

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 62: Burning Fury (3rd ride of Elesias 1370)

Normally I could feel the Way. Not that I did not make mistakes, but if I truly listened to nature and myself I knew what was right. But this place... I was filled with indecision. No not indecision, but an unnatural urge to act before the path was clear. Do, don't. Act now, delay. I even felt a kind of anger, but it was a pale shadow, as there was no injustice, no *reason*. It just *was*.

It did not help that Ozias had only the loosest connection to his own past. His memory was uncertain, his recall murky. What were we talking about? As far as I could understand the Manual of Malevolence contained only a part of the darkness threatening this world. It was the part that gave visions, gave reasons, to follow the wrong Path. And here we learned of another part. The part that burned with anger, fueled wrath, urged destruction. The whole abbey had been constructed to keep parts of this... Daemon... locked up. Locked up by light. Or something along those lines. There was a sword involved too – but insight still eluded me. I had never felt so uncertain in my life, the lack of order, the love of pain and destruction of this place was sapping my resolve. Do or don't... it was a maelstrom of conflicting ideas. Ozias helped Felina find a booklet by the watch commander of this fortress. It was good that Cuura was paying attention, because Ozias wasn't and Grimwald's body would have been hit by that falling rocks.

We slowly start to piece together the story of this place. To guard parts of a Daemon Lord, but slowly getting corrupted from within. The battle between the priests and paladins. Couldn't they see the signs? The sword of the commander could hold the memories, the essence of those who held it before. The sword that absorbed the dark soul of the Daemon when it broke free... safe until somebody who should have been wiser touched it. There was a container for the sword, inside.

We closed to the center building. It still stood, the triple wards around it still holding the corruption in check. For now. The taint made me gag and tears formed. They should know: no mortal building can stand against the timeless, but no timeless can stand against the bright flame of a mortal willing to offer himself for the good of the other living. Will this quest ask my life? If it does then there is no need to worry. I left T'u Lung a nobody, the group helped me to become somebody again. It would only be proper to return to nobody again, repaying them sevenfold.

We crossed inside, and the anger got hold of Kendalan's hatred of dragonkind. He hit Zhae and Zhae hit him back – to incapacitate, not to kill. It wasn't *bad*, but Nethander showed more insight by activating Kendalan's *resurgence* rune. Cuura stood tall, but I was happy that Oddvar was not here.

It took some effort, music tuned just right, and the digging of Nethander to find the Sword's former container. Indeed it was impossible to describe: to many corners, lines straight yet still curved. An extra dimensional prison, not hidden as a simple sack or backpack. Then we found the way down. Down into the desecrated temple of Lathander, into the darkness.

We went through several portal, guarded by simple riddles. Why would they expect that enemies that came this far would not have a working knowledge of the proper ways? Or perhaps the true test evaded my perception: if it tested for lack of aggression, ability to heal from within, not from scroll, then maybe... In the end it was unimportant as we went deeper and deeper. We needed to fight some minor undead and such, but – how things have changed in a half a year – it was of little consequence. The whole situation, however, began to pressure my mind. This place was build on the highest of ideals, the start of a new Karmic circle. Yet it had been corrupted and filled with anger, hatred, and greed. We found a ruined library. I glanced around, found nothing of interest, so I concentrated on opening that last portal. Then my uncertainty was forced as a thing of fire advanced on us. To my everlasting shame I released an acid bolt, intense and powerful. What had I done?