

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

### Chapter 25: Best laid plans (2<sup>nd</sup> ride of Mirtul 1370)

When Felina and Nethander returned, it was time to make some plans. I wasn't surprised when Nethander was the one to come up with the idea to use the sleeping poison we had acquired at the start of the journey. It was sneaky thinking, but it would do what needed to be done. Nethander then expected me to oppose any plan to kill all in the cave. Again he shows he doesn't understand my position on life at all. I do not like it, that's for certain, but the pest of tainted creatures like goblins must be kept under control. Amazed at my non-opposition of the plan, he then started to talk crudely about wiping out all in the first cave and couldn't understand why such talk was objectionable to me. In the end he just stopped talking about it, while Grimwald started sharpening his axe in preparation.

Next evening we left, but this time Felina told Zhae to watch over the chest. After some grumbling he in no uncertain terms told Cuura to watch over me, but he did stay behind with the sergeant, Paul and Rebecca. Cuura showed her insight and did not bring her horse, the spell of Grimwald still enough to cancel her glowing. I used some lesser magic to stay in touch with all of the group – it only allows me to 'think' to them and visa versa, but at least it means that the advance group is in touch with us.

Again Felina and Nethander sneaked towards to encampment, Kendalan in his tree, and Grimwald, Cuura, and myself some thirty yards further between some bushes. We kept our bows ready, but we hoped that their mission would go as smoothly as the previous day.

Hope is a cardinal virtue, but the goblin watch was far more effective this time. Some goblin in the camp started pointing at Felina's and Nethander's general locations and shouting something. Cuura, Kendalan and me released almost immediately, and at least two of us hit, dropping it. However, an Ogre had awakened and inquired what was the alarm. Of course I do not speak that tongue, but Grimwald did, so with his help I managed to project a goblin like voice from that location, with some excuse for the noise. This seemed to appease the Ogre, and, after some dire threats should he be woken for nothing again, he went back to sleep.

I picked up some surface thoughts of Nethander, as he was whispering to Felina, informing me they had passed through the barrier and were busy making the goblin's death seem like some infighting. They then proceeded to the water location where they put the leaves in – only to be discovered by another goblin! This time Felina was prepared however, and cast *sleep* over it. Nethander of course killed it and made it look like it had been responsible for the first goblin's death. I couldn't think of a better solution myself in that short time, but I feel kind of dirty. Some solutions, though effective, aren't the type I would choose myself.

As they sneaked out Kendalan (who else) saw that a third goblin was sneaking up on them, and, when it readied to strike, shot it. Felina and Kendalan then decided to stay into hiding there, but I vehemently opposed such an idea, as those goblins had been far to observant, plus a group divided is a group weakened. After some objections they listened and returned to Kendalan's tree with that last goblin.

Somebody discovered one of the corpses, and then soon the second. The missing one let an Ogre to send out a patrol of six, which we ambushed without anyone the wiser. Our original plan was lost, so when the Ogre leader started raising a fuss because one of his followers was very sound asleep, Cuura, Kendalan, and I just waited until Nethander, Grimwald, and Felina had sneaked mostly back to the camp (to be discovered by a goblin again) and fired our bows at the boss, except for our elf who shot the goblin pointing at our friends. This infuriated the boss, and he charged at us, ignoring our hidden vanguard, pulling four other Ogres with him.

We all three fired at the leader again, and again as it slowed down because Felina used *caltrops*. Yet two others kept on their speed and would quickly reach us. In the mean time Grimwald attacked the rear most Ogre, while Nethander and Felina had to fight off a score of goblins. Cuura now charged the Ogre leader, making it too dangerous for us to shoot at him, so Kendalan targeted on quick one, while I called forth my magic. I focused on the fire, putting in every last bit of energy, then synchronized this with the latent fire present in every living creature. It died instantly, only glowing embers remaining. Why do people think first circle spells are weak?

Cuura made a valiant stand against the leader who, despite being riddled with arrows, still foamed and hit with great precision and strength. Kendalan was attacked by rocks thrown by the last Ogre, as well as being confronted by another one, but he used his wolf to catch that one between two opponents. Grimwald and his opponent battled it out, but both held up a solid defense, although our dwarf was already bleeding. Nethander and Felina were surrounded by goblins, but their magic and speed was such that the little runts only could get in the occasional lucky hit, while Nethander used his rapier with unpredictable moves. I cowered and looked afraid as the stone throwing Ogre's hostile look swept over me, and he turned to throw at Felina, missing her, but killing two goblins instead. I used that chance to evoke some fire around Kendalan's opponent, as the Ogre hit our guide with great strength.

Cuura was loosing from the prodigious might of the Ogre leader, so when she valiantly attacked before she would be hit, I assisted her with some fire. That was just enough. Kendalan was in dire straits too, but his wolf caught a blow, allowing Kendalan to regain the initiative. The group of goblins was slowly dwindling, but Grimwald was in trouble, but was smart enough to warn us of such. Kendalan and I took out his Ogre, then a charging Cuura, with a little help from me dispatched Grimwald's. The last one took my suggestion and ran, while I stabilized the one who fought our elf. Now we had seven survivors, so we would keep our end of the bargain.

I turned to find Kendalan healing his fallen wolf, so I healed the elf. The rest was pursuing the goblins, so I took the time to search the Ogre leader, finding a key and a map of the stars. When Kendalan and I reached the cave, no goblins were left alive, and Nethander quickly found the hidden trapdoor to the lower levels. One can still see remnants of the elven art, even if it is hidden under layers of goblin filth.

Downstairs some Gnolls and a hyena tried to oppose us, but we made short work of them – the hyena was killed before I could even voice my objection. Now we must see where that corridor leads.