

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 79: Fist against Fist (2nd ride of Uktar 1370)

*I*t took me almost two days before I recognized what I was feeling: Baldur's Gate felt a bit like my home town. A cold, stormy, wet, cat filled town perhaps, but the feeling was the same anyway: Evil had gotten hold on the Flaming Fist somehow, and it was a slow creeping kind, not a clear infestation. I wasn't sure if I had to weep or smile, but of course Nethander was already involved when I finally awoke to the situation. The different factions with the Fist were jockeying for position, but that natural process was tinged with taint.

I needed to find things out, but with Cuura drinking with the barbarians, Nethander sparring with the swordsmen, and Kendalan teaching their scouts, my position could be easily pulled towards some faction. I decided to talk to Grimwald, to ask him to become an intermediary, which resulted in him locking on the fact I did not want to be seen with Nethander. Sigh. Lasham smiled and said that this was as good a test case as he could have devised, so he would only help me if I really became stuck. Aggravating, but he was right.

*T*here was, of course, a serious downside to operating alone: I only heard thing the others had done after they happened and my friends and companions were sometimes... how to put it... less trained in diplomacy than I was. Kendalan and Cuura had almost started a 'war' between the harassers and the archers, and Nethander was helping the swordsmen to come up with devious plans... and was good at those. Luckily Felina stayed out of it, and Zhae was mostly busy assisting Grimwald in the smithy.

I berated myself for not spending time with Zhae. But would it harm him to actually ask?

*A*fter talking to Nethander he promised to scale down his plans, and that he would see what he could find out about Narses, the leader of the swordsmen. Kendalan just left with some scouts for a wilderness test, and Cuura decided to make amends by dropping in on Saris, the archery captain, after she buttered things up with Ula, the harassers leader.

*D*ropping in on somebody coming from Calimport was, according to Nethander, not the thing to do, so we taught Cuura several does-and-don'ts. Grimwald was not happy that we used the smithy, but I had a good feeling about this. Then she left and I could just pace. The cycles of nature were so much more easily felt here, but the stars were as opaque as in Tu Lung. Would she pass?

*W*hen she returned she had succeeded beyond our best hopes. Not only had she restored good relations, but she also got enough intel so Grimwald could assist her in creating an adapted training scheme which would enhance the units capabilities. I really needed to trust my companions more, but Grimwald was right in stating that trust was good, but proper preparing was better.

*A*fter a ride I got to perform for Narses, but could not find anything improper. An utter focus on the dress and equipment, often beyond effectiveness, but was that wrong? Still, I could feel twisted ideas creeping by. I was looking, but not seeing. Abysmal... not the twisted logic of Hell. I managed to get him to visit Grimwald to look at a masterwork (and pretty looking) swords. Again nothing conclusive, yet there is clearly taint present... But how where they touched? No Jade to be had.

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