

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

### *Chapter 83: Knowledge ≠ Understanding (3rd ride of Nightal 1370)*

*A*fter we returned to the 'Gate, our smith analyzed the trolls armor, proclaiming them to be masterly – but not dwarven masterly – made by using scraps of former mail and weaponry. He did not seem to be worried about such well equipped opponents, but to me it felt like another sign. Things were happening that would threaten the lives and safety of many.

*T*wo books we took a look at the next morning. They were ancient but still readable and radiated a kind of vague magic, but beneath the surface power lay waiting. Another kind of magic was placed over it, making the whole rather muddled. One had the draconic rune for 'body' on it, the other 'mind'. Although the script was draconic, the writing style was more runic. Accompanying it was a non magical scroll written in a bold hand, and signed with an odd, triangular, claw mark:

*Master of Fire and Stone,*

*I hope these two books are of acceptable quality. We indeed have not lost a battle once we took your advice, and these three messengers show what our new army will look like. The business in the north east is indeed one that would allow a well prepared group to build a solid base. The business around Soubar will be concluded as the harp is unstrung.*

*F*elina decided that she and Grimwald would read the tomes, Mind for her and Body for our dwarf. Well I said that Felina decided, but Grimwald had a gleam in his eyes indicating it would be difficult for him to let another satisfy his curiosity first. As the Omen had not warned for any mishaps, it was a bit disconcerting that both readers seemed so engrossed by the books that they seemed oblivious to anything else. Then I noticed the runes disappeared as they nodded in understanding. Ah, two of those books. Rare, rare indeed.

*W*hile some of us were considering the pros and cons of this happening, it turned out that Nethander and Cuura had left in hunt of that dwarf. I started picking up gear because for one reason or another when those two went on a 'mission', it usually turned out that some action was needed, and went for an information hunt myself. It took some time – the pair of them had just finished reading those tomes – but they had indeed found the dwarf and he wanted to see the items we had received from the time traveling person. Felina was a bit in two minds about it, but it seemed he was the guardian of children with birth defects. Again I felt Karma twist and turn in gut wrenching way. There was no way to evade what was going to happen, Powers where focused on this event to happen one way or another.

*O*utside the sky was more overcast, with the promise of cold rain or wet snow in the near future. I wasn't exactly surprised when a ripple in the reality started to form, but the bulk of the creature coming through was a lot bigger than any previous infestation. Grimwald with his formal training in these matters identified it as a greater Hezrou, a daemon warrior with a poisonous aura and immunity against fire and lightning. Cuura charged but was indeed overcome by its foul fumes, and stood helplessly retching. Kendalan grabbed his bow as I searched deep in myself for a fire hot enough to even break through the defenses of one normally immune.

*T*hen Nethander took the lead and he spoke to the creature in no uncertain terms. I did not speak the Infernal, no Abysmal, tongue, but I could read his body language as he clearly lambasted the daemon while holding his hand up like it was a sign of sorts. That hand... the hand with the strange mark... a mark the daemon also wore. No doubt Nethander would call it luck, but his ploy worked and the creature retreated through the gate. Would we have been able to defeat it? I severely doubted that.

*A*fter a bit of quick talk to the arriving guards and burghers present we could continue towards the abode of Durgan Stonehammer. As we came close we found a number of people keeping an eye on this area. I heard Cuura propose we discuss this in a nearby inn, but I (foolishly) thought that just asking one of them about what they were doing would do no harm. That turned out to be as far from the truth as I could get.



I got attacked by this lout, although his skill was not on a level that seriously threatened me. Around the inn another scuffle broke out. Nethander was in the midst of it, and I worried that he jumped to conclusions, perhaps even attacked an innocent! The fight was rather one sided, and I asked Kendalan to stop a fleeing opponent, so we could discover what was going on. Yet instead of using his impressive speed, he just shot an arrow in the fleeing man's back, killing him. I was shocked and even quite angry that Kendalan would fall for such needless use of violence. The man wasn't a threat, was unlike to ever become a threat, and without information we would blunder through our lives like men in the dark. The scuffle near the inn took an unexpected turn when a female petrified Nethander, only to be hit herself by a crushing blow from Grimwald.

Zhae captured one ruffian, Kendalan – had he truly understood why I was so angry? – another, but Felina's help to the fallen woman came to late. What was going on here? We needed to first take care of Nethander, while Cuura and Felina talked to the dwarf. I knew Cuura wasn't as diplomatic as I was, but with dwarves she had a good report, and Felina would be there to polish any rough edges.

As was to be expected with our lade luck, the priests of that temple just happened to have the proper counter spells available. As Nethander had done many good things for that temple, they even did not ask for any repayment in return. Grimwald felt bad about killing the woman, even after we found out that she definitely was one of the people that through her actions invited such fate. I could understand him: there was no proof beforehand, so his decision was wrong.

When we returned to the house we started to check the items of the calshite woman. There was something odd about them. I quickly discovered that wearing them tried to break both my spirit and my body, but – and that was unexpected – also when one took them off. Nethander found another link to the Medusa. These things are risky, so we kept them for later analysis. Cuura said that she had helped Durgan with finding a safe place for the children, but that she would not tell us. A secret shared was a secret lost, that was true, so we complimented her on her actions. So many threads, so many things happening, and yet we were no further in discovering the truth of the matter.

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