

## The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

### Chapter 137: Inside Outside (3rd ride of Mirtul 1371 - Feast of Lanterns)

**W**e stood in the inner circle, with Grimwald, Nethander, and Norbert close by. Nethander inquired why I had left, assuming I had teleported to the city or even further. I explained that I had some problems with keeping my fire under control, so that I had returned to the watch post and calmed myself before returning for the proper burial of the spider-apes. Norbert wasn't really responding. Perhaps I had overreacted, but I still saw a man who denied his true self, who hid behind rules and principles, external things, but where was the focus on the ultimate: his own soul? He might have heard, but I doubt he understood. But I should talk, not attack.

**U**sually when Grimwald summoned his armor it appeared on in, not on top of him. Not only his armor, but also a chest. And Cuura on the chest. If Grimwald had been human, or slightly less burly I would have been worried, but now I just smiled. A sad smile, but a smile nonetheless. I should have warned him that the shielding would logically include teleportation scrambling, but I had thought he would have thought of that himself. We had learned of the four towers, with four Wu-Jen each, Death on Death, and the Warlord in the center palace. Having Cuura was good, but the amount of predators around here was worrisome: we could handle them, but that would take time and energy, a waste of resources. Plus even if most animals here were evil, many were still just that: animals. Luckily with the help of Kendalan Cuura and Efyra were able to produce the proper sounds to scare them off.

**J**ust as I feared that we could no longer scare off the creatures lurking around, we saw the fortress looming through the dense growth. Cuura showed her strength by refusing to see a problem before it truly existed: she asked Nethander to find a secret door inside, and he did so within minutes. Was this a trap, or lady Luck helping us? During that little time Efyra has already disappeared between the trees above, climbing not much slower than a squirrel. A smart trap triggered, targeting those thinking, not those acting. Nethander and Cuura were inside, save from the Red Death Shroud blossoms, and Efyra was above it, but the others were more or less affected. Silly I should have known better! Then Grimwald started all distrustful again. I know that he and Nethander like to needle each other, but I almost start to worry! In the end we decide on a two pronged attack: Efyra, Norbert, and Kendalan via the trees, Cuura, Nethander, Grimwald, and I via the secret staircase. Draeni sat on my shoulder but Bear and Yuka needed to stay outside. Where they in danger? Yuka was an apex predator, and Bear... well Bear was probably the scariest critter in this dark neighborhood. Simple plan: clear out the towers before we assaulted the main palace. By now we have learned the importance of securing the flanks and the fall-back route.

**E**ntering a corridor Grimwald quickly surmised we were inside the wall, with a tower at each end of the hallway. Red light or Green? Red it was, as it was likely more towards were the other were. The half a dozen Shadows were no threat. We found a huge circular room with a dark red pool in the middle, and twelve alcoves, five of which still contain a cursed soul in a unliving body. Perhaps we could have prepared better, but Nethander issued a challenge, and got run through by an *evil* pike. Cuura destroyed a body, but the soul took hers and pummeled Grimwald with her flail. Even adamant wasn't strong enough to stop internal injuries. I managed to push the spirit out after I had secured that pike, but in the mean time the power of the floor had appeared behind me. Draeni warned me just in time. I managed to sidestep its touch with only the barest margin, while Nethander got thrown towards the red (blood?) pool. I managed to damage the ghost a bit, when a lot of things happened at the same time: the ceiling got broken open by a force lance, Nethander managed a teleport trick to miss the pool which then exploded covering most of us. I feared for my companions, but none were corrupted, although Grimwald... no I had mis-sensed.

*Nowhere to go. The WuJen was destroyed, as were these cursed champions of evil. They had started out good, but slowly got corrupted. We should take care that such fate would not befall us! Cuura got possessed again, but this time Grimwald managed to break the hold without getting broken himself. What happened when he released that ghost? I was sure there was something. Norbert told us they had defeated two dozen goblinoids, and that the rooms above ours were either empty or destroyed. There was something in his voice. Ah, the adventuring flū. He may berate us, but he was one too. It was his Karma. Oh why do people think rules were more important than people? The corruption of magic made user of healing magic dangerous by those not trained in the finesse of magic. We were trying to have a more detailed look when Grimwald suddenly dashed of toward the green glowing door in the distance.*

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