

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 76: What is right? (2nd ride of Eleint 1370)

As we were leaving the gates of Candlekeep, a brother came over to speak to Felina for a moment. I felt a shiver, like when I first met the man-I-can't-name. A shadow crept over me. We were actors in a play and I feared I did not know my lines. Felina the unexpected, her Karma unreadable, Nethander the flamboyant, a curse that was a blessing, Kendalan the straight, his blood the gate to life, Cuura the unbroken, who would stop an army greater than she ever imagined, Grimwald the rock, making what was unmade, and Zhae the slave, the master of his own fate.

We were here to save what could be saved.

As Cuura was getting the horses together, Bishop walked up. He had a request, if we would allow him and the mercenaries to ride them, with us, to Baldur's Gate, as they quarry had gone to Calimshan and they needed a boat to catch up. Bishop asking something was enough to make the mercenaries in hearing range fall silent. Cuura had no problem with it, but for me it felt so *wrong*.

Somebody is playing a game, perhaps with good intentions, perhaps with bad, but they tried to determine another person's Karma. This would not do.

An orcish ambush – discovered of course by Kendalan – interrupted my thoughts. I went forward to talk to them, only to have them freely admit that they did attack vulnerable travelers. I sent them off, but how could I be sure that they would not do this again? As I contemplated that question, Nethander pushed them until they attacked him, resulting in the others joining the fray. Kendalan understood my aversion, but the others made short work of the score or so highway-orcs. I felt utterly ashamed that I had been unable to solve this properly, even if unlearning habits passed through countless generations is likely beyond my capabilities. But still!

Kendalan reported that somebody traveled parallel to our course, but often that entity teleported short distances. As we went by road it needed to do so to keep up, but we really should find out what was going on. Shortly before we arrived at the Friendly Arms Inn, Nethander discovered that Bishop knew exactly where that entity was, and that it was the drow. We confronted him with that knowledge: no doubt they had reason, but they put many people in danger just because they did not think lieutenant Landis capable of understanding her own destiny. Utter foolishness. I hoped that they had the moral strength to tell her the truth. Truth, however harsh, is reason for growth; lies are poison to improve your Karma.

We traveled on to Baldur's gate, the weather slowly showing the start of fall. It has been less than a year since I came here. Moon's Mirror would be married... and I just knew she already was a member of at least three secret societies. My former father and grandmother both had aged, the loss of my great aunt and my disappearance a weight they could carry only with difficulty. My mother even paler than before. Shu, in his simple ways, was no doubt busy planning next years ventures and paying the proper grafts to the right people, Nio so focused on his training that he lost sight on the world, and Yoshi... where was he? At night I stared at the stars and read an awful truth: our family had been forced to send a person to the Guard and Yoshi had gone. He wasn't ready! Who would show him the right path? Oh Yoshi... would I be able to save you? The stars only told me that to act was to loose. Who would show you compassion?

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