

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 43: Thorns and Training (1st ride of Elesias 1370)

We rested and slept several hundreds yards away from the carnage. It was about impossible to bury the score of bugbears, and I kept silent on the monk of Shar and the warmage: the remains of the warmage I thought would be best left where the cyclus of nature would reclaim them, perhaps partially repairing the damage he had done. With the monk of Shar, it was difficult, but as far as I understood their belief, they preferred to forget, to leave things behind. A place of burial is a place of remembrance. Perhaps I was in error, but Grimwald is far more knowledgeable in this area and he left them as they were.

Grimwald used to pray at dusk, as Dumathoin was lord of those fallen, but now, he told me, he needed to pray at dawn, the time of renewal, as Dumathoin frowned on his actions, yet Moradin acknowledged them as necessary. So next morning Kendalan, Grimwald and I tried to restore the health and strength lost to our friends by spell and poison. Although not all was as it should, everybody felt close to healthy again, so we left north. The psionist... I was sure we would meet again. And when we did... Revenge is bad. Karma patient. He will be his own downfall.

The teaching of Guan Yin gave me a prayer to ask nature to cooperate with me and my understanding of earth and wood through my great aunt's Wu Jen training helped increasing its duration. We travelled together like there was a trail available for us. No thorny bushes, no dead falls blocked our path, so we made good speed. I needed some concentration to talk to nature, but I could hear the others discussion riding and archery. In truth it was Grimwald asking and he got answers by Cuura, Kendalan, and Zhae. Nethander rode along quietly, seemingly reliving yesterday's fight and Felina made some off remarks, but usually talked with Rebecca. I knew little about horse riding, but Zhae and I could tell him about a way of practicing archery that was neither based on the elven way, nor Cuura's mounted style. Perhaps it was of some use.

After an hour or so Grimwald decided to walk, riding was just not him. Luckily I had a minor spell which helped him keep up. Before I lost control over the spell I did likewise: it was so much easier to talk to the earth when I was touching it.

We travelled like this for about three days.

Dusk was still some time away when the magic started to unravel. We found a superb defensible spot – nobody can sneak on our rear – and made ready for the night. I had first watch with Nethander but instead of a quiet few hours we thought we heard some rustling. A bit later we heard it again. It felt *odd*, not one of the normal sounds. It wasn't very close, so we just warned the next group. Cuura, Kendalan, and Zhae were next.

Early in the morning we were alerted: something was close. It turned out to be blood thorns, risky for a small inexperienced group but not for us. Luckily I managed to talk people out of destroying the main plant. After all it too has a function in the balance of nature.