

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 56: Sin and Synergy (2nd ride of Elesias 1370)

We were getting closer, but the forced passiveness was starting to weight on my mind. Why could I not assist the others? Another room, with a mosaic of different symbols. Most of the others were already there, discussing. Then Nethander touched a symbol and I faded. It was hard to described. I was still there, but not there. Like my existence was in doubt. I would have felt horrible, but for the fact that even my feelings were perhaps there. I could see the wall for what it was, we had to describe our path, but as Nethander had erroneously started with the 'warrior' symbol, I, Felina, and Grimwald were precluded from being present. Grimwald was 'furthest' gone, but oddly enough he also was closest to being a warrior. My mind tried to comprehend, grasp the implications. Perhaps he was closes to being a warrior of us three. Perhaps he was growing to be a warrior. Felina on the other hand... she was already trying to worm her way out. Ungraspable is her true essence.

I tried to keep in sync with the group. They returned to the final, unchecked, room. Zhae was removing anything metal from his body then went in to return with... something. It was aggravating, I just could not see sharp. Back to the mosaic room where they solved the path with only one minor hiccup. I hoped it wouldn't be a problem later on. A stair opened... again? I felt unstuck in time like I saw things happen at another time.

Down to a circular room. I could taste the fire present. Fireballs exploded in an irregular pattern, but Nethander was quick enough to evade while he opened the right hand door. I an aura that reminded me of my family, then I saw a the skeleton of a huge dragon lying on a heap of coins, gems, and assorted other valuables. Greed! Had my family been touched? I tried to recall patterns, actions, and I had to admit that we were not clean. Focusing on the present I saw the group getting Nethander out of greed's grasp. Zhae was just not interested, but Cuura and Kendalan were bulwarks against the excuses that oozed from my problem child. My? Yes. I was his Jie Jie, his elder sister.

Outside the cave like room I felt the group discuss the essence of the tower. They now clearly understood the traps, but without Grimwald, without me, I had some doubts about their ability to cope. Kendalan just wasn't the person to manage our three hotheads.

Through a long wide corridor they took a side door leading to a strange simple room. About halfway a narrow ledge started towards the other door, but the floor itself was only an inch or so lower. The real trick lay in a sign glowing in the air: *'The best can go first'*. Oh dear.

Zhae... Sometimes I despaired, he fell for it. Such a mastery of the blade, such a lack of self knowledge. Nethander of course saw – he was a quick thinker – but his solution? To challenge Zhae to a duel! It felt like my Di Di wasn't really concentrating because the fight was awfully one sided even though Zhae went for bruising blows, not killing ones. Kendalan and Cuura manage to stop the foolishness, but I... They *need* me.

Nethander then ran over the ledge shouting: "I'm not the best." For a second I feared he was trying to lie his way through but then I felt a spark of truth. Deep in his heart Nethander knew/accepted that he was depended on luck, the Smiling Lady, that without her he would fall. *Did he know it wasn't luck at all that he had found her?*

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