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Chronicles of the Luminous Sphere

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Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Shadows in Thessis
- Chapter 2: The Whispering Orb
- Chapter 3: Chains of the Empire
- Chapter 4: Into the Wildwood
- Chapter 5: The First Vision
- Chapter 6: The Thief of Midnight
- Chapter 7: Ashes of Betrayal
- Chapter 8: The Banished Prince
- Chapter 9: Wildfire and Ice
- Chapter 10: The Pact of Four
- Chapter 11: Secrets Written in Stone
- Chapter 12: The Fading Light
- Chapter 13: Lost Magic
- Chapter 14: Shadows of the Old Court
- Chapter 15: A Bond, Shattered
- Chapter 16: The Storm's Edge
- Chapter 17: The Wraithwood Trials
- Chapter 18: A Kingdom Unveiled
- Chapter 19: The Sorceress's Gambit
- Chapter 20: Descent into Ruin
- Chapter 21: Fury of the Brevak
- Chapter 22: Heart of the Sphere
- Chapter 23: The Unraveling
- Chapter 24: Twilight's Stand
- Chapter 25: Dawn of the Chosen

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Introduction

In the land of Thessis, where the rivers shimmer with ancient magic and forests murmur with secrets, power is both a promise and a prison. For generations, the Brevak Empire has cast its long shadow across every valley and city, its iron rule stifling the spark of magic that once enlivened the world. Most of its people now bow, weary and resigned, beneath the weight of its banners. Yet in the overlooked corners and narrow alleys, quieter stories persist—stories of what the world once was, and what it might become again.

This is the world Eris was born into: a world of constraint, suspicion, and forgotten wonders. Orphaned as a child and raised within the walls of a silent convent, she led a life mapped out for her by others. The monks taught her humility and discipline, while the empire demanded obedience without question. As the years slipped past, Eris often found herself gazing beyond the stone arches, searching for patterns in the stars and breathing in the forbidden whispers about the age before Brevak. To those around her, she was another stray, marked by fate for quiet servitude. But Eris harbored dreams of escape—even if she never dared to act upon them.

Change arrives not as a whisper, but as a shattering: a night when the empire's soldiers come searching for a legend thought lost, and a hidden artifact calls out to Eris with a voice she alone can hear. The Luminous Sphere, a relic from ancient tales, selects her as its bearer. Suddenly, Eris finds herself swept into currents of power far beyond her imagining—currents that threaten to undo everything she knows about herself, her past, and her world.

With the sphere's visions unfolding in her mind—images of distant lands, long-lost faces, and impending catastrophes—Eris becomes an unwilling rebel. Yet in trying to understand the artifact and her own connection to it, she discovers alliances in the most unlikely of places: a thief with a shadowy code of honor, a prince exiled from his home, and a sorceress branded a traitor. Their fates are drawn together by the secrets of the sphere, and their choices will shape the destiny of empires.

As Eris ventures beyond the confines of her old life, she discovers that magic is not just a tool of power—it is the memory of the world, the connective tissue linking past, present, and uncertain future. The Brevak Empire, sensing the stirrings of rebellion, launches its full fury against her and her companions. With every step, the stakes escalate, threads of trust are tested, and the true history of the sphere—and of Thessis itself—emerges from darkness.

This tale is not merely of rebellion against tyranny, nor of magic against mundane

steel. It is the story of finding identity among secrets, of forging unity in the crucible of discord, and of the courage it takes to claim one's destiny when the world demands silence. Here, in the Chronicles of the Luminous Sphere, nothing is as it seems, and every light casts a shadow waiting to step into legend.

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CHAPTER ONE: Shadows in Thessis

The air in the convent of Our Lady of Whispers always smelled of beeswax, old parchment, and the faint, sweet decay of ancient roses. For Eris, it was the smell of home, and also of a cage. Her days, meticulously ordered by the tolling of the bell tower, had been indistinguishable for as long as she could remember. Rise with the first pale light, attend morning meditation, tend to the convent's meager garden, transcribe dusty scrolls in the scriptorium, and then, as twilight painted the sky in shades of bruised plum, prepare the evening meal. Every moment was accounted for, every thought theoretically guided.

Yet, despite the rigid schedule, Eris found slivers of freedom. In the quiet drone of the monks' chanting, her mind would wander, painting vibrant landscapes beyond the convent walls, imagining the world before the Brevak Empire's iron grip squeezed the magic from Thessis. She would watch the starlings trace intricate patterns against the vast sky, their flight a stark contrast to her own grounded existence. Sometimes, when a particularly old monk nodded off during his watch in the scriptorium, she'd sneak a look at the forbidden texts—scrolls hinting at elemental powers, mythical beasts, and a time when the very air thrummed with unseen energies.

Her favorite escape, however, was the convent's walled garden. It was a small, neglected patch, filled more with hardy weeds than the medicinal herbs the monks preferred. But in its wildness, Eris found a kinship. She'd spent hours there, not just pulling weeds, but talking to the plants, tracing the delicate veins of leaves, and feeling the rich, dark earth beneath her fingertips. There was a quiet strength in the way a tiny sprout pushed through hardened soil, a resilience she admired and, secretly, hoped to possess.

One afternoon, as the sun dipped towards the western mountains, casting long, distorted shadows across the convent courtyard, Eris was pulling particularly stubborn nettles from around a crumbling stone statue of a forgotten saint. The air, usually still within the high walls, stirred with an unusual tension. It wasn't the pre-storm static she knew well; this was something deeper, a subtle hum beneath the surface of reality, like a distant tremor. Her scalp tingled, and the fine hairs on her arms stood on end.

A sudden, sharp clang echoed from the main gates, followed by urgent shouts. Brevak soldiers. A knot of ice formed in Eris's stomach. The convent was rarely disturbed, deemed too insignificant for imperial attention. Their visits were usually brief, merely tax collectors or census takers, never an armed patrol. Eris dropped her trowel, heart hammering against her ribs, and instinctively crouched behind a particularly overgrown rose bush, its thorns offering a thorny, albeit flimsy, camouflage.

Through the gaps in the foliage, she saw them: three hulking figures in the empire's signature black armor, their polished breastplates reflecting the fading light like obsidian mirrors. A fourth man, slender and cloaked, walked a step ahead, his face hidden beneath a deep hood. He carried an air of quiet authority that suggested he was more than a mere soldier. He was a seeker, a hunter.

The convent's abbot, a portly man named Brother Gareth, emerged from the chapel, his usually placid face etched with alarm. "Good sirs, how may we assist you?" His voice wavered slightly, a stark contrast to his usual booming pronouncements. The cloaked figure stepped forward, his voice a low, gravelly whisper that nevertheless carried across the courtyard. "We seek an artifact, Abbot. One that has been hidden within these hallowed walls for too long."

Eris's breath caught in her throat. An artifact? The convent housed only dusty relics, worn prayer beads, and the occasional splinter of a supposed saint's bone. Nothing of significant value, certainly nothing that would warrant the attention of Brevak's elite. What could they be talking about?

Brother Gareth stammered, "I-I assure you, sir, there are no such things here. Only items of faith, of humble devotion." He wrung his hands, his gaze darting nervously towards the chapel entrance. The cloaked figure remained impassive. "Is that so, Abbot? Then perhaps your memory fails you. Or perhaps... you are protecting it." He gestured, and two of the armored soldiers pushed past Brother Gareth, their heavy boots clanking menacingly on the flagstones as they strode towards the chapel.

Panic began to coil in Eris's gut. She had heard whispers about what happened to those who defied the Empire, even implicitly. The abbot was a kind man, if a bit simple, and he wouldn't knowingly harbor anything that would put his brothers at risk. But the cloaked man's conviction was unnerving.

As the soldiers disappeared into the chapel, a strange sensation washed over Eris. It wasn't fear, not entirely. It was a deep, resonant thrumming, vibrating through the earth, through the air, and most intensely, through her very bones. It felt like a song she'd always known but had only just now heard clearly. The source of the sensation seemed to emanate from beneath the convent itself, a heartbeat buried deep within the earth.

The cloaked figure and the remaining soldier stood by, their attention fixed on the chapel doors. Eris, drawn by an irresistible pull, found herself slowly, almost unconsciously, moving towards the small, neglected storage shed tucked away behind the garden. It was a place rarely used, filled with rusty tools, broken furniture, and forgotten junk. The humming grew stronger with every step, a magnetic force guiding her.

She pushed open the creaking wooden door, the interior plunged into near darkness. Dust motes danced in the single shaft of moonlight that pierced a grimy windowpane. The air inside was thick and stale, smelling of damp earth and disuse. The hum was now a tangible pressure against her chest, a vibrant thrumming that resonated in her ears.

Her eyes scanned the jumbled mess—broken barrels, splintered crates, discarded religious icons. Then, tucked beneath a pile of old burlap sacks, she saw it. A faint, ethereal glow. It wasn't bright, more like the luminescence of a deep-sea creature, pulsing softly, steadily. It called to her, a silent, urgent plea.

Eris approached cautiously, heart thumping. She knelt, her hands trembling as she pushed aside the rough sacks. Beneath them lay a small, perfectly spherical orb, no larger than a child's fist. It shimmered with an inner light, a kaleidoscope of soft blues, greens, and purples that swirled and danced within its translucent shell. It felt impossibly ancient, yet vibrantly alive.

As her fingers brushed against its cool, smooth surface, an electric current shot through her arm, up her shoulder, and into her mind. It wasn't painful, but intensely startling. Images flashed before her eyes: towering, ancient trees reaching for a sky painted with two moons; colossal cities carved from glistening crystal; faces, both human and distinctly not, smiling, weeping, warring. It was a torrent of forgotten memories, a glimpse into a history far grander and more terrifying than anything she had ever read in the forbidden scrolls.

A gasp escaped her lips, quickly stifled. The orb grew warmer in her hand, its light intensifying, casting dancing colors across the dusty shed. She felt a connection, a profound and undeniable bond forming between them. This wasn't just an artifact; it was alive, and it had chosen her.

Suddenly, a commotion erupted from the chapel. Shouts, the clash of metal on stone, and then a guttural roar that made the shed's flimsy walls vibrate. Brother Gareth's terrified shriek followed, cut short by a heavy thud. The Brevak soldiers had found something, or someone. Eris's mind raced. They were looking for this. This orb. And she now held it.

The connection to the sphere deepened, and a powerful, almost desperate urgency pulsed through her. Not just a call to protect it, but a command to flee. To run. To hide. The world outside the convent, the world she had only dreamed of, was now her only option.

Holding the Luminous Sphere tightly, its light now a comforting warmth against her palm, Eris peered through a crack in the shed wall. She saw the cloaked figure

pointing towards the chapel, fury emanating from his still-hidden face. The two soldiers emerged, dragging a protesting Brother Gareth, his face ashen with terror. They hadn't found what they were looking for. Not yet.

Eris knew, with a certainty that chilled her to the bone, that they wouldn't stop until they did. And now, she was its keeper. Her quiet life in the convent, her dreams of gentle escape, were shattered. The Luminous Sphere was not merely an object; it was a beacon, and she, Eris, was its accidental guardian. The world had just become a much larger, and infinitely more dangerous, place. With a last, longing look at the only home she'd ever known, Eris slipped out the back of the shed, melting into the deepening shadows of the Thessian night.

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