

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 47: Forth and back (2nd ride of Elesias 1370)

Zhae had not made more than a single step under the arch of the gatehouse when webbing enveloped him. He struggled to get free, but then he stiffened... and fell limp. Poison? I saw nothing, but heard a kind of high pitched warble. Nethander stepped forward and he... what! shot a dragon breath bolt into the webbing! Webs burn like mad! And they did, encapsulating Zhae. Grimwald immediately *created water* over Zhae but it must be awful to be engulfed by flame while helpless.

Then Nethander got yanked up, inside the gate house. He managed to hold at the arch, by frantic struggling, and Grimwald stepped quickly forward to cut some cord, while Cuura got jumped on by a huge spider. I readied my guan dao to help her, trying to keep focus with two-step rhythm, yet Grimwald seemed amazed I attacked the creature. In truth I did so unwillingly, but the life of my companions was more important than the life of a single spider... The poor dwarf confused my personal beliefs with my predictions. I couldn't blame him, sometimes it is hard for me to do so.

Again a sonic attack of some kind and Grimwald *silenced* the area where the attack came from, even as Felina's and Kendalan's attacks (and those spikes on Cuura's armor) slowly got the better of that spider. As we helped Cuura scramble from under that carcass I saw Grimwald standing holding a bow with a kind of reverent look. Utterly calm in focussed. I was proud for him, he clearly learned how to focus on a true meditative state.

The 'spider' that had harpooned Nethander – a Cavefisher according to Grimwald – hid in the room above the arch. Kendalan went to try and kill it, even though Grimwald and I did not understand the needless killing: it was extremely unlikely it would ever dare attacking us again, and this place wasn't what you would call 'well travelled'.

We continue over the bridge to the gatehouse opposite. It would be extremely difficult if the other side was held. Zhae was still incommunicado because of the sonic blast. That gatehouse was a lot more solidly build than the others. It was also guarded by fire traps as Nethander and Cuura discovered. If you pronounced the proper words (like Grimwald and Felina did) you could walk through unharmed, unless somebody close by (say Kendalan) mispronounced them... It was good that Grimwald had cast a *protection from fire*. The gatehouse was fairly defensible so we set up camp to rest before taking on the tower.

I proposed to use the wand of curing but Grimwald countered that Moradin's blessing was renewed each day, while the wand was finite. Why did I not think of that? I continued reading the book of the Brotherhood – the chapter about exorcism to be precise – when a cry like sound boomed across the room. We all jumped up, wide awake, but nothing else happened. Suddenly I *knew* that this would happen again and again, stopping any from resting enough to replenish their magic. After some discussion we decide to turn back to camp outside the area and try again when we have restored ourselves.

The way back is more difficult than it should as I totally forgot to use my fire to shield us from the cold, and Nethander dove left through the lightning portal. Left was the right side when we went in, but definitely the wrong one when we returned. The reset time allowed us to pass unharmed and Grimwald healed our funky haired swashbuckler.

Finally we could rest, even if the camp was a bit wet. I was grateful I could sleep in the tent with Felina. The part I was reading was tricky and full of darkness. I had to be careful. Next morning it turned out the skeletons had returned – or better new skeletons had arrived including a new doomguard. Nethander danced around him as Zhae still was unwell. He did little damage, but allowed us to cross unharmed. Could he learn a lesson from this?