

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 67: Games of Power (3rd ride of Elesias 1370)

Nethander and Felina were sad. Nothing to find but some hay. Others must have entered and been beaten by these minotaurs, so it followed that their gear must have been harvested. I could not but smile, but it was a sad smile. The need to gain physical goods to gain happiness...

Another door exited the labyrinth and we found ourselves in a room with another skeletal creature. It spoke the same archaic tongue, yet reacted totally different. Its robes were tattered, yet told of riches and power, but its mind was almost gone. We were his slaves, while he mumbled about things long past and the password of the door he had forgotten. How long has he been here?

The door is easily unlocked, although Nethander blanches when he opened it. Nothing untoward happened so I considered the 'lich'. Had it been hit by a *feblemind*? Inside a still living dismembered corpse, the remains of his opponent. Had each been here for millenia, caught in a trap made by the other? The worse part: neither was able to learn from this: one caught in perpetual agony, the other in eternal fog. If punishment could repay evil they had paid in full. If remorse is needed – which is more to the teachings of Guan Yin – both were exactly where they started. Both were Evil beyond my capacity to change and I decided to give rest to the one in pieces. Fire may hurt for a second, but at least now his soul is free to leave. Nethander, Felina and Grimwald attacked the other. Was it wrong to do that? In a way he was helpless. Helpless, yet undead. Undead and long past his lifespan. Sometimes there were no good choices, but did I made the wrong one?

It might lack mental acuity, but its items were still working fine. Fire did not touch him, Nethander was drained, and Felina lost her sword. Grimwald's blessing punctured the mage's defense, and then he disappeared. Gone through a contingency of some kind. Luckily the damage done to Nethander was only temporary. With time his strength should return.

A desk in the room had several hidden buttons, which Nethander immediately start fiddling with. For once Grimwald's extreme caution paid off, as a pit appeared where he had been standing mere seconds before. Another opened a hidden passage, at which end an extremely surprised dark elf looked at where a solid wall was. She had just fought several orcs, and wore a human uniform which Grimwald seemed to recognize, so we talked. 'Talked' as in decided the other was not an enemy. She left and we returned through the now closed passage – Zhae was stronger then mere rock. The reason for this was another undead servant, which we talked to before granting it rest.

I added a unique marker to one of the boxes to be 'fetched'. We would be able to find it later.

We left this netherese place behind, and run into a score of people hunting that dark elf. They had been hunting her for some time, but recently lost their tracker and paladin. This tasted of politics. I was not convinced the drow was evil, although the red haired company leader was sincere. Yet what did that prove? We accompanied them, even returned their tracker back from a bunny by help of Felina's staff. What an uncouth man! When Kendalan mentioned he wasn't truly tracking he just... Politics! No other explanation. The wizard in the group – all the people except that tracker – was more likable, and we discussed magic, spells, and other arcane details. I lent him the spellbook of the Kakanos so he could perhaps learn a new spell or two.

Grimwald disliked our action, and, in truth, I wasn't happy about the way Nethander 'helped'. Yet when I left T'u Lung I also left behind the need to play games I had not chosen for. I will not show trust in one I do not, I cannot allow a lie to continue. It might weaken the group now, but in the end truth is strength.

A cave with two bugbears guarding it. Felina and Nethander (with a few of my spells to help) are going to scout...

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