

## **Being a Recounting of the Tale of the Relic of Gar Urthal**

Our tale begins in the hot deserts of Hayat Ghallaya where Gar Urthal, a great general and red sorcerer was chieftain of the Jewelled Pavilion. Many battles he fought and tribes destroyed but after one such victory, the wife of the defeated chieftain caught his eye and instead of putting her to death, as was his custom, he took her back with him.

Aliana was a powerful seeress and although she hated Gar Urthal, over many months he managed to successfully woo her and eventually a great love formed between them. This culminated in the birth of their only child, a boy.

Gar Urthal, with his brutal ways, had many enemies and they conspired together to bring an end to his happiness. They paid one of his son's nursemaids to poison the child with a terrible wasting disease and it soon brought him close to his death. In pain and anguish the parents called out to their patrons, the Elemental Prince of Fire and the Evil Sphere, for assistance so that the boy should not die.

Rather than curing him, as they had hoped, all three were transformed. The boy into an unchanging, but living, state of a multitude of small pink and blue crystals. The parents into two halves of a shell to enclose and protect their son forever. And so, this became a relic of the Jewelled Pavilion and it was closely guarded and protected.

The Jewelled Pavilion passed the ages through exploration and eventually became part of the Mirror Realm on the dark pass, prey to the vampires there.

After the valley had made a successful trip into the Mirror Realm to rescue Nathan and destroy the Soul Garden that remained there, news of its existence came to one Jebediah Clearwater, leader of a group of artefact retrieval experts known as the The Misfits. The Misfits travelled to the Mirror Realm and heard tell of the great relic held by the Jewelled Pavilion. In an audience with the seeress Kadira she prophesied that in seeking what they desired they would bring about their own destruction. They shrugged off the advice as superstition and when Kadira left them alone for a short while they attempted to break the seal on the relic to get to what they thought would be the treasure within.

Using a Ritual of Breaking they managed to open the relic but the forces of Gar Urthal and Aliana swept out upon them and they were forced to retreat without its contents. Upon their return to the Valley the curse began to take effect and one by one they were destroyed.

Knowledge of these events was passed down to Jebediah's son, Jezeriah in the form of a journal, but he remained in ignorance of what had truly happened to his father and the rest of The Misfits.

During the Cataclysm, the Jewelled Pavilion passed from the Mirror Realm onto Orin Rakatha and they had sufficient strength to claim a Nation for themselves. Settling in, they created a small shrine to house the relic of Gar Urthal and his family and gave it what protection they could spare. The shrine was named the Shrine of Passion.

Soon after they drew the attention of the Fortress of Pentar who wished to test the strength of this unknown nation. To do so they summoned a Hephath named Barash-et-Ketazor and commanded him to assail the Jewelled Pavilion nation. The Hephath was not, by itself, the strongest of its kind but its soul's desire was to consume those who were firstborn children to their parents and from them it gained its power. It was soon drawn to the site of the relic and, discovering within it the crystals of the firstborn son of Gar Urthal and Aliana, it consumed them and gained a tremendous power, effectively making it immune to attack.

Seeking to continue its orders to harass the Jewelled Pavilion, the Hephath constructed three

nodes of disease to spread foulness among the people and to bring about their demise. The disease was at first easily treated but could not be permanently removed and always came back with a greater virulence. Eventually those affected would begin to lose their minds and became little but anger and pain filled shells of their former selves driven to attack and kill those not yet afflicted.

In desperation the Jewelled Pavilion asked nearby nations to assist them but not knowing who they could trust decided to create a series of trials to test each nation against the others. Seeress Kadira was chosen to oversee these trials and she welcomed groups from The Fortress of Pentar, The Khalid, The Valley and The Shadowsfall. The Reader had also been invited but chose not to become involved in the trials.

The trials consisted of contests of both arms and senses and although the Khalid nation eventually came out on top, it was the Valley nation that was selected to assist the Jewelled Pavilion based on the manner of their conduct during the testing. Throughout this period the Hepath sent groups of his minions who, when slain, appeared to drop small crystals.

The crystals were collected and the Valley group journey to the Shrine of Passion and returned them to the their container. The top part of the container was part of the treasures passed to Jezeriah Clearwater who had been assigned as guide to the group and when the top and bottom halves were reunited both Gar Urthal and Aliana appeared before them. They exclaimed their anger that not all the crystals of their son had been returned and demanded that the rest be retrieved from the Hepath and brought back to the container.

Speaking again with Kadira, it became clear the group must embark on a vision quest to journey within the Hepath and release the remaining crystals within him. The start of the vision quest would be at the point the relic was broken open and the power released and that meant going back to the moment where The Misfits met with Kadira and completed the Ritual of Breaking. True to her word they were transported to that moment and after witnessing events passively for a first time, they then had an opportunity to try and influence Jebediah from his course of action but clearly, since it was just a vision there was no way to actually change history. The Misfits did not recognise the Valley group in the vision and there was a great battle that the group barely overcame. Now, however, they were well within the realms of the Hepath's mind and the only release would come from besting him at every challenge.

Exploring the Hepath meant encountering trials and challenges at every turn. As well as pure testes of combat, there were tests of memory and intellect, challenges of the power of the mind, judgement challenges and even being forced to confront oneself and persuade or reason why they should continue.

This led onto a great prison where the remains of the child were being held. A kind of secure kindergarden. Concentric layers of wards had been placed around the child and each area broken into sections based on spheres of power and colours of magic. Each area would have to be set (by one or more people entering) and when all were set the wards would come down and creatures of each type attack.

Defeating the wards the child was released but he had decided, in his petulant way, that he had been abandoned by his parents and he did not want to leave. Some persuasion was required to make him believe again in the love of his parents, combined with the promise of sweets. At this he transformed back into crystals that were gathered up and the group ended their vision quest and returned to the real world.

The found crystals were returned back to relic and Gar Urthal once again reappeared, but thanks there came none, only threats to not let it happen again. It seems now, that the relic has

been breached, Gar Urthal, Aliana and their son will once again walk the paths of the Jewelled Pavilion and it remains to be seen what influence this once general will have upon them. Now that the Hepaths power was waning the three nodes of disease were vulnerable to interference, and coming back to their original quest, the Valley managed to cleanse each malign area.

Finally, his power truly broken, Kadira supplied a ritual to summon forth the Hepath and it was finally slain and cast back to the Abyss.

Those from the valley were: Roesis Tarndeth, Vallan, Mordecai, Igor, Frannk, Zug, Malice, Drake and myself Ichabod

Jezeriah