

Activating The Gem

Inspired by the painting "*Activating the Gem*" by Mark Price.

The stillness of the desert night was complete. The naked stars bejeweled the night sky high above whilst warm and gentle breezes caressed the long golden stems of the *kral* grass. The plain stretched out in every direction, rising gently to the east. The perfect horizon was interrupted only by the occasional tree - lonely sentinels keeping a silent vigil over the savanna.

Erupting from the plain like a spear toward heaven, dominating the trees about it as if mocking them, a steep and narrow stone staircase rose. It's dark grey rock little more than an inky shadow in the moonlight. Up and up yet further and steeper it rose, seeming too narrow and frail to support its own weight, yet solid and unmoving. Timeless and unchanging, this monument had stood for centuries weathering the passing years in dignity and indifference.

A herd of jekals slowly lumbered along the plain, wary of predators, yet embracing the warm night. Their eyes strayed to the stone behemoth but they paid little attention to it. It was and had always been.

A pack of desert striders, emerald scales glinting in the moonlight, gathered amicably to devour a fresh kill. They too saw the stairway rising into the sky. But it offered no prey, no shelter. They, too, ignored it.

The giant mura birds, perched lazily, burdening weary branches. With their keen eyes, the monolith was always in view. But winds surrounded it, guarding it. No fruit laden branches did it offer. They turned their attention to the plain.

Distantly, the soft *swish swish swish* of the *kral* grass against a warrior's leggings came into hearing and in a moment a lone figure stood at the foot of the stair.

The crunch of sand and gravel underneath his leather boot caused desert striders to look up from their feast. The jekals paused in their grazing while the mura birds turned to gaze and take in the details of the figure.

His tall, lean figure was wrapped in a forest green hunting cloak tied with golden pendant. His long auburn locks cascading gracefully about his shoulders contrasted with his bright green eyes. The mura birds noted other colors... the purple armband, the long silver dagger, the ruby ring and the black headband with runes of white which spelled out his name... *REM*.

Slowly, almost reverently, the warrior placed a hesitant foot upon the first step. The second came with more confidence and the third. Step by step, Rem mounted the ancient stone staircase, leaving the world of mortal man behind. The animals watched as he rose to the height of the trees and passed on, higher and higher. From the ground, he seemed a god walking among the heavens. At the top, the warrior paused. No platform waited for him there. No door. The stairs simple ended. High above the land, the final step carried forward into empty air.

Rem looked out upon the plain before him. His sweeping gaze taking in the whole of creation. An infinity of space stretched out beyond the horizon, embracing the curve of the world, holding aloft the heavens. The stars beckoned to him.

From a worn leather satchel at his side, he withdrew a small fist sized stone. A shimmer of green reflecting the starlight hinted at its beauty. He gazed upon the emerald for a while in quiet reverie. Slowly tracing the thin silver lines on its surface, his finger drew the outline of the Avisarr. Gently cradling the emerald in both hands, he held it above his head, closed his eyes and waited for the words to come. Like formless thoughts, the images came unbidden to his mind. Symbols and runes tied to memories and emotions. Like liquid, the syllables flowed from him, a whisper of desire, a chant of ecstasy.

The Avisarr responded. A soft glow at first that only warmed the hands and lit the face. But soon it grew. It spread, alighting the top of the staircase. Mura birds perched high in distant landwing trees watched as a pinprick of light on the horizon grew in strength.

With the light came the tremors. A deep rumbling which embraced the stone and stretched out to the trees, shaking their branches. The illumination intensified engulfing the top of the staircase and forcing Rem to shield his eyes.

Blinking back tears, Rem cried out the final syllables and the gem exploded in dazzling light and peals of thunder. A ring of emerald fire erupted from the Avisarr, spreading out in a slow wave of energy. As it spread across the sky, lines of light formed within the ring matching the lines on the gem. The symbol of the Avisarr.

Mura birds took to flight, jekal herds dispersed and desert striders craned their necks to watch the ring of fire spread out across the sky. Before Rem, suspended in air at the edge of the stairs, a great rippling cloud of light had spread out from the center of the ring. Rem peered into the cloud, across dimensions, through time...

Memories of old friends and past adventures played themselves out in the cloud. The saving of the one true king, the journey into the Labyrinth, the battle with the demon lord. These events and others played themselves out with perfect clarity before him as he replayed them in his mind.

Closing his eyes, Rem took a deep breath and stepped forward into the light. With a flash and a peal of thunder, Rem, the Avisarr and the cloud of light were gone. The ring of fire, still expanding, slowly dispersed on the edge of the horizon even as the rolling thunder faded.

The mura birds returned to the branches, the striders returned to their feast. The jekals cautiously moved back to the patches of kral grass to feed. All was quiet under the night sky. The desert breeze moaned a soft good-bye.