

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

Chapter 146: Dragon Deceived (3rd ride of Mirtul 1371 - Feast of Lanterns)

Usually Grimwald insisted on keeping the group together. Now he just decided that he needed some underground time. Alone. Something was wrong here. Either through our actions, or because something in this castle had warped his mind. Had he unknowingly swallowed some of the blood from the pool? Or was it something different? He brushed off Norbert's suggestion he walk with him, so the halfling wandered back to where the secret entrance was. Efyra was still busy with her 'clean up' in the forest below with the assistance of Cuura, who climbed up and to help us put a lot of stuff in her bag of holding.

Nethander, in the mean time, tried out two items that the lich had been wearing. None of the items had a trace of necromancy, and several of his items suggested a solid interest in enchantment and metal. The gloves were indeed dexterity enhancers, and a headband was, unsurprisingly, one of intellect. If there were secondary enchantments, we were not able to tell, but their aura was fairly clean, so there might be none. I tested a ring, which deflected anything trying to hit me. Useful, but couldn't the others use such an expensive item better?

Realizing that one of the hidden corridors was behind one of the walls, I pointed it out, only to have a secret door pop open. Nethander feared a trap, but, after ten minutes of experimenting, it turned out that "there is a corridor", and "there is no corridor", were the rather simple command words. We had planned to wait for Grimwald, but now we decided to have a quick peek ourselves. No corridor, but a place. Hills in a barren world, clouded and at dusk. Where was it?

Entering, we tried to find if we had planeshifted, timeshifted, or had stumbled on something else. Nethander asked if I could read the stars, and I found them exactly as I expected. Either we had not moved at all, or we had time shifted some very precise amount. Kendalan examined some moss growing on rocks, and declared them to be the wrong kind for that type of rock. So... Illusion? It seemed the most likely bet. We still could see the exit hanging in mid air, so we took some extensive precautions to make sure the door could not close.

Accepting that we could not break the illusion we walked in climbing a hill to see a valley on the other side. There, halfway the opposite slope, a ruined temple stood, and we could see movement around it. Nethander sneaked closer and informed us of half a dozen creatures that were slowly rebuilding the shrine. They seemed neither truly alive nor undead, and Kendalan informed me that they weren't making any progress at all: the stones themselves illusory. This was a never ending job, and our elf also spotted a dragon. Ah, a Pan Lung, protector of holy places! This was his trap!

Logic did not convince him, even while we showed and did not tell. The illusion was powerful and Kendalan and I even fell for it for some time. So Nethander decided to skip the mind and activate his emotion: in other words, make it royally pissed. That worked, even though he had to do some fancy footwork to not being steamed like breakfast bun. It joined us towards the exit and thanked us. Two walls and two tower chambers to go.

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