

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

### Chapter 72: Dance, Dragon, D'Evil (1<sup>st</sup> ride of Eleint 1370)

I awoke dog tired, my mind hardly ready to absorb the spirit lessons and the blessings of GuanYin. Still I managed to do so and healed the others of the group as well as I could. We needed to stop fighting the whole time: it was bad for our health and bad for our souls. Felina had skinned the Blue Dragon (proper... improper... I wasn't sure), and Grimwald made sure it could leave for its eternal rest. The dwarf also left a pillar of some kind. Physical proof of our fight. Why?

Only we left we discovered that Nethander is missing. I felt horrible about that, and amazed when we found him in the stasis netting. Suddenly I got the feeling that he should be there. I could not put it in words, but I can sense the correctness. We were close to our target so speed seemed more wise than caution, yet Grimwald warned me against too much optimism. Routes through the underdark were twisted and unpredictable. Yet even he admitted that two days might be attainable.

Shortly after we encountered a sole survivor of a group of mixed humans and drow who had fought several bear/cat like creatures. Quaggoths, according to our dwarf, who seemed amazed that we did not know them. They are often the slaves of strong underdark powers, for their physical might is offset by the mental weakness. The drow bear the signs of Eilistraee, so I dance for their remembrance. Likely another patrol of theirs fell to the purple worm. Afterwards I cremate their bodies, and we follow Grimwald. The offer to join the Eilistraee followers is nice, but they would likely stop us to check things, and we just could not afford the time that took.

As we travel most of us start to talk about our yearning for the world above, something the dwarf just cannot understand. So it was good we found something odd: a green emerald statue of a female, yet the scripture below stated (according to Grimwald): "Karsus, defier of Gods". The fact that the name was male and the statue was female was 'normal': they were known to shift shape over the years. It was a valuable object, but none of us touched it, we continued on. Still the statue spoke, telling us that we entered the domain of the deep dragon Trinezalisee. Grimwald knew of her, and his tone suggested more combat. Sigh. Combat wasn't the answer to every question! My doubts were validated when Kendalan took my side. Grimwald just misread the wariness as hatred.

We followed the passage until we were intercepted by Quaggoths. Some of us tried to hide (only Felina truly faded from view), but I talked to them, with Grimwald, grudgingly, as a translator. The Quaggoths did not understand what I offered – quality wine and a song – but the dragon did. We were invited to her abode and then I knew why Nethander 'slept': so many treasures... it would have been near impossible from him not to... Back home I had learned how to praise guests, and Trinezalisee liked how Felina and I performed. From the corner of my eye I saw how Zhae looked. He would have loved to prove his mettle against this creature, but this is not the time and place. I can even understand Grimwald wanting to regain treasures of his forefathers. Evil was easy, but to do good asked for a constant evaluation, striving for forgiveness, searching for the good, and, yes, standing firm to stop the taint. Perhaps we will meet Trinezalisee in battle, perhaps we might show her the path to redemption. But for now we must go on.

The Quaggoth's escorted us out. If we had fought with the dragon then the dozens of creatures would have been a serious hurdle to overcome. Outside the dragon's territory we found a winding stairs going ever upwards. Here we encountered a problem where we did need to fight: Red Abysshai crept through a rip in the reality. Kendalan's lightning was impressive, yet he did not know how to really affect these dragon-daemons. Zhae, Cuura, and Grimwald made short work of them. They did not reach the books. Was Tiamat one of the parties offering to take the books?

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