

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 64: Triumph and Treason (3rd ride of Elesias 1370)

We looked at the fortress, knowing our peril. Suddenly there was a change in Grimwald. I felt Ozias retreating. Our dwarf was back, and we did need him. We (well, Zhae and Grimwald) planned our attack, when Odvar popped up. I was almost overcome with anger when I heard that Aloth Kakanos took the Manual – and other books – and left with the banite priest. He was a Red Wizard after all. Anger is wrong, but it took me some time to get the burning fire under control again. Still there are questions: why did he *teleport* Oddvar to us, why did he not harm him... or us? Was he under some kind of *geas*? What to do? We decided to try and find the sword first, free Kolakas from his burden. Kakanos cannot *teleport* with the book, so we might still be able to catch up.

The others moved forward under cover of a mist cloud. My skill in this sort of things was low, so I lagged, trying to understand myself. The door was strongly guarded, and the archers, which we had expected, were Spawn of Kyuss. The limited room meant that Zhae alone had to fight a Boneclaw defending the door with flying Kendalan supporting, while the others tried to counter the worm barrage. As usual Grimwald lamented his lack of proper preparations, while Cuura just went for it, and Felina evades most attacks. Nethander and Oddvar did what they could. Part of the defense was no doubt based on forcing the attacker into the slime, but we managed to sidestep that problem.

Those worms really became a nuisance, and some of us needed time to dig them out before they reached a vital part. This took some time and then Zhae managed to break down the door. Nethander and Felina dove past the guard, trying to catch it in a three way lock. Of course the Daemon appeared then, but to its chagrin they just tumbled out again, leaving a nice place for a fireball. I didn't do that much damage, but it forced the Kyuss Spawn to wait to regenerate. Kendalan's accurate fire made the Daemon try to possess him with one of his bound spirits – now my study of exorcism payed off. Then the Boneclaw fell to our warrior's might.

We moved in and I experienced the unnatural feeling of a place bound to Evil. Yet together we managed to ignore it debilitating presence and attacked the Daemon.

It was an odd battle: on the one hand we must really try to weaken it, but we could not kill its possessed shape. If we did so it would just invade somebody else. Some of its moves reminded me of the ninja who tried to kill me – some of our attacks were more dangerous to us than to it. Oddvar fell prey to his lure and reposit technique, but all this meant that Grimwald managed to destroy the door leading to the sword. I had to focus and get Oddvar out of the pattern before he killed himself.

We were battered, but not beaten when I saw the sword, distant behind a multi-hued sphere and guarded by large undead creatures. Spawn of Kyuss filled the hall, but the others fought them and the Daemon buying me time. The sword's protection didn't stop me, because they were to stop anybody reaching the sword – not somebody using *magnetism* to bring the sword to her.

Many of us were close to falling, when Zhae took the sword. Grimwald desperately tried to stop a worm for reaching his brain at the same time as he shielded other from the Daemon's onslaught. The undead were less of a threat, but those worms... Then Zhae attacked, Kolakas focussed on Nethander and me. His strike was, true piercing his heart and Nethander, protected by blood's gifts, took the sword and safely stored it in that weird container. The undead fled and crumpled. We won.

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