

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 80: Essential Vices (3rd ride of Uktar 1370)

The weather in could be best described as 'volatile'. One hour the wind blew a wintry whet spray through the city, a few hours later a soft breeze almost had the promise of spring. No true frost – it seldom snowed here – but a water chill felt even worse. Outdoor performances were definitely out. I kept on learning more songs, more stories, and most merchants started to indicate in sometimes none to subtle words that I should go somewhere else. The 'Gate was a trader's city, but it seemed my father taught me well. I would feel guilty but for the fact that we could help many more if we were well equipped.

Was it less than a year ago when I thought that Grimwald's mantra was a bit overdone?

Cuura in the mean time worked hard to restore the status of the archers. The barbarian harassers were oddly quiet about her actions, I would have expected them to force her to prove she had the right (not that I doubted the outcome of such a fight for a moment). Alas I wasn't present, because it turned out that Nethander saw the best path to getting close to Narses was to start ugly rumors and infighting. And Nethander is nothing but effective.

In the end it turned out well, because he returned with a vital clue before his suggestions started to boil over, but I had to agree with Grimwald that this was trusting luck perhaps a bit too much. He had drunk a wine reserved to the leaders of the men-at-arms, and he was wise enough to detect that he started to act out of character. Foppish to be exact. Our tiefling had always been interested in clothing, but till now his main focus had been how it influenced others, not about how the fabric felt or the actual costs. He hadn't really changed, but there was this easy way down into debauchery. Yet, frustratingly enough, nothing changed that we could detect, but for a feeling of evil. We considered psionics, and I discovered that there was a second, hidden, path of magic called 'shadow-magic', controlled by Shar. Even as we looked for a way to counter that it turned out that the 'change' slowly lessened over time. Not like the Art at all, much more like a disease or poison...

In the mean time Felina managed to get a sample of that 'wine'. EVIL! Yet not magic. 'We need an expert, and we find a dwarf alchemist living a days ride east of the 'Gate. Rides of looking for the source of the problem, and then we stumbled over the perpetrator. Or at least the creator. He admitted making distilled vices: Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth, Pride, Lust, Envy, Fear, Deceit and Greed, ostensibly for a group trying to build defenses against these. He had been duped, a task not too difficult I was afraid. Wrath, Pride, Sloth, Fear, and Greed had been used, leaving Gluttony, Lust, Envy, and Deceit unaccounted for. Grimwald berated this Klyje of clan Grossgrabenstein, while we hunt for the place this 'wine' is created.

With help of some priests of Tymora we create an antidote, and Felina had no problem in switching the foul brew with the restorative one in the wine merchants cellars. We thought it likely that the persons doing the mixing had no idea what they were doing, and even if they did they were helpers: no use in warning the masterminds behind this. Five of the vices destroyed... But we'll need to be vigilant to discover the other four.

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