



*In the ancient days when gods still walked among mortals and the empire of valdros stretched across seven seas, there lived a noble family whose destiny would shake the very foundations of the realm. The house of alexios, descended from the legendary storm kings of old, ruled over the magnificent city of thalarion with wisdom and strength.*



*Andrew Alexios, heir to the Crimson Throne, stood upon the marble balcony of his father's palace, gazing out at the blood-red banners that fluttered in the morning wind. At twenty-five summers, he possessed the bearing of a true prince—tall and broad-shouldered, with the piercing gray eyes of his lineage and hair dark as a raven's wing. Yet beneath his noble exterior burned a restless spirit, for he had dreamed strange dreams of late, visions of five ancient symbols blazing in the sky like fallen stars.*



***His father, Lord Marcus Alexios, the Lion of Thalarion, had ruled justly for three decades. His mother, Lady Helena Alexios, known throughout the empire for her beauty and wisdom, had borne four children to secure the royal line. Andrew was the eldest, followed by his fierce brother Robert Alexios, a warrior without equal who commanded the Iron Legion; his sister Katherine Alexios, whose gift for strategy and diplomacy made her invaluable to the court; and young Antonio Alexios, barely sixteen but already showing promise as a scholar of ancient lore.***



*The morning peace was shattered when a messenger arrived bearing grave news.*

*The Oracle of Moon Haven had spoken a prophecy that would change everything:*

*"When storm clouds gather over the Crown of Gold,  
And five cities tremble at shadows untold,  
The blood of Alexios shall rise or fall,  
As ancient enemies answer the call.  
The wolf, the owl, the gem, and the flame—  
All shall bow or none shall remain."*



*Andrew's blood ran cold as he recognized the symbols from his dreams.*

*The prophecy spoke of the five great cities of Valdros: Thalarion with its crown and flame, Moon Haven with its white owl, Iron Hold with its precious gems, Miraleth with its golden scorpion, and Storm Watch with its howling wolf.*