

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 138: Pretty Button (3rd ride of Mirtul 1371 - Feast of Lanterns)

*C*ommunication was always a difficult thing. I heard Grimwald shouting something about being right back, but to let him go alone? It meant interrupting the search for secret doors started by Norbert (methodical), Nethander (trusting his luck), and Efyra (trusting her strength). Norbert quite correctly proposed so start a systematic sweep of the towers, but Grimwald's action had preempted that. Cuura, of course, had immediately followed him, and, with her greater speed, caught up so they burst into the green room together. I just looked at Kendalan – it was the normal chaos – and we all followed the dwarf: Yes he wanted to do something alone, but leaving him was neither proper, nor prudent.

*H*overing in the air where a multitude of flying objects, varying from cloaks, to headgear, to small handkerchiefs. And they all tried to swamp us, gag us, engulf us. It might have worked if Grimwald had been alone, it might even have worked if he had only Cuura for support. But against seven there were too few, too widespread, and Efyra showed off her athletic skill by jumping from one item to another to target the ceiling mounted green glowing gem, which Grimwald, even entangled, indicated was the evil heart. Kendalan fixed some flying items to a wall with his arrows, Norbert stuffed a flying crown (goldish) down his backpack, and Nethander had to admit that Efyra's bouncing trick was actually more difficult than she made it look. Perhaps we should ask master Wang if he could polish Efyra's undoubted raw potential. Grimwald hovered up to smash the crystal too, and Kendalan put an arrow precisely in the crack that had appeared. Crack! The items lost a lot of power and focus so were quickly taken care of. I acquired a rather pretty cloak; I hoped it wasn't cursed beyond repair. Odd, the crystal was gone, but I had not felt anything truly leaving.

A little thing worried me. Grimwald looked apprehensive when Nethander walked towards him to cut him free. Why? Why can't Grimwald see that Nethander was perhaps far from flawless, but that attacking somebody of the group was really not something he would do. He even mumbled something along the lines of 'why didn't they read the books more carefully', when he very well knew that more than one chapter was a serious risk: look at what happened to Cuura, to Nethander, to Kendalan, to me. Grimwald, after some pushing, returned Nethander's life essence from the pike, but Kendalan didn't listen to his own warning and managed to get himself into a stasis field because he read a scroll he found. Grimwald still had the dispelling wand, and the others tried to make sense of the tower structure. It would be logical if there were (hidden) doors, both in the pool room and in the empty room above, but the others found nothing as I concentrated on the scripture engraved in the pool edge.

*O*ptions... To spend more time looking for secret doors that might very well not be present; Dig our way through floor or walls; Go up to that "twenty five!" goblin room; Go through the green room. The last one it is, and after the usual chaos (Cuura breaking open a door the Norbert and Nethander were trying to unlock) we arrive at a room filled with the remains of a smithy, bits of broken armor, and other odds and ends. Grimwald went glassy eyed and Cuura ordered us to move on. I could see the double edged reason: we could find valuable gear which might help us on our quest (some of us quickly pick up this and that item), but we could also lose lots of time here. Perhaps we might find time to canvas this room. It would be nice to be able to get some sellable goods for a change. There is a stairs down here, which does suggest some kind of spiral, but why then no second door in the pool room or empty room?

*S*iege towers filled the cavernous room below. Massive machines, but with a palpable aura that they knew exactly what their duty was: to kill and to destroy. Before anybody could act Grimwald and Nethander were inside two of them, and then things quickly went from bad to worse. Kendalan was quick enough to get out of the way, Cuura strong enough to damage even these colossal structures, Efyra athletic enough to climb out of the way. But Norbert got into problems, so I used my magnetism to pull him from underneath one of those spiked wheel and shove him toward a door opening. I got targeted, but Grimwald found the time to hide me, and then

Kendalan got them to fight each other with some fancy archery. One by one we took cover in the door opening toward the other tower, none of us foolish enough to use the destroyed gates towards the open courtyard. 'Killing grounds' they were called in siege terms, and we had not fully cleared the towers yet. Norbert looked like we were all crazy, which we probably were, Grimwald clearly was both miffed with Nethander (didn't that get boring?) and with e new idea for some building, and Kendalan satisfied that these rampaging constructs were crushing themselves to bits. I... I felt like I missed something, a warning that I hadn't heeded. I need to listen better.

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