

The story of Chi Si Chen (Autumn Silver Reed)

Chapter 90: Being recruited (2nd ride of Alturiak 1371)

The Sergeant decided that trolls, especially hunter trolls, roaming these hills, was something he needed to report. So while we still checked near the road the focus shifted from reconnaissance to safety. We still checked but never outside line of sight. It also meant we moved quicker so a day or two early we arrived at an outpost of Neverwinter, manned by Cuura alike humans. The alike was not because she knew them, although... more of that later... but they were as close to their horses as our combat leader was. This meant, of course, that Cuura wanted to test the leaders mettle, something Grimwald managed to smooth over only with difficulty. I talked to their lore master, and picked up a few small troubles with the officers of the army proper. I think I managed to propose a solution that would please all involved. What a bit of horsehair can do for morale...

Once we reached the city we quickly accompanied Grimwald to visit his grandfather. He was as nervous as I was when I was summoned to my mothers quarters. Inside his kin showed that there was taciturn and taciturn. Then Grimwald broke the news of him leaving the clan, and I saw how it would feel if you put a mountain on top of another one. No external change... but oh, the pressure! Like any proper elder he didn't blink an eye, but handled it the best he could. Cuura tried to speak to his defense, but although I spotted an almost imperceptible change, the old man continued with what needed to be done. Stopping his work – Grimwald was shocked by that – he took out a maul then ordered Grimwald to put his right hand on an anvil. We all could see what was coming, but nobody, not even Nethander, tried to intervene. He was mumbling under his breath in dwarven, and, although I could not understand the words, I understood the meaning: he was calling on his Gods, his forefathers, his whole lineage to judge the matter at hand. Strange but this felt like it could happen back home... if there were men with enough strength and morals in spirit to be able to do so.

The hammer came down, and there was no doubt Grimwald's hand was crushed, yet as it struck I saw/felt/knew that Grimwald was tested and found genuine. The bones, muscles and sinews knitted together within seconds. The pain was true, but I knew that both dwarfs considered it a price well worth paying. Grimwald of course tried to object, but his grandfather, in angry, but oh so relieved, tones cut him off. This matter clearly was closed business. Instead the old smith started to check his grandson's handiwork, and I thought that he was happy with what he saw, even if making compliments was not something he was accustomed to do.

Back in the inn we prepared for a relaxed dinner when two men entered. Both had that aura of military men, yet one showed in everything he did that he had compassion, while the other looked at us with a glint that got me edgy before he had said a word. They wanted us to join the army, but instead of just asking they, well captain Nathaniel Ogg alone, just put us into a position where we had to join to support him. This was so like Tu Lung that I felt bile rising in my throat and I close to exploded. Later Felina told me she pick-pocketed his notebook with his hooks on most people in Neverwinter. Sometimes I love Felina!

Grimwald, of course, came to talk to me about my reaction, but I managed to reassure him while still holding on the fire. I need the fire, even if I need to control it. Tempering... not yet. I was upset with the other captain, a priest of Ilmater no less, that he allowed Ogg to pain people in the name of Law and Order. That night, however, I saw my feelings were correct, but my reaction was not: I should strive to make him decide to follow another path in life, not force him to do so. Passion and compassion. Heat and warmth. How to interweave them?

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