turned out to be something else! This was really aggravating! Some spider-monkeys lived in the forest. My companion advanced to talk to them, but the instant that Grimwald moved they fell back, we entered the forest and got peppered by sleeping poison darts and clumsy rope traps. Again my companion tried to talk in that utter convincing way of hers, but the demon human started with some kind of fear effect, quickly followed by a blast from the tainted elf, and big surprise, a wall of energy from the halfling Norbert. That quickly had the survivors running, but made the sleeping fire in my companion explode as the halfling refused to see that she considered his actions breaking her honor. I was unsure: those creatures attacked first, yet we entered their realm, my companion offered peace, the others justly defended themselves. Then my companion decided to retreat to reconsider. I'd better stay with her.