

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

### Chapter 51: There be Traps (2<sup>nd</sup> ride of Elesias 1370)

As we pressed the two discs in the depressions at the foot of the stairs, another stair folded out. Down. Below we saw Grimwald looking up. He was listening to his ancestors, like I was, but there the comparison stopped. I could feel a multitude of them talking to him, where I had only one... my great aunt. My aunt! Sometimes I was a bit stupid. Like an ox, Mirror would say. It had been my great aunt all the time. I whispered my thanks, for she delayed her inevitable better position on the wheel by helping me. If I died, who would I try to help with their lives? Nethander? Yoshi? Moon's Mirror? I thanked my aunt again for helping me, then went down.

I heard the others follow me, as Felina remarked that Grimwald did not look to good. I healed our dwarf, who indeed looked a bit battered and bruised from the long slide and fall. Then, with a surprised yelp from Kendalan the stairs folded back into the wall! I looked around, but we were all in this little ante-chamber. Large doors led to another room or corridor, and we could not see a way to open up the stairs again. Kendalan was not happy about this.

Felina and Nethander took the lead, checking doors and corridors as we travelled, even if Grimwald expected fewer traps. If this was a true dwarven keep I thought he would be right, but this tower... I feared things were different here. This tower was a test. For evil and for good. And I'd got the feeling the tower presented a different face to each opponent. Nethander returned: a large hall with hidden and clear openings to other places. And a kind thin pillared structure in the middle.

Zhae stepped between the pillars and my heart stopped for a moment. Nothing happened. Should I have acted? I was told to be passive. I saw the grin of Nethander, the sight of Grimwald, the ever so slight smile of Felina. Luckily Cuura and Kendalan weren't looking – or did not mind. We decided to start with a corridor shielded by an *illusionary wall*. Grimwald and Cuura had some difficulty in getting through, which was kind of logical. It looked like a area where ready food was stored to be brought into the hall. Food was still there, shielded by magical eternity fields, although the left most was failing. The food looked delicious, but Kendalan – who is our cook – found that all food was created using things like larks tongues and other rare ingredients which made this world such a wonderful place to live in. Eating this was Bad Karma, it showed lack of appreciation. Oddly enough the only 'pure' item was a rather unappetizing blob in that left most plate. 'Dwarven waybread', according to Grimwald. Zhae tasted it, and he admitted it tasted rather better than it looked. As we went on Grimwald started to repair the broken plate.

We found a kitchen and a cool cell, but nothing of any value remained. As we returned our dwarf was looking was an odd look to the unchanged malfunctioning plate. He wasn't looking upset, just pensive, like he learned something unexpected. I was sure he would tell us the time came.

An obvious corridor leads us to a machine identified by the others as a grape press. We did not have such things in T'u Lung. Some amphora's of wine-turned-vinegar lay in a corner and Nethander put one in his special backpack. A light acid could indeed be handy. A bit farther we found some machinery, but I totally lacked he insight necessary. Grimwald puzzled over it, but we decided to leave it alone for now.

The door from this place is trapped... how long has this place been a home? How long has it been a lair? A test? A side corridor, but first a steel door with three traps. Three nasty traps according to our specialists. Mind burn is one of them. So that fighter came this far. Grimwald showed a remarkable lack of insight as he leaned forward to look through the key-hole. Even though he retracted swiftly, I could feel life energy being pulled out of him. Zhae is bad enough, not more!

Leaving it we found the other corridor trapped to, but this fire field is easily subverted. I could see Zhae and our scouts enter a chamber when dwarven automatons attacked. Nethander dodged, but

Zhae readied himself to attack. The balance was beautiful and nothing remained but some ruptured parts. I finally understood how the others felt when I was one with the Elements. Grimwald tried to stop the automatons, then ordered us back. Indeed they did not follow, but a shout and flare warn us that Kendalan had forgotten the fire trap! It must be awful to feel so trapped underground.

We tracked back and find an half build shrine to Mordadin's wife Mya. I've read many books on the subject and listened to Grimwald's stories – this was odd indeed. I can hear the ceiling groaning to the absolute panic of Kendalan. The golden statue of the goddess is the only finished piece, and as it looked like it held up the ceiling not even Felina was tempted. Nethander was egging Kendalan and I admonished him before I knew I did. Passive or not, this side of Nethander I was not interested in seeing! I could feel some dark part of him trying to take over – like it was desperate.

Kendalan ran across the room and I followed to find the queen bed chamber being pulled apart by Felina. She found some things, but I was more interested in the voice around Grimwald. I could not hear them, of course, but I could tell he almost could. It was important that he listened to his forebears.

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