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# Wings of Oblivion

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## Introduction

Eldoria—sprawling, bewitching, and steeped in mythos—lies shrouded beneath a veneer of ordinary days. Yet beneath its rolling emerald hills and tangled forest depths thrum hidden veins of magic, long whispered about but mostly forgotten. The old tales speak of cities once aglow with enchantments, of skies split by the echoes of dragon wings, of secrets etched upon the bones of the earth. But now, most in Eldoria walk through life as if those legends have faded into fable, mere shadows flickering at the edges of campfire tales.

In this quiet, weary world, a reclusive mapmaker named Alden toils in solitude among parchment and ink, charting landscapes that few even care to traverse. His life is marked by routine and haunted by memories he cannot quite touch—a childhood suffused with flashes of terror, distant lullabies sung by vanished voices, and the unplaceable certainty that he is not like other men. Magic, to Alden, is not just a myth; it is a mystery tangled in the roots of his own identity.

Drawn from a distant village forged on courage and iron, Lira stands in stark contrast: a sword at her hip, fire in her eyes, and an unyielding belief that she is meant for more than a warrior's life. Her days are filled with drills and dreams, her nights with the silent longing for purpose. Underneath her fierce bravado lies the aching question of fate, a dream that someday, she will be called to something greater.

Both Alden and Lira live in a kingdom reaching for peace, yet haunted by an unshakable prophecy. For as long as records have been kept, a scrap of verse has survived: "When magic's wings unfurl from shadowed sleep, destiny shall awaken, and oblivion shall weep." Most dismiss this as little more than dusty superstition, but the wise—and the watchful—see signs that the prophecy stirs. Whispers travel on the wind. Stars are seen to fall.

As fate would have it, a chance encounter with a relic of unimaginable power will force Alden and Lira onto a path neither could have charted alone. Together, they will be swept into a tide where past and future, memory and myth, collide. If magic is truly returning to Eldoria, so too is its greatest threat, a shadow older than the stones that built the realm.

"Wings of Oblivion" follows their journey as ancient magic stirs, allies are gathered from the farthest reaches, great tests are endured, and the very heart of Eldoria is set to beat anew—or be swallowed by darkness forever. In this chronicle of forgotten wonders and inescapable fates, the lines between legend and reality blur, and what once was lost may yet shape the dawn.

## CHAPTER ONE: Relics in the Dust

The air in Oakhaven smelled perpetually of wet earth and ancient woodsmoke, a scent Alden had long found comforting, if a touch stifling. His small cottage, perched precariously on the edge of the Whispering Woods, was little more than a collection of leaning walls and a perpetually leaking roof, yet it served its purpose. Inside, stacks of parchment rose like unstable towers, filled with meticulous lines and faded colors, each stroke a testament to the unglamorous life of a cartographer. He preferred the quiet company of his maps to the bustling, if sparse, chatter of Oakhaven village.

Today, however, the silence was disrupted by an insistent tapping at his window, a sound too light for a branch, too rhythmic for rain. Alden, hunched over a half-finished survey of the treacherous Serpent's Spine mountains, grunted. Few people sought him out, and those who did usually carried an urgent request for a detailed route through some forgotten pass, or, more often, a complaint about the accuracy of a previous commission. He sighed, dipping his quill in fresh ink, choosing to ignore the interruption.

The tapping grew bolder, followed by a muffled, but distinctly feminine, voice. "Alden? Are you in there, you reclusive badger? I know you're not deaf!"

A flicker of annoyance, quickly followed by a weary resignation, crossed Alden's face. Only one person in Oakhaven possessed such brazen disregard for his carefully cultivated solitude. He pushed himself away from his desk, the wooden chair scraping loudly against the floorboards. "It's open, Lira," he called out, his voice a low rumble. "You needn't shatter my window."

The door creaked open, admitting a gust of damp forest air and Lira, a whirlwind of energy even in the confined space. She was clad in practical leather armor, smelling faintly of sweat and pine needles, her dark braids pulled back tightly, revealing a face smudged with dirt but alight with an irrepressible intensity. A well-worn sword, a gift from her village elders, hung at her hip, a testament to her warrior upbringing.

"Good, you're alive," she declared, her eyes sweeping over the chaotic order of his workshop. "I thought perhaps you'd finally been buried under a landslide of topographical surveys." She grinned, a flash of white against her sun-kissed skin. "Or maybe a particularly aggressive legend about a griffin's lair."

Alden merely raised an eyebrow. "What brings you to my humble abode, Lira? Another lost badger? Or have you finally tracked down the elusive Glimmering Fae you swore you saw last autumn?"

Lira snorted, brushing a stray lock of hair from her face. "Fae or no Fae, this is more important. The elders sent me. They've found something." Her voice dropped slightly, a hint of genuine excitement creeping in. "Something... old. Really old. And they want your expert eye on it, mapmaker."

Alden straightened, a prickle of curiosity stirring beneath his usual reserve. The elders of Lira's village, nestled deep within the Eldorian heartlands, were traditionalists, guardians of ancient lore and history. If they sent for him, it was rarely for trivialities. "Old? How old?"

"They said it was uncovered near the Sunken Falls, during the last clearing operation. A structure, partially buried. And inside..." Lira paused, her eyes wide. "A box. Made of a metal no one recognized. And glowing."

A glowing box. That certainly piqued Alden's interest. Most "ancient relics" that found their way to his attention were weathered stone tools or crudely fashioned arrowheads, easily dismissed as relics of a forgotten hunter-gatherer tribe. But something that glowed? That was different. It tapped into a dormant part of his mind, a fleeting memory of something bright and impossible, just beyond his grasp.

"Show me," Alden said, pushing his chair back completely. He grabbed his satchel, a worn leather affair filled with his essential mapping tools: charcoal sticks, a compass of polished brass, and several rolls of blank parchment. "Lead the way, warrior."

Lira grinned again, a flash of genuine pleasure. "Finally, something that isn't just a squiggly line on paper, eh?"

The journey to Lira's village was a familiar one, yet today, Alden felt a strange undercurrent beneath the mundane. The path wound through ancient oak groves, where sunlight dappled through the dense canopy, and the scent of damp moss filled the air. Lira, with the boundless energy of a seasoned scout, led the way, her footsteps light despite her armor. Alden, though less agile, kept pace easily, his mind already sketching out the topography of the Sunken Falls, trying to recall any old maps that might hint at hidden structures in that area. Nothing came to mind.

"They're calling it the 'Whispering Box'," Lira explained as they walked, her voice hushed. "Because some of the older folk swear they can hear faint voices, like wind through dry leaves, coming from it when it's quiet."

Alden frowned. "Voices? Are you certain it's not just the echo of the falls?"

"Perhaps," Lira conceded, though her tone suggested she wasn't entirely convinced. "But the light... it's not natural. It pulses. A soft, blue-white glow." She glanced at him.

"You don't believe in magic, do you, Alden? Not really."

He considered her question. "I believe in what I can see and measure, Lira. But I also believe in things yet to be discovered. The world is vast, and our understanding of it, however complete we believe it to be, is always just a fragment." He thought of his own fragmented memories, the impossible images that sometimes surfaced in his dreams. "Some mysteries simply haven't been charted yet."

They arrived at the village as dusk began to paint the western sky in hues of orange and purple. Lira's home was a collection of sturdy log houses, centered around a communal hearth where a crackling fire always burned. The elders, a group of stoic, weathered men and women, awaited them in the largest of the longhouses, their faces etched with a mixture of awe and apprehension.

Elder Thane, a man whose beard was as white as winter snow, stepped forward. "Alden. We are grateful you have come. Lira spoke of your... unique perspective." He gestured towards the center of the room.

There, resting on a rough-hewn wooden table, was the box. Even in the dim light of the longhouse, it pulsed with an undeniable, ethereal luminescence. It wasn't large, perhaps the size of two clasped hands, fashioned from a dark, smooth metal Alden had never encountered. Its surface was unblemished, save for intricate, flowing symbols etched into its sides, symbols that seemed to shift and dance in the flickering light. The blue-white glow emanated from these markings, a soft, inviting radiance that defied the laws of any known light source.

Alden approached it cautiously, his cartographer's instincts for measurement and observation kicking in. He reached out a hand, hovering it just above the metallic surface. The air around the box felt... charged. Not cold, not hot, but like the anticipation before a storm. The intricate symbols seemed to thrum faintly beneath his fingertips, almost as if they were alive.

"The carvings," Elder Thane whispered, his voice hushed. "No one here recognizes them. They are not of Eldoria, not as we know it."

Alden nodded, his gaze tracing the swirling patterns. They were beautiful, alien, and utterly captivating. He had seen countless scripts, ancient and modern, but these were unlike anything he had ever charted. There was a profound, almost musical quality to their design. He felt a strange resonance deep within him, a faint echo of familiarity he couldn't explain, as if the symbols spoke to some forgotten part of his own being.

He noticed Lira standing beside him, her usual warrior's composure replaced by a quiet wonder. She too seemed drawn to the object, her hand instinctively going to the hilt of her sword, not in aggression, but as if seeking an anchor.

"What do you make of it, Alden?" Elder Thane asked, his voice breaking the spell.

Alden carefully withdrew his hand. "I... I've never seen anything like it. The metal is unknown. The markings... they are not a language I recognize, yet they feel incredibly powerful." He paused, looking around at the expectant faces of the elders. "And the glow, of course, is inexplicable by any natural means."

As he spoke, a sudden, almost imperceptible shift occurred. The blue-white glow intensified slightly, and a faint hum, barely audible, filled the longhouse. It wasn't the wind, nor the fire. It emanated directly from the box. The intricate symbols on its surface pulsed more rapidly, as if waking.

Then, just as quickly, the glow subsided, the hum faded, and the box settled back into its previous state of quiet luminescence. But the brief surge had sent a shiver down Alden's spine. He felt a sudden, inexplicable urge to touch it again, to understand it.

Elder Rona, her face wise and furrowed, stepped forward. "We have tried everything, Alden. To open it, to understand its purpose. But it remains sealed. We thought perhaps, with your maps, your knowledge of forgotten places, you might discern its origin."

Alden shook his head slowly. "My maps chart the physical world, Elder Rona. This... this feels like something beyond the physical. Something from a different age entirely." He glanced at Lira, a new thought forming. "Have you tried to focus on it? To see if it reacts to a touch, to intent?"

Lira looked surprised. "Why, no. We were too afraid to tamper with it directly. What if it's a curse? A trap?"

"Or," Alden countered, "what if it's meant to be found? Meant to be opened?" He felt a pull, a strange certainty growing within him. "I think... I think it might be waiting for something."

He turned back to the box, his gaze fixed on the dancing symbols. He noticed one symbol in particular, larger than the others, at the very center of the box's lid. It resembled a stylized pair of wings, unfurling from a central point, strikingly similar to the imagery in the ancient prophecy: "When magic's wings unfurl from shadowed sleep..."

A sudden surge of heat pulsed through Alden's hand, though he wasn't touching the box. It was a phantom heat, rising from within his own palm, mirroring the surge of energy he'd felt from the artifact moments before. He felt a tremor deep in his bones, a sudden clarity amidst the confusion.

Without a word, Alden reached out, his hand unerringly finding the winged symbol on the lid. As his fingers made contact, the entire longhouse plunged into an unbearable brilliance. The blue-white light flared, engulfing the room, casting stark shadows that danced wildly. The hum from the box intensified into a resonant thrum that vibrated through the very foundations of the building, a sound that seemed to speak directly to the core of their beings.

Lira gasped, instinctively drawing her sword, the steel reflecting the blinding light. The elders cried out, shielding their eyes. Alden, however, did not flinch. As his skin touched the symbol, he felt an unprecedented rush of energy flood his body, a sensation both terrifying and exhilarating. Images flashed through his mind—fragments of ancient cities, figures cloaked in light, the sound of wings beating against an impossible sky. These were not his memories, yet they felt intensely real, burning themselves into his consciousness.

Then, with a soft *click* that was surprisingly loud amidst the blinding light, the box opened.

The light didn't diminish; instead, it seemed to coalesce, forming a swirling vortex of energy above the opened lid. And from within this vortex, a single, feather-light object drifted upwards. It was a shard of crystal, no bigger than Alden's thumb, iridescent and shimmering with all the colors of the rainbow, yet primarily radiating the same deep blue glow as the box. As it rose, it seemed to catch the light from the box, amplifying it, sending streams of pure energy cascading across the room.

The hum quieted, the light softened, and the crystal shard slowly descended, settling gently into Alden's outstretched palm. It was warm, impossibly so, and pulsed faintly, like a tiny heart. The moment it touched his skin, the phantom heat he'd felt before intensified tenfold, then spread rapidly through his arm, tingling, invigorating, yet not painful. It felt... right.

Lira, her sword still drawn but her eyes wide with astonishment, lowered her weapon. The elders stared, their faces a mixture of fear and profound reverence. They had witnessed something impossible, something pulled from the deepest legends.

Alden looked at the crystal in his hand, then back at the now open, still glowing box. The symbols on its inner lid continued to shine, revealing even more intricate patterns than those on the exterior. He could feel the energy coursing through him, a strange, beautiful symphony of power. He was no longer just a mapmaker charting the known world. He had touched something forgotten, something magical, and it had touched him back.

"What is it?" Lira whispered, her voice barely audible.

Alden closed his hand around the crystal, feeling its warmth spread throughout his body. He didn't know. Not yet. But he knew one thing with absolute certainty: his world, and perhaps all of Eldoria, had just changed forever. The forgotten magic, long confined to dusty prophecies, had awakened, and with it, Alden's own enigmatic destiny began to unfurl.

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