

Pendragon- Forest of Flames

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I couldn't help myself. I made a second string of territories.

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1 - Second Earth

* First Earth*

Bobby Pendragon ran his hand along the rocky wall around the flume. It felt strange to think it was all over. It was a good feeling, strange, but good. All of Halla had almost crumbled, but it didn't. Saint Dane had lost. A pinprick of light appeared at the furthest point of the flume within view. The jumble of sweet musical notes came to, growing louder as the light grew brighter.

He smiled slightly. He wondered to himself who was paying a visit. Loor, maybe Alder? Either way it would be a pleasant surprise. But as fate would have it, the surprise was not so pleasant. The light and music reached their climax, then vanished, leaving an eerie silence, made eerier by the person at the mouth of the flume.

Saint Dane.

Bobby stood there, stunned. The demon was back. He gave a twisted smile, showing his crooked, yellow teeth.

"You act surprised Pendragon," he said, his voice full of relish at the fear he was causing. "Did I not tell you that Halla was only the beginning?" At this he gave a high, cold laugh and turned to the flume.

"Gararu!" He shouted, then turned towards Bobby again and chuckled, "you certainly have your work cut out for you," he said, and with another horrible smile the light and music grew insistent, then vanished along with Saint Dane.

Bobby was in shock. He felt cold and weak. Saint Dane. He had been defeated, but there he had been. Hala was only the beginning. What did it mean? Obviously there were more territories than the ten he knew about. He made a quick decision. It killed him to do it, but he knew he had to. He straightened up, faced the flume and croaked out ,

"Gararu!"

The flume sprang to life and the adventure began again.

2 - Gararu

* Gararu *

Hey mark. Hey Courtney. Listen, I'm sorry I'm not home with you guys right now. As it turns out there are more territories. When the flume dropped me off I mentally kicked myself for doing this. I had to do it, but I didn't have to like it. As always there was a pile of clothes waiting in the gate. There was a pair of soft black shorts that sort of felt like cotton. There was also a crude leather belt, attached to two pieces of brightly colored, burlapy feeling cloth with a pattern of vertical stripes. I slipped into the shorts; they were a little longer than my boxers, and actually pretty comfortable. The belt I fastened around my waist, the cloth dangling in front and back of the shorts.

I started to look around for a shirt, but never found one. At that moment a sharp metallic squeal sounded from the far side of the dark room. I backed up against the wall; whatever it was made of it was rough and sharp on my bare back. But, it was better than the quig that, no doubt, owned the beady yellow eyes staring at me. It stepped close enough to see it in the gloom. I wanted to puke. It looked like a possum, and was about the size of a house cat, with mangy white fur and foam around its bald snarling snout.

Also, complementing its stubby ears were a black, beetle-like shell, and a black scorpion tail.

It stepped forward again and hissed, but a moment later a large club of weathered wood came down on it, crushing its skull and spraying a disgusting brownish liquid everywhere. I did puke. After emptying my stomach I looked into the dark for my savior and saw, more yellow eyes .I panicked for a moment thinking it was another quig, but then I noticed they had pupils and a sort of intelligence that I can't quite put my finger on.

"Hello Pendragon," It said.

3 - Garau (1)

Gararu (continued)

Whatever it was stepped close enough to see. It was a kid about thirteen or fourteen, with a mop of shaggy black hair; it was tangled up and looked like it had never been washed. He had a hint of a friendly smile, but I was honestly freaked out. Like I said before, he had yellow eyes, but that was nothing now that I could see the rest of him. First, his arms were long, reaching about to his knees. His forearms were covered with thick black fur up to his oversized hands. Next were his feet, the toes looked more like fingers, and the big toe was actually a thumb. And adding to the disturbing effect of it all, he had a tail. I'm serious; he had a long, furry, black tail that dangled out from under the back of the cloth he was wearing. (He had a loincloth-shorts outfit too.)

I stood there for a minute like an idiot, mouth open, catching flies. He shifted on his feet, obviously feeling awkward. I closed my gaping mouth, but still was in total brain lock.

"Uh, you are Pendragon right?" He asked nervously. I nodded dumbly, still a bit too freaked to talk.

"I'm Arrol, the traveler from Gararu." He held out a length of leather chord from around his neck, a traveler ring dangling from it. His tail twitched and moved side to side like a monkeys. I finally got my wits back together; I really shouldn't have been so surprised after the klees on Eelong, but for whatever reason I was.

"Um, yeah," I said, "so, Arrol?"

"Yep," he said, smiling again. "No offense, but you're a little strange looking," he said. I was strange looking? Give me a break. "We'll have to do something about that," he cocked his head. "You'll stick out." Oh geese. He motioned for me to follow, we walked out of the dark room and out to where the lighting was a bit better. I now saw we were surrounded by bark. Weird. He pulled a knife out from under his cloth, note to self: watch out for the clothes on Gararu. He started gently scraping bark off the wall. He started talking as he worked.

"So, I guess you should probably know everything that's going on here. Since Saint Dane's here, it means something big's about to happen right?" I nodded. "Okay, well, let's see. There's been a drought lately, I'm not sure it's such a big deal though. It's a little dry, but there's enough water left in the river to last a long time."

"Are you sure you're not making this drought sound like it's not as bad as it is?" I asked, after all, the turning point on Loors home territory, Zadda, was a drought. People almost killed each other over it.

"No," He said thoughtfully, "You can take a look for yourself though if you want." He motioned towards an opening in the bark cave. I stuck my head outside and got my first look at Gararu. I Gaped.

4 - Garau continued

Gararu (continued)

Gararu was spectacular, I was looking down out of a hollow in a huge tree; at least three hundred feet up. Forever as far as you could see was an ocean of millions more enormous pine trees like the one I was in. The ground was littered with pine needles, patches of grass and wild brush were scattered here and there. Snaking their way through the roots and thickets were what looked like little lines of silver. The effect was breathtaking.

"Here we go!" Arrol said. I had forgotten he was there. When I looked he had worked through the thick bark, and a thick river of sap began to ooze out. "Could you come here?" He asked. I was sorry I did. With a strange and highly unpleasant process that I don't plan on explaining he used the sticky goop to stick a mass of brown fur to my forearms (don't ask me where he got it) and attached a hairy brown vine to the back of my shorts for a tail. I noticed the resin seeped through a slit in the back that I guessed was for a real one. Ewe. Finally, after putting a pair of leather moccasins on my feet he stepped back. "Okay, now we can go," he said.

He walked over and stepped backwards over the edge of the hollow. I rushed over and looked down expecting to see a big splat at the bottom of the tree. Instead he was expertly climbing down the tree, hooking his dexterous hands and feet into deep cracks in the huge chunks of bark covering the tree. I started nervously down the face of the tree. My feet felt tentatively for holds, and I continued this way for about ten feet. Suddenly I slipped and began to plummet downward.

5 - Gararu (continued)

Gararu (continued)

Oh, great. I had been here all of ten minutes, and I was already about to die. Branches whipped by in a blur as I fell. I closed my eyes, not wanting to know when I was about to splat. I felt an impact at my side. But I hadn't hit the ground yet, I cracked open one eye, and saw that Arrol had grabbed onto my shoulder with his feet (I'd have been a little grossed out if they weren't my only lifeline). We were moving at an angle sideways, and I was suddenly aware that it hurt (really bad) where he had hit me; my guess is that he launched himself out of the tree at me. Not sure how it's supposed to help. But then he grabbed a passing branch and its front end started coming with us. We slowed as the branch bent, and then, when I thought it would break in two, it snapped back to its original shape and we went flying up.

Over the course of maybe forty seconds, he caught another branch which bent up and, unfortunately, slung us back down. He then repeated his first trick and we slung back up and down various branches in various directions until the whole cartoon-like affair ended in the crotch of another giant tree. I wanted to hurl all over again. Through the nausea and pounding headache the ride had given me I managed to turn to Arrol and croak out,

"Thanks". He looked a little shaken up too, and replied,

"Just don't make me do that again." I leaned over (carefully) and threw a couple of dry heaves; my stomach was still empty after all. Looking down I saw that what from my former position maybe two hundred feet up looked like silver lines were actually tiny clear streams of water ranging from about six inches to two feet wide. I also noticed there were about twice as many of these canals that were dried up.

6 - Gararu (Continued)

Gararu *Continued*

After we got our wits back together I took a nerve wracking and somewhat awkward ride through the forest. Nerve wracking obviously because we were hundreds of feet in the air and Arrol was jumping from limb to limb like a freaking monkey. Awkward because I was riding on his back the whole time. The wiry kid was apparently strong enough to hold me and jump gaps at least ten feet across at the same time. We saw a lot of animals along the way. We passed colorful birds that looked like a cross between a cockatoo and a dove, as well as small squirrel like creatures with apish faces and long front limbs (which Arrol pointed out were delicious and a good source of protein. How nasty is that?)

The sun was starting to go down slowly, creating an oddly purple and blue sunset. The duskier it got the jumpier Arrol seemed to get. He stopped at intervals to look around, and occasionally cocked his head like a dog listening to something. And he was from here so I guessed if he was nervous, I should be too. "Hey," I finally asked, "You seem a little freaked, any reason for that?" He looked at me like someone back home would if I asked, "United States, Is that a country?"

"You really don't know do you?" He finally replied.

"No, I'm not exactly from around here."

"Well," He said, starting to move again, "After sunset, the kanmids come up from the ground."

"And kanmids are?"

"Well, I'll put it this way, to them we're two easy meals," he said grimly. Great, another territory where things want to eat me. Finally, as it was starting to get dark we arrived at a huge grove of the giant trees surrounded by thick canals, the jump was so far we almost missed the next branch, I'm glad we didn't, going splat would just make saving all of existence that much harder. We started gaining altitude quickly as he scrambled up the enormous cracks in the bark, and after about fifty feet upward we reached a hole about three feet wide and he hauled us through. Once inside he started vigorously poking a pale white bundle of mushrooms which responded by giving off a bright reddish glow. Once the space was illuminated I saw it was fairly roomy, about eight feet of space all the way around and a ceiling about fifteen feet above, all carved out inside the tree.

"Here we are," he said, a hint of pride in his voice, "I hope you wont mind staying here for a while." He turned back to the entrance as I examined the space. The floor was soft and spongy, covered with thick moss and soft grasses that appeared to be growing out of it. The wall had a shelf made of sticks that had a few small clay jars, a freaky animal skull of some sort, a bulbous root, and three rolls of paper-like bark.

So I found out that the bark was actually used as paper and the weird root contained ink. I'm using them to write this journal. Also I noticed that Arrol used a thick slab of wood and something like an old fashioned bear bar to seal the door. But I'm ending this journal now; tomorrow the hunt for Saint Dane begins again. You'd better bet I'm not happy about it. But for now, I hobeey ho, and I hope to see you soon.