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Eclipse of the Swords

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Introduction

Eldoria—land of ancient forests, soaring mountains, and boundless rivers shimmering with magic—has always stood as a beacon of hope in a world shaped by the clash of sword and sorcery. From its founding, kingdoms have risen and fallen under the watchful eye of twin moons, their people forged in the crucible of relentless change. But in the veins of Eldoria runs a secret more powerful than the elemental forces themselves—a legacy of enchantment and sorrow that binds every living creature to the fate of the land.

Long ago, when primal titans stalked the world, the Swords of Sorrows were forged deep within the mountains' heart, tempered by the grief of gods and mortals alike. They passed from hand to hand, weaving through history as objects of awe and dread. With each generation, they have incited heroes to acts of valor and villains to horrors unspeakable. Empires have been built and razed in their name, entire ages shaped by those bold—or foolish—enough to claim their power.

Now, the delicate balance on which Eldoria rests is threatened once more. A celestial event—the Eclipse—draws near, an alignment prophesied to reopen the Swords' slumbering might. In the shadow of the coming night, destinies entwine. Hushed voices in candlelit halls speak of upheaval, of hope and despair twisted together like the roots of an ancient tree. The world teeters on the edge, its future uncertain, its past unable to let go.

As the time of the Eclipse approaches, champions are called from unexpected corners of the realm. Arin, once a noble knight, now burdened by disgrace and haunted by memory, finds himself thrust into prophecy's unforgiving light. Thalia, a daughter of the streets, wields wit and steel with equal deftness, but trusts no cause but her own. Young Torin, newly awakened to magic's call, must prove himself while pursued by enemies seen and unseen. And Mira, the dream-touched seer, navigates visions as wild and treacherous as the realm itself, seeking threads of hope in a tapestry of doom.

Together, these unlikely companions will embark on a journey that will test their loyalties, challenge their beliefs, and demand sacrifices they cannot yet imagine. As the Swords of Sorrows stir once more and darkness stretches across the land, their choices will ripple through every soul in Eldoria. In the end, each must decide: will they be masters of their fate, or will they fall to the shadows growing beneath the Eclipsed sky?

In Eldoria, the legends are never only old stories—they are living, breathing truths,

waiting for those bold enough to take up their telling. And so the tale begins, on the eve of an eclipse, in a world where every sword bears a sorrow—and every heart is the realm's own.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Shrouded Realm

The sun, a tired ember in a sky of bruised purple and grey, cast long, spectral shadows across the cracked cobblestones of Oakhaven. A chill wind, carrying the scent of damp earth and distant pine, snaked through the narrow alleys, whistling a mournful tune around the sagging eaves of the taverns and workshops. It was a weather-beaten town, clinging to the edge of the Whispering Woods like a burr to a wolf's pelt, and its residents knew the hardship of an unforgiving land. Yet, even in Oakhaven, a sense of unease, deeper than the usual struggle for coin and comfort, had begun to settle.

Arin, once Sir Arin of the Crimson Blade, now merely Arin, the one-eyed blacksmith, leaned heavily against the soot-stained forge wall. The rhythmic *clanging* of his hammer against hot steel usually brought him a measure of peace, a quiet communion with the raw elements. But tonight, the insistent beat only amplified the frantic drumming in his own chest. His good eye, a weary grey, scanned the rough-hewn timbers of his smithy, then drifted towards the small, curtained window. The twilight deepened, painting the sky in ever-darker shades, and with it, the unsettling feeling grew.

His disgrace had come swiftly, a viper's strike in the court of King Theron. Accused of treason, though the charge was a fabrication spun by jealous rivals, Arin had been stripped of his knighthood, his lands, and nearly his life. The duel had cost him his right eye and his honor, leaving him with little more than a strong back and a profound distrust of gilded words. He'd found refuge, of a sort, in Oakhaven, where the people cared little for noble titles and much for a well-made sword or a sturdy plow.

For five years, he had buried himself in the honest work of the forge, letting the heat and the labor burn away the bitterness, or so he told himself. But some wounds festered, deep beneath the surface, waiting for the right catalyst to erupt. And the whispers in the market, the strange shifts in the sky, the heightened anxiety in the air – they all pointed to something stirring, something that threatened to pry open those old scars.

He picked up a newly sharpened dagger, testing its edge with a calloused thumb. The steel gleamed faintly in the dim light of the forge. It was a fine blade, balanced and true, but it felt hollow in his hand. What good was a blade when the true enemy was unseen, an approaching shadow rather than a tangible foe?

The local tavern, 'The Leaky Flagon,' was already alive with the murmur of voices and the clatter of tankards. Arin had no intention of joining them tonight. The small talk and forced joviality would grate on him. Instead, he planned to finish the last of the

repairs, secure his smithy, and retreat to his solitary cottage on the outskirts of town. Yet, as he reached for a cooling iron bar, a sudden, blinding flash of light erupted from the forest's edge, followed by a resonant boom that shook the very foundations of his forge.

He dropped the iron, his heart leaping into his throat. This was no ordinary storm. The air crackled with an unfamiliar energy, and the faint, almost imperceptible hum that had pervaded Eldoria for the past few weeks intensified, becoming a palpable thrum against his bones. He grabbed a heavy hammer, its familiar weight a small comfort, and cautiously moved to the smithy door, pushing it open just enough to peer out.

The sky was alight with an unearthly glow, a sickening emerald mixed with deep violet, pulsing like a wound. From the direction of the flash, a faint, metallic scent, like ozone and something ancient, drifted on the wind. Panic, a cold, unfamiliar sensation, began to prickle at the back of Arin's neck. He had faced armed men, mythical beasts, and the king's wrath, but this... this felt different. This felt like the world itself was holding its breath.

A young boy, no older than ten, came tearing down the street, his face pale and streaked with tears. "The sky! The sky is breaking!" he shrieked, his voice raw with terror, before disappearing into the gloom. Arin watched him go, a sense of grim determination settling over him. He wasn't a knight anymore, but he wasn't a coward either. Something was happening, and sitting idly by while the world unraveled was not in his nature.

He moved quickly, securing the heavy wooden bar across his smithy door, then strode towards his cottage. Inside, he retrieved his old sword, the one he had hidden away after his disgrace. The hilt felt familiar, comfortable in his grip, despite the years of disuse. He buckled on a worn leather scabbard and pulled on his old, battle-scarred leather jerkin. It was foolish, perhaps, to venture out alone into whatever madness was brewing, but the alternative – cowering in his cottage – was unthinkable.

As he stepped back outside, the eerie glow intensified, casting the familiar landscape in alien shades. The murmurs from 'The Leaky Flagon' had died down, replaced by a stunned silence, broken only by the nervous whinnies of horses and the distant barking of dogs. Everyone in Oakhaven was watching, paralyzed by the spectacle. Arin, however, felt a pull, a strange, almost magnetic urge, drawing him towards the Whispering Woods, towards the source of the emerald light.

He remembered fragmented tales from his youth, old women's stories whispered by firelight, of a celestial event called the Eclipse, and of ancient powers stirring when the moons aligned. He'd dismissed them as fanciful folklore, meant to scare children. But as he walked deeper into the chilling embrace of the night, the air growing colder, heavier, he began to wonder if there was more truth to those tales than he had ever

imagined.

The path into the woods was usually well-trodden, but tonight it felt like a primordial journey into the unknown. The trees, their branches skeletal against the unnatural light, seemed to writhe and moan. Every snapping twig, every rustle of leaves, sounded like a warning. He gripped his sword tighter, his good eye darting left and right, searching for any sign of movement, any threat.

Then he saw it. Not in the woods themselves, but just beyond, in a small, forgotten clearing that few dared to visit. A stone altar, ancient and crumbling, pulsed with the same emerald light that lit the sky. And on the altar, half-buried in moss and earth, lay something impossibly old, impossibly powerful. It was a blade, unlike any he had ever seen. Its hilt was carved from what looked like petrified wood, and its guard was a twisted knot of dark, metallic vines. The blade itself, however, was the most striking—it shimmered with an inner light, a deep, sorrowful grey, and along its length, faint, almost imperceptible runes pulsed in time with the sky's strange beat.

He felt an irresistible draw, a sense of recognition so profound it shook him to his core. This was no ordinary sword. This was one of *them*. One of the Swords of Sorrows. The very air around it thrummed with ancient magic, a lament woven into its very being. He approached cautiously, his boots crunching on fallen leaves, his breath misting in the sudden chill.

As he neared the altar, a faint, ethereal voice seemed to whisper in his mind, a chorus of forgotten sorrows. *"The Eclipse approaches... The blood calls... The champions gather..."* It was barely audible, a thought more than a sound, yet it resonated deep within him, stirring something long dormant.

Then, just as his hand reached out, drawn by an unseen force, a figure emerged from the deeper shadows of the woods. Tall and gaunt, shrouded in a cloak of deepest black, the newcomer moved with a predatory grace. Two eyes, burning with an unnatural red light, fixed on Arin, then on the sword. A sneer, cruel and knowing, twisted the figure's lips.

"So, the disgraced knight seeks solace in old legends," a voice, raspy and dry like rustling parchment, hissed. "But some prophecies are best left undisturbed, old man." The figure took another step forward, and Arin saw the gleam of another blade, dark and wickedly curved, held loosely in their hand. The air grew heavy, thick with malice.

Arin pulled his own sword, the familiar *shing* of steel on leather a stark contrast to the otherworldly silence of the clearing. "Stand aside," he growled, his voice rough with disuse, but firm. "This is not yours."

The cloaked figure chuckled, a dry, rattling sound. "Everything will be mine,

eventually. And this blade, especially, will ensure it.” With a sudden, blurring movement, the figure lunged, their curved blade slicing through the air with lethal intent. Arin barely managed to parry, the clash of steel echoing through the eerie stillness. The fight was upon him, sudden and brutal, beneath a sky twisted by the impending Eclipse, and he knew, with chilling certainty, that this was only the beginning.

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