

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

### *Chapter 28: Lost and Darkness (1<sup>st</sup> ride of Kythorn 1370)*

The fair was beginning and I spent some time there. Zhae and Nethander are focusing on the tournament, and even Kendalan and Cuura are interested. Grimwald has locked himself in the smithy, and Felina and I spend some time listening to the bards. To be quite honest I feel a bit forlorn: the town is so different from home, the multitude of people wandering the streets are different and I miss the quiet and contemplation of nature. Reading about Gods in these realms, drinking tea with Marian, helping Nethander getting a leather armor he found at the fair at a better price, admiring the fact that listening to Noob paid off, time passes quickly. I can feel a kind of tension, a kind of meaning within meaning between the way of the WuJen and the Way. They are closer than most would expect. Oh, I yearn for some proper tea!

The tournament was a bit of a disappointment for Zhae and the others. Clearly fighting in a tournament isn't the same as fighting against aberrations and ogres. Nethander got into a grudge match next morning with a fighter of the Guardinals. Both weren't well prepared as each of them had a hangover, but Nethander still showed that speed and elegance trumped brute force. He, however, picked up a name which made me doubt their background: 'Gauthar' wasn't quite a deity known for his calm and protection.

Next day Zhae and I were walking on the fair, when we spotted some smoke on a side. Nobody paid it any attention, but the smoke had a darkness in it that touched my soul. We hastened towards a lone tent, Nethander running towards it. A shrine of Sune, now smoking like it had been engulfed with acid, and a moving tent as if something had just been pulled under it. Nethander moved towards the entrance where a lone man in hood and cloak sat, while Zhae went for the tent itself, trying to cut through the surprisingly tough fabric.

Some scuffle at the entrance while Zhae, then I entered. Somebody cast a spell over us: three persons at one end of the tent, while we could see another tending to Cuura and Felina – lying still with some strange flasks nearby. Suddenly most of the tent turned dark, and Zhae almost stumbled, his actions unsure and doubting. A few moments later the darkness lifted and I could see those three – two men protecting a woman – ready to try more magic. Nethander came in, but he too looked uncertain. As I feared the woman waited on my actions to do something, I called on flames around the three, and retaliated by invoking a flaming column on me. That hurt, but Zhae had just been touching me, and he got singed too, and he attacked her in a flash, tumbling past her two defenders.

I hastened to Felina – fearing what was happening to her, when Cuura showed she had been poisoned, but not incapacitated. Let's keep it at the fact that her attack was both effective and just. Zhae got hit by poison and my prayer to Guan Yin gave him the second chance he deserved. Tymora smiled on us again when one of the defender hit Nethander by accident. The charm broken, the fight was over in seconds.

Zhae still had no use of his memory at all, and Felina was knocked out, but with smart thinking of Nethander, some misdirection by Rebecca, we managed to return to the inn without the guards noticing. The poison we took. I don't like it much, but we might use it for the good of all.