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# The Forgotten Kingdom

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## Introduction

Long ago, before the names of cities were etched into maps and the birth of empires had left scars upon the land, there existed a kingdom whispered of only in legend—a beacon of wisdom and power known as Edrion. For centuries, its people prospered beneath the gentle guidance of ancient magic and virtuous rulers. Yet that splendor could not withstand the creeping shadow that stole quietly over Edrion, bringing ruin and silence until even the memory of its glory vanished. Now, only ruins remain, hidden beneath tangled forests and forgotten by all but the oldest of myths.

Unbeknownst to most, the fate of Edrion hangs by a fragile thread, reliant on the unlikeliest of heroes. Arin, a young blacksmith's apprentice haunted by dreams he cannot explain, and Lira, a clever wanderer with secrets deeper than the roots of the oldest trees, are drawn together by twists of destiny. Both have held their separate burdens, content to keep to the margins of a world tilted by corruption and fear. Yet, a strange summons—faint at first—calls them onward, promising that answers to their deepest longings lie somewhere within Edrion's shrouded past.

The story begins in days of uncertainty and unrest, where darkness rises in places both old and new. For Arin and Lira, the journey starts not with a declaration of heroism but with the quiet recognition that they cannot turn away. Forces beyond their understanding are gathering, and the ancient powers that once shielded the land are stirring—a fact that both threatens the fragile present and hints at the possibility of restoring something lost.

As their paths first cross in the bustling town of Mirrowen, the ripple of fate is felt in every glance and hesitant word. Allies, too, begin to surface—some drawn by hope, others by desperation. Each carries a history shaped by the world Edrion left behind, and each will play a role in the unfolding quest to restore balance.

Through trials both physical and emotional, Arin and Lira learn that the Forgotten Kingdom's curse is matched only by its promise. Secrets lurk in the darkest wood, waiting to be unveiled, and riddles of the kingdom's betrayal weave through every step they take. If they are to succeed where countless others have failed, they must unlock not just the kingdom's magic, but also the truth within themselves.

In the pages that follow, the legend of Edrion will be reborn. Old enemies awaken, new friendships are kindled, and the past and future race toward collision. It is in these moments of danger and discovery that courage is forged, and a forgotten kingdom waits to claim its true heirs.

## CHAPTER ONE: Shadows in the Vale

The scent of woodsmoke and damp earth hung heavy in the air of Hearthwood Vale, a familiar comfort to Arin. He stood at the forge, muscles rippling under his worn tunic as he brought his hammer down in a rhythmic clang against glowing steel. Sparks danced like tiny, angry stars, momentarily illuminating the grime on his brow. The anvil sang its ancient song, a melody of creation and transformation, a sound he'd known since he was old enough to hold a miniature hammer.

His father, Old Man Bran, a smith whose hands were as gnarled as ancient oak roots but still possessed surprising strength, grunted approval from his stool by the bellows. "Good, Arin. Keep that rhythm. A sword forged in haste will fail in battle. A sword forged with patience, however..." He let the thought hang, a familiar lesson etched into Arin's very bones. Bran had taught him more than just smithing; he'd taught him the value of meticulous craft, the respect for raw materials, and the quiet dignity of honest labor.

Arin was a creature of routine, of solid ground and predictable days. His world was the forge, the small cottage he shared with Bran, and the occasional trip into Mirrowen for supplies. He knew the paths through Hearthwood like the back of his hand, the best spots for berries, the hidden stream where the fish were plentiful. He was content, or so he told himself. Yet, lately, the contentment felt thin, stretched over an unquiet current beneath the surface.

The dreams had started weeks ago, faint at first, then growing in vividness and intensity. They were not nightmares, not exactly, but unsettling visions of towering, moss-covered stones, of glowing sigils etched into forgotten walls, and a pervasive sense of ancient power humming just beyond his reach. He saw figures, cloaked and regal, and heard whispers in a language he didn't understand, yet somehow recognized. Each morning, he woke with a lingering ache in his chest, a sense of loss for a place he'd never seen.

He tried to dismiss them as the product of overwork or too much ale, but the images persisted, bleeding into his waking thoughts. Sometimes, while hammering a particularly difficult piece of iron, he would catch a fleeting glimpse of a ruin, half-swallowed by grasping vines, shimmering in the heat of the forge. He never spoke of them to Bran, knowing his father would simply scoff and tell him to get more sleep.

Across the sprawling, diverse lands of Edrion – though few still called it by that name – Lira moved with the effortless grace of a shadow. Her world was the open road, the hidden paths, and the ever-shifting tapestry of human nature. She wore practical,

earth-toned clothing, unremarkable enough to blend into any crowd, yet her sharp, intelligent eyes missed nothing. A weathered leather satchel, never far from her side, held all her worldly possessions, and perhaps a few more secrets besides.

She was in the bustling market of Mirrowen this particular morning, a place where the scent of baking bread mingled with fresh fish and the occasional whiff of something less savory. Her nimble fingers moved with practiced ease, exchanging a beautifully carved wooden bird for a handful of fresh apples and a length of sturdy twine. She was a merchant of small wonders, a purveyor of tales, and a collector of whispers. Information was currency, and Lira was rich.

Unlike Arin, Lira had no fixed home, no roots binding her to a single place. Her past was a scattered collection of memories, some sharp and painful, others hazy like a dream. She knew she had been found, a child alone, by a nomadic tribe of traders who had taught her their ways: how to read the stars, how to speak a dozen dialects, how to navigate by instinct and intuition. They had also taught her caution, for the world was a dangerous place for those without a tribe to call their own.

A strange restlessness had begun to prick at her heels in recent months. It wasn't the usual wanderlust that drove her from town to town. This was deeper, more insistent, a feeling of an impending shift, like the pressure building before a storm. She found herself drawn to ancient sites, to crumbling cairns and overgrown ruins that most people avoided. She would sit among the stones, feeling a faint resonance, a thrumming beneath the earth that spoke of forgotten power.

Just yesterday, while exploring the forgotten outskirts of an old quarry, she had found a small, smooth stone, unlike any she had seen before. It fit perfectly in her palm, cool and surprisingly heavy, with faint, almost invisible markings etched into its surface. When she held it, a strange current of energy pulsed, a soft hum that seemed to echo the whispers she heard in the wind—whispers of a place lost, of a kingdom sleeping.

She dismissed the thought, chalking it up to an overactive imagination fueled by too many solitary nights under the stars. Yet, the stone remained clutched in her hand, a small, tangible piece of the inexplicable. It felt important, though she couldn't articulate why. It was a secret, like so many others she carried, hidden away from the prying eyes of the world.

Back in Hearthwood Vale, Arin's hammer struck the cooling steel for the final time. The longsword gleamed under the flickering firelight, its balance perfect, its edge keen. It was a fine piece of work, destined for the mayor's eldest son, who fancied himself a warrior despite having never faced anything more dangerous than a particularly stubborn badger. Arin wiped sweat from his brow with the back of his hand, feeling the satisfying ache of a day well spent.

As he began to clean his tools, a shimmer caught his eye – a faint, almost transparent light that seemed to pulse from a corner of the forge. He blinked, rubbing his eyes, thinking it was just the residual heat playing tricks. But the light persisted, a soft, ethereal glow emanating from a crack in the ancient stone wall, a crack he had never noticed before. Curiosity, a feeling often suppressed in his methodical life, tugged at him.

He approached cautiously, hammer still in hand. The crack was narrow, barely wide enough to slip a finger into, yet the light pulsed more intensely now, a low, resonant thrumming he could feel in his teeth. It was the same feeling he experienced in his dreams. He peered closer, his breath catching in his throat. Within the fissure, something shimmered – a glimpse of intricate carvings, of colors he couldn't quite place, moving and swirling as if seen through water.

A faint whisper brushed against his mind, a wordless invitation, ancient and compelling. It wasn't a voice he heard with his ears, but a thought that resonated deep within him, stirring the dormant longings his dreams had awakened. He reached out, his fingers trembling slightly, drawn by an irresistible force. The stone around the crack felt warm, alive, as if breathing.

At the same time, in Mirrowen, Lira felt a sudden, sharp jolt. The small stone in her satchel, which she had momentarily forgotten, grew intensely warm, almost hot, against her leg. She gasped, quickly reaching in and pulling it out. The faint markings on its surface now pulsed with a soft, inner light, mirroring the mysterious glow Arin was observing. The air around her seemed to thicken, charged with an invisible energy.

She looked around frantically, scanning the faces in the bustling market. No one else seemed to notice. The vendors hawked their wares, children laughed, and the normal cacophony of Mirrowen continued unabated. Only Lira felt the shift, the faint tremor beneath her feet, the whisper that now felt louder, more insistent. It was no longer a vague sense of unease; it was a definite summons.

The whisper in Arin's mind solidified, forming a single, clear thought: *Seek the heart. The forgotten calls.* He recoiled slightly, startled, dropping his hammer with a clatter. It couldn't be real. This was madness. He was a blacksmith, not a dreamer of ancient prophecies. He looked back at the crack, but the shimmering light had faded, leaving only the dark, unyielding stone. Had he imagined it?

Bran, rousing from his doze, stirred. "What was that clatter, lad? You dropped your hammer? You losing your touch?"

Arin quickly bent to retrieve the tool, his heart still thrumming. "Just... a slip, Father.

Nothing." He glanced back at the wall, but the crack was just a crack, the stone unremarkable. Yet, the feeling remained, a deep, unsettling certainty that something profound had just happened. The world, once so predictable, had just shifted on its axis.

Lira, clutching the now-cooler but still faintly glowing stone, felt an undeniable pull, a direction whispered into her very being. It was west, she realized, towards the shadowed peaks that marked the edge of the known world, towards the vast, untamed wilderness that few dared to traverse. It was a dangerous journey, a foolish one, perhaps. But the urgency of the summons was absolute.

She looked down at the stone, its light now a faint glimmer, but the message was clear. *Go*. Her life of careful, measured steps, of blending in and avoiding notice, felt suddenly inadequate. The world needed more than just a clever wanderer; it needed someone to answer a call that transcended the mundane. And, deep down, Lira knew that for all her carefully constructed independence, she was tired of simply watching.

That evening, as the twin moons cast long, silvery shadows over Hearthwood Vale, Arin lay sleepless in his cot. The forge was silent, his father snored softly in the next room, but Arin's mind raced. He kept seeing the shimmering light, hearing the whisper. *Seek the heart. The forgotten calls*. It was a riddle, a command, and a terrifying invitation all at once. His life, simple and predictable, was no longer enough. The dreams, the whispers, they were all leading him somewhere, and resisting felt like trying to hold back a river.

He knew, with a certainty that chilled him and thrilled him simultaneously, that he could not ignore it. The familiar comfort of his home, of his trade, suddenly felt like a cage. He had to know. He had to understand. The Forgotten Kingdom, a name that had only ever been a myth, suddenly felt tangible, just beyond the veil of reality. He would tell Bran he was going on a long trip for supplies, stretching the truth as far as he dared. He would gather what he needed and leave before dawn.

Miles away, under the same moonlit sky, Lira packed her satchel with a determined glint in her eyes. The stone, now nestled safely within her inner pocket, offered a faint, reassuring warmth. Her instincts, honed over years of solitary travel, screamed at her that this was not a journey she could turn from. The market of Mirrowen was already fading in her mind, replaced by images of ancient trees and crumbling ruins, of power stirring beneath the earth.

She had always been a survivor, adaptable and resourceful. Now, a new purpose stirred within her. This wasn't about surviving; it was about seeking. It was about answering a call that had echoed through time, a call meant for her, and perhaps for others like her. The world was unraveling, she knew it. The dark magic, the shadows creeping at the edges of the known lands - she had seen its effects firsthand in

isolated villages and forgotten hamlets. If the Forgotten Kingdom truly held the key to restoring balance, then she would find it.

As dawn approached, painting the eastern sky in hues of rose and gold, Arin slipped out of the cottage, a small pack on his back, his father's old hunting knife at his belt. He left a note on the workbench, a vague explanation about needing to explore a new iron ore vein, promising to return. He felt a pang of guilt, but it was overshadowed by the potent pull of the unknown. He glanced back at the forge, its chimney a silent sentinel against the brightening sky, then turned his face west, towards the distant mountains that seemed to beckon him.

Lira, too, was on the move, a solitary figure disappearing into the early morning mist that clung to the edges of Mirrowen. She didn't look back. Her path was forward, towards the whispers and the ancient stirrings. The world was vast and full of secrets, and she was ready to uncover them. Unseen and unknown to each other, two unlikely heroes, a blacksmith and a wanderer, had taken their first tentative steps onto paths that would soon intertwine, leading them towards a destiny far grander and more perilous than either could have imagined. The Forgotten Kingdom was stirring, and its awakening would send ripples across the entire world of Edrion.

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