



*From the MixCache.com library*

SAMPLE COPY

# Echoes of the Fallen

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

## Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Shadows Beneath the Hearth
- Chapter 2: The Veiled Ritual
- Chapter 3: The Scholar's Awakening
- Chapter 4: Runes in the Ashes
- Chapter 5: Prophecy Unfolding
- Chapter 6: Emberlight's Calling
- Chapter 7: Companions in Exile
- Chapter 8: Whispers of the Forestborn
- Chapter 9: Secrets of the Skyhold
- Chapter 10: The Shattered Pact
- Chapter 11: Gathering Storms
- Chapter 12: Veins of Darkness
- Chapter 13: Betrayal at Sundown
- Chapter 14: The Lost God's Mark
- Chapter 15: Echoes of Ruin
- Chapter 16: The First Trial
- Chapter 17: Fire's Reckoning
- Chapter 18: The Mirror Gate
- Chapter 19: Sacrifice at Dawn
- Chapter 20: The Watcher in Shadow
- Chapter 21: Rally of the Forgotten
- Chapter 22: Blades Across Realms
- Chapter 23: Legacy Unbound
- Chapter 24: Fall of the Nightbringer
- Chapter 25: Harmony Restored

## Introduction

In the heart of the forgotten Vale of Silences, life was ordinary—at least on the surface. Ancient stone cottages clung to grassy knolls, their walls whispering stories of a world long past into the eager ears of children tucked in for the night. Amongst them lived Arin, a humble scholar's apprentice, whose days were measured by the sun's cycle and whose aspirations rarely stretched beyond the safety of his village's border. The touch of fantasy, for young Arin, lived only within the pages of brittle tomes, remnants of kingdoms that time had all but buried beneath layers of dust and myth.

But the serenity of the Vale was a fragile thing, delicately woven atop secrets far older than any villager dared suspect. Every year, during the waning days of autumn, a ritual was performed not out of faith, but tradition—a silent offering to a history half-remembered. It was during one such ritual, under a cold moon and among the chanting of elders, that Arin first felt the stirrings of something ancient within his blood—an ember, long dormant, now seeking the breath of life.

The event awoke more than just curiosity in Arin. Visions plagued his dreams: shattered crowns, cities swallowed by moss and shadow, a voice—distant yet persistent—calling him by a forgotten name. Objects in the village began to respond to his presence, flickering with faint glyphs, muttering in the tongue of old legends. The villagers watched with wary eyes, unsure whether to fear or revere the awakening power in their midst.

As Arin grappled with his new reality, the past began to unfurl itself with a relentless inevitability. Fragments of prophecy surfaced from the depths of ruined libraries and secret alcoves, each tied to a lineage that, against all logic, pointed to him. The world beyond the Vale—a tapestry of broken kingdoms, haunted forests, and wind-scoured mountains—beckoned, filled with answers and further mysteries alike.

Haunted by both the weight of destiny and the shadows of forgotten powers, Arin stood on a precipice. Little did he know that the path set before him would reach further than legend, forcing him to not only uncover the truth of his heritage, but also to forge bonds that would span the realms—or shatter them forever. Thus, from the ashes of the fallen, the first notes of a new epic would be sung, echoing through the ages, awaiting the one who would dare answer their call.

## CHAPTER ONE: Shadows Beneath the Hearth

The air in Master Elara's study always smelled of aged parchment and something faintly metallic, like forgotten coins. For Arin, this was the smell of home. His life in the Vale of Silences had been a quiet symphony of mundane tasks: grinding herbs for poultices, transcribing Elder Elara's cryptic notes, and, his favorite, poring over the dusty, often fragmented, scrolls that comprised the village's meager library. He was nineteen, lean and unremarkable, with hair the color of damp earth and eyes that tended to linger a moment too long on the faded illustrations in the oldest texts.

Today, however, the familiar scent was underscored by an unfamiliar tremor. It wasn't an earthquake; the cottage stood firm. The tremor was within him, a low thrumming behind his ribs that echoed the subtle vibrations of the ancient stones beneath the hearth. The hearth itself was a central feature of every home in the Vale, built from megalithic blocks salvaged from what the elders vaguely referred to as 'The Old Places.' These 'Old Places' were the crumbling ruins on the outskirts of the village, overgrown with ivy and largely ignored.

"Arin, lad, are you quite well?" Master Elara's voice, raspy from years of lecturing and herbal smoke, cut through the internal hum. She stood by a sun-dappled window, stirring a concoction in a clay pot. Her face, a roadmap of wrinkles, held an expression of concern Arin rarely saw directed at him. Usually, it was a look of exasperated fondness.

Arin cleared his throat, pushing away the strange sensation. "Just a shiver, Master. The autumn air bites sharper this year." He gestled towards the open window, a flimsy excuse given the mildness of the day. He didn't want to admit to the unsettling pulse beneath his skin, or the faint, almost imperceptible shimmer he thought he'd seen ripple across the hearth's stone surface. It would sound like a fever dream, and Elara, for all her wisdom, had little patience for unscientific phenomena.

He returned to the task at hand: meticulously copying a recipe for a headache tonic from a decaying scroll. His quill scratched against the fresh parchment, a comforting sound, yet even that felt subtly altered. Each stroke seemed to resonate with the tremor in his chest, as if the ink itself hummed with a hidden frequency.

Later, as twilight bled into the Vale, casting long, distorted shadows from the gnarled trees, Arin found himself drawn back to the hearth. Master Elara was already asleep, her snores a gentle rumbling from her room. The cottage was quiet save for the crackle of the dying embers. He knelt, tracing the cool, rough surface of the stones. They felt colder than usual, yet somehow, intensely alive.

His fingers brushed over a faint indentation near the base, a swirl he'd always assumed was a natural flaw in the rock. But tonight, as his fingertip passed over it, a faint, almost imperceptible warmth blossomed under his skin. He snatched his hand back, startled. He looked closer. The swirl wasn't a flaw. It was too deliberate, too perfect. A symbol? He'd studied countless ancient scripts, yet this particular glyph was unfamiliar, despite its elegant simplicity.

A faint light, no brighter than a glow-worm, flickered within the crevices of the symbol. Arin stared, mesmerized. It wasn't a trick of the light; the embers in the hearth were too dim to cast such a defined gleam. As he watched, the light intensified, pulsing with the same rhythm that had been throbbing beneath his ribs all day. His hand, as if compelled by an unseen force, reached out again, hovering inches above the stone.

The moment his fingertips grazed the glowing symbol, a jolt, not of pain but of pure, concentrated energy, shot up his arm. It surged through his veins, warm and bright, illuminating every nerve ending. The world spun for a dizzying instant, the cottage walls seeming to blur, then solidify with an unnatural clarity. He felt a profound connection, as if the ancient stone had become an extension of his own being.

A whisper, faint as the rustle of autumn leaves, brushed against the edges of his mind. It wasn't a language he understood, yet the meaning was undeniably clear: *Awaken*.

Panic, cold and sharp, pierced through the wonder. Arin scrambled backward, knocking over a stack of kindling with a clatter. The glow on the hearthstone vanished instantly, leaving only the dull, familiar grey of the rock. The tremor in his chest had subsided, replaced by a lingering echo, like a bell that had just rung.

He sat on the cold floor, heart hammering against his ribs, staring at the innocuous hearth. Had he imagined it? The jolt, the light, the whisper—it all felt too real, too vivid to be a dream. He looked at his hand, still tingling with residual energy. There was nothing visible, no mark, no scorch. Yet, he knew. Something had happened. Something profound.

He remembered the cryptic visions that had plagued his dreams since the autumn ritual: shattered crowns, cities consumed by shadow. He'd dismissed them as stress, the result of too many late nights poring over forgotten histories. But what if they weren't dreams? What if they were echoes, reverberations of the power that had just awakened within him?

He rose, his legs feeling strangely unsteady. The silence of the cottage, once comforting, now felt oppressive, filled with unasked questions. He walked to the window and looked out at the Vale. The moon hung high, a sliver of silver against the black velvet sky, casting the ancient ruins on the horizon in stark relief. For the first

time, Arin didn't see overgrown stones; he saw shattered crowns and cities swallowed by moss and shadow. He saw the past, reaching out to him.

He knew, with a certainty that chilled him to the bone, that his life in the Vale of Silences, the quiet symphony of mundane tasks, had ended. The world, a tapestry of broken kingdoms and haunted forests, was calling. And somehow, impossibly, he was meant to answer. The scholar's apprentice was no longer just a scholar. He was something more. And the journey to understand what, had just begun beneath the hearth of his unassuming home.

SAMPLE COPY

---

*This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.*

Visit [MixCache.com](https://MixCache.com) to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY