



ROD TRENT

EXCLUSIVE FREE  
CHAPTER

# SWORD OF THE SHATTERED KINGDOMS

ANCIENT CRYSTAL OF ELDORIA

Welcome, dear reader, to the enchanting world of "Sword of the Shattered Kingdoms," a tale woven from the very fabric of imagination and magic. As you embark on the journey through the realm of Eldoria, you will uncover the mystery of the Ancient Crystal of Eldoria, a legendary artifact whose fragments hold the power to unite or shatter the realms themselves.

I invite you to delve into the lives of our heroes: Eldric the Silent Blade, Lyra Stormweaver, Thorne Ironheart, Sylas Whisperfoot, and Isolde Frostbane, as they navigate treacherous landscapes and rival factions to prevent an apocalyptic event known as the Sundering.

As the author of this fantastical odyssey, I began my career writing fiction, a passion that has never dimmed even as I ventured into the world of technology content to pay the bills and drive my career forward. The act of creation is not just a job; it is a therapeutic escape, a return to the roots of my creativity, and I am thrilled to be sharing this passion with you. In a very real way, this book is just for me. Selfish, huh? But for those that know me, I share everything, so, I hope you both excuse and enjoy my attempted intrusion into your world.

I hope you enjoy this free chapter. If you like it, I hope you'll take the next step to start the journey through this series with me by supporting my efforts with the purchase of a full copy. And please, share this free chapter with anyone you think would benefit from it.

-Rod



# Chapter 10

## Quest and Mission

The war room of House Evergreen lay shrouded in shadows, save for the flickering light of torches that cast a restless dance upon the stone walls. Around the oaken table, grim-faced warriors leaned forward, their eyes reflecting the urgency of the hour.

"Time runs like sand through our fingers," Eldric's deep voice broke the silence, his words falling heavy as stones in the stillness. "We must reforge the Ancient Crystal of Eldoria, else the Sundering will consume all we hold dear."

His piercing blue eyes met those of his comrades, each carrying the weight of impending doom. Lord Cedric Evergreen nodded gravely, his noble features set in lines of determination.

"Aye, the peril is great, and greater still if we falter. The balance of Eldoria teeters on the edge of a knife," Lord Cedric agreed, his voice resonant with the wisdom of ages.

Thorne Ironheart, whose very presence seemed to fill the chamber, slammed a fist onto the table, making the maps and scrolls jump. "Then let us not dally with words! I say we strike at the heart of this curse. The Lost City of Eldor holds what we seek."

Eldric turned his gaze to Thorne, considering the chieftain's rugged countenance. Thorne's bushy beard bristled as he spoke of the city, a testament to the intensity of his conviction.

"Speak then of Eldor," Eldric commanded, his sword lying before him on the table, pulsating subtly with an inner light.

"Naught but ruins and whispers remain," Thorne's gravelly voice painted a picture of desolation. "A city once resplendent, now a lair for darkness. Its halls are threaded with traps cunning and cruel, its secrets guarded by specters of old. Many a brave soul has sought its treasures, only to join the silence eternal."

"Yet within its crumbling embrace lies the shard we seek," Eldric mused, feeling the weight of destiny upon them.

"Indeed," Thorne growled. "But be warned, the city does not yield its spoils lightly. The air is thick with enchantments long-forgotten, and every shadow may harbor death."

"Then we shall tread carefully," Eldric declared, rising from his seat, his leather armor creaking softly. "And let our courage light the way through the darkness of Eldor."

"Aye," Thorne nodded, gripping the haft of his warhammer with calloused hands. "For clan, for kin, for Eldoria itself, we shall brave the ancient city's heart and wrest from it the power to mend our sundered world."

Eldric's gaze swept over the assembled band, each a stalwart ally in the grim tapestry of war that had unfolded before them. "Friends," he began, voice resonant in the charged silence of the war room, "the ruins await, a labyrinth of peril and promise. We must be as one, each playing our part in this deadly dance."

"Thorne, your strength shall be our bulwark against the hidden terrors that lurk within those accursed walls." Eldric's nod was met with a grim smile from the chieftain, whose fingers brushed the haft of his warhammer with anticipatory resolve.

"Each stone, each shadowed corner may spell our doom. I shall stand firm, Silent Blade," Thorne rumbled, the title echoing with respect.

"Good," Eldric replied curtly, turning to the others. "We strike at dawn. Keep your wits sharp and your blades sharper." The meeting disbanded with the clinking of armor and the low murmur of voices, each member of the ensemble steeling themselves for the morrow.

As morning's light pierced the veil of darkness, Eldric led the way into the Lost City of Eldor. His sword, an ethereal shimmer about its blade, seemed to hum with a life of its own, casting eerie reflections upon the overgrown cobblestones beneath their feet.

The ruins loomed like the skeletal remains of a once-proud civilization, its grandeur devoured by time and nature. Vines clung desperately to the broken pillars, and the air hung heavy with the scent of decay. The silence of the place was oppressive, broken only by the occasional caw of a distant crow or the rustling of leaves in the ghostly wind.

Eldric moved with the stealth of a panther, his every sense attuned to the whispers of the past that permeated the air. The faint pulsations of his sword acted as both guide and warning, leading them through archways choked by ivy and across courtyards where statues of forgotten deities stood sentinel over the desolation.

"Stay close," Eldric murmured, his voice barely above the whisper of the breeze. "The city is treacherous, and we are far from alone in these forsaken streets."

His companions nodded, their expressions set in lines of fierce determination. They trusted in Eldric's command, in the silent promises etched in his steely blue gaze — that they would face whatever horrors awaited them together, as a united force against the encroaching dark.

And so they pressed on, delving deeper into the heart of Eldor, where shadows clung like shrouds and the very stones seemed to hold their breath in anticipation of the coming storm.

Lyra Stormweaver strode forth, her silver hair whipping about like a banner in an unfelt gale. With arms outstretched and eyes ablaze with the fire of resolve, she chanted the incantations known only to those who dance with the tempests. The air around the intrepid band began to stir, growing into a maelstrom of protective wrath. Her robes billowed as energies ancient and wild coalesced into a shimmering barrier that encased them all.

"Let the winds be our fortress," Lyra proclaimed, her voice carrying the resonance of rolling thunder, "No curse or snare shall reach us within this cyclone's embrace!"

"By the ancients, I've never seen such sorcery!" exclaimed Sylas Whisperfoot, his hazel eyes wide with wonder beneath his tousled mop of sandy hair. He stepped closer to where the symbols of a bygone era adorned the moss-eaten walls. His fingers traced the cryptic runes delicately, as if afraid they might crumble at his touch.

"Ah! Here lies the path, written in the language of the old ones," Sylas declared, the excitement evident in his rapid speech.

"These sigils speak of a hidden chamber, where light pierces darkness, and the shard we seek gleams with the pulse of the earth."

"Lead on then, Whisperfoot," Eldric commanded, his tone firm yet laced with anticipation. "Our fate hinges upon thy deciphered secrets."

With newfound zeal, Sylas guided them through the labyrinthine ruins, each step punctuated by the hum of magic and the rustle of decaying pages of history. The party moved with purpose, their hearts buoyed by the thrill of the hunt and the promise of the crystal's power soon to be theirs.

The air grew still as death, and a silence fell upon the ruins like a shroud. Isolde halted in her tracks, her eyes closing as she reached out with senses beyond those of flesh and blood.

"Beware," she whispered, her voice barely audible over the muted echoes of their cautious tread. "There is... another presence among us. The spirits murmur of shadows that hunger for our light."

Eldric's hand tightened on his sword, its blade thrumming with the heartbeat of an imprisoned shard. His piercing blue gaze swept across the labyrinthine passages, seeking out the unseen menace that now stalked them. Beside him, Thorne Ironheart shifted the weight of his warhammer from one hand to the other, the metal head gleaming dully in the weak light.



"Let them come," growled Thorne, defiance etched into every line of his battle-scarred visage. "Ironheart blood has never yielded before darkness, nor shall it start this day."

"Steel yourselves," Eldric commanded, moving with fluid grace into a warrior's stance, the worn leather of his armor creaking softly. "Whatever lurks in these forsaken halls will find us ready."

In response, Isolde's hand glided over the amulet at her throat, her lips moving silently in communion with the ancients. A chill wind stirred, carrying whispers of warnings from the other side. Tension coiled within the group like a spring wound tight, every shadow now a suspect, every sound a potential threat.

"Let them taste the bitter edge of resolve," Eldric's deep voice broke the mounting unease, his words falling like stones into the stillness. "We stand united, blades drawn, hearts steadfast. We shall not falter."

Thorne nodded, his red beard bristling with the energy of imminent battle. "Aye, Silent Blade. In unity, we find strength. Let the shadows come. They'll find naught but their demise at the hands of House Evergreen."

The two warriors exchanged a look of unspoken understanding, the glint of determination in their eyes reflecting the unyielding spirit that bound them together. Shadows danced just beyond the reach of sight, but Eldric and Thorne stood unwavering, sentinels against the encroaching darkness.

A sudden rush of darkness, a blur of motion — Eldric's instincts flared as shadowy figures spilled from the crevices in the ancient walls. The glint of steel and the hiss of whispered incantations heralded an ambush. Eldric's allies, a band bound by blood and battle, sprang to life around him.

"By Evergreen, we stand!" Thorne bellowed, his broadsword slicing through the air, carving arcs of defiance that sent the assailants stumbling backwards.

"Wind, heed my call!" Lyra's voice cut through the din, her arms raised high as the winds obeyed, spiraling into a protective gale that encircled them, deflecting poisoned darts and turning aside dark spells with bursts of crackling energy.

"Back, you fiends!" Sylas chanted, fingers dancing over ancient symbols on his staff. Runes flared to life, casting a glow that revealed their attackers' twisted visages — agents of Shadowfall, eyes alight with malice.

Amidst the clash of metal and fury, Eldric stood resolute, the weight of past sorrows fueling his wrath. His sword, a living memory of lost souls, pulsed with the shard's power, its light a beacon amidst the chaos.

"Your shadows hold no sway here!" Eldric roared. With a swift motion, he unleashed a tempestuous flurry of strikes, each blow more forceful than the last. His blade sang through the air, a dirge for those who dared cross its path.

Opponents fell before him, their confidence shattering like glass under the onslaught. The sharp ring of Eldric's sword against their weapons was a clarion call that echoed through the ruins, a testament to the Silent Blade's might.

"Curse you, Chosen!" one of the shadow figures spat, recoiling in fear as Eldric advanced. Desperation crept into their movements, the knowledge of their impending doom mirrored in wide, terror-stricken eyes.

"Yield or perish!" Eldric's command thundered across the battlefield, his gaze locked onto the wavering will of his enemies. One by one, they faltered, their resolve crumbling under the relentless storm of his assault.

The fight raged on, the air thick with the cries of the wounded and the scent of fresh blood. But beneath it all, the steady beat of Eldric's heart drummed a rhythm of unyielding courage, driving back the darkness with every swing of his storied blade.

Eldric stood tall amongst the fallen assailants, his broad chest heaving with exertion. His allies gathered around him, their own breaths quick in the aftermath of battle, yet their eyes burned with an undimmed fervor. The air still crackled with the remnants of magic and clung to the tang of spilled blood.

"By the gods, they'll rue the day they crossed our path," Thorne Ironheart grunted, wiping his warhammer on the tattered cloak of a vanquished foe. His armor bore new dents, but his spirit was unbroken, the fires of combat making his eyes gleam like molten steel.

"Aye, we've sent them back to Shadowfall's dark embrace," Eldric replied, his voice a low rumble as he surveyed the carnage. "But we must press on, lest their sacrifice be in vain."

Lyra Stormweaver nodded sharply, her silver hair reflecting the dim light that filtered through the crumbling ruins. "The storm within me rages for justice," she declared. "Let us forge ahead. The shard beckons."

"Indeed," Sylas Whisperfoot interjected, flipping through the pages of an ancient tome. "If my translations hold true, the heart of this accursed place shall yield the crystal's kin."

Isolde Frostbane closed her eyes for a moment, her lips moving silently in communion with the ancestral spirits. When she opened them again, they were clear and focused. "This way," she said, pointing towards a moss-covered archway that seemed inconspicuous to the untrained eye.

With determined strides, the team navigated through the labyrinthine passages of the Lost City of Eldor, their senses alert for any more surprises the cursed ruins might harbor. Roots twisted underfoot, and the air hung heavy with the scent of decay, yet they moved with a grace born of necessity and a shared sense of purpose.

At length, they arrived at a chamber veiled in shadows, its entrance marked by runes that shimmered faintly in the gloom. Within, a soft glow emanated from a pedestal at the room's center. It bathed the space in a light that seemed to pulse with life, casting long, quivering shadows against the walls.

"By the ancestors," Isolde breathed, her voice a mere whisper.

"Behold," Lyra said, her hand outstretched toward the source of the luminescence. "The shard!"

Eldric stepped forward, his sword drawn and ready, its own shard resonating in response to the proximity of its sundered kin. The crystal upon the pedestal glittered like a star plucked from the firmament, its facets throwing dancing lights across the chamber.

"Guard yourselves," Thorne warned, his gaze sweeping the room. "Such treasures are rarely unguarded."

"Let it come," Sylas said, his fingers sparking with arcane energy. "We are ready."

The team formed a protective circle around Eldric as he approached the pedestal, each member poised to defend against whatever curse or guardian that might spring forth to deny them their prize.

As Eldric stretched out his hand, the light from the shard intensified, illuminating the chamber in a spectacle of brilliance that left no corner untouched. The power of the Ancient Crystal of Eldoria was palpable, thrumming through the very stones of the ruin.

"Take it," Lyra urged, her eyes alight with anticipation.

With a steady hand, Eldric grasped the crystal shard. A surge of energy silently roared through the chamber, and for a heartbeat, time itself seemed to stand still. The Silent Blade had claimed another piece of Eldoria's legacy, and their quest surged forward with renewed vigor.

Eldric's gauntleted hand closed around the crystal shard, its edges sharp against his palm. The moment their skins met, a jolt of energy surged up his arm, resonating with the fragment already fused to his blade. His muscles tensed, and a rush of power flooded his veins, as if the lifeblood of Eldoria itself pulsed within him.

"By the gods," he murmured, the sensation overwhelming yet strangely familiar—a call to the destiny that had long ago been etched into his soul.

"Silent Blade?" Thorne's voice pierced through the surge, concern etched upon his battle-hardened face.

"Steady," Eldric replied, his tone even but deep, betraying the storm of energies that clashed within him. "The shard is ours now." He sheathed his sword, the crystal shard securely in his grasp, feeling it thrumming in harmony with the weapon's own piece. The union was incomplete, but the promise of power was undeniable.

The team exhaled collectively, the tension in their shoulders easing at Eldric's command. Yet as they turned toward the egress of the ancient chamber, Eldric's steps faltered. A prickling sensation crept up the back of his neck, a whisper of danger that tugged at the fringes of his awareness.

"Wait," he commanded, halting the group with an outstretched arm. His piercing blue eyes scanned the shadows that clung to the crumbling walls, seeking the source of his unease.

"Is it the curse?" Sylas asked, his hands flickering with readiness to cast.

"Or another trap?" Lyra added, her brow furrowed beneath strands of hair that fluttered in a breeze of her own conjuring.

"Neither," Eldric said, his gaze never leaving the darkness. "We are watched."

"Who dares?" Thorne growled, gripping the hilt of his own weapon tighter.

"An unseen foe," Eldric replied, his voice a low rumble. "One who knows we tread these ruins."

"Shadowfall's spies?" Thorne suggested, his eyes narrowing.

"Perhaps," Eldric conceded, "or worse." He turned to face his companions, his expression grim. "Be on your guard. This presence... it's not merely observing. It's waiting."

"For what?" Lyra whispered, her magic crackling in response to her rising alarm.

"For the right moment to strike," Eldric answered. "But we will not give them the satisfaction." With a nod, he signaled the group to move forward, each step measured and cautious.

They proceeded, the weight of unseen eyes following their every move, a silent predator lurking just beyond sight. Eldric felt the grip on his sword tighten, a silent vow to protect his allies from whatever lay ahead.

"Let them come," he thought, the Silent Blade ready to sing its deadly song once more. In the heart of the Lost City of Eldor, Eldric the Chosen pressed onward, the fate of Eldoria resting upon his shoulders, and the shadow of conflict ever-present in the ruins' oppressive air.

Sunlight pierced the heavy canopy of the Eldorian forest, its rays like golden lances thrusting through the twilight of the ancient ruins. With deliberate strides, Eldric emerged from the shadowed maw of Eldor's crumbling gateway, his companions flanking him like the steadfast guardians of old.

"By the gods, we've done it," Thorne Ironheart exclaimed, his voice a mix of triumph and exhaustion as they cleared the threshold of perilous stone and creeping vine.

"Aye, but let us not tarry in celebration," Eldric cautioned, his eyes still scanning the verdant wilds for signs of pursuit. The crystal shard pulsed within the hilt of his sword, a heartbeat synchronous with his own—a reminder of the power they had wrested from the clutches of fate.

Lyra, her azure cloak billowing softly with the residual magic of her protective barrier, nodded in agreement. "The elements whisper of our victory, but also warn of trials yet to come."

"Then let those trials face the unyielding might of House Evergreen," Sylas chimed in, his scholarly demeanor bolstered by the adventure's success. His fingers traced over the arcane etchings that adorned the leather-bound tome at his side, eager for the lore that would lead them to the next fragment of destiny.

"Indeed," Eldric said, his gaze fixed upon the horizon. "Each step draws us closer to thwarting Shadowfall's dark designs."

"Yet this presence you spoke of..." Isolde began, her ethereal beauty marred by a frown of concern. "It troubles me still."

"Trouble it may, but fear it not," Elder Wildwood interjected, his voice a calm force amidst the stirring leaves. "The spirits of this land are with us, and their vigilance is unceasing."

"Let those who lurk in shadows take heed," Thorne declared, hoisting his battle-worn axe onto his shoulder. "We are bound by more than mere alliance; we are forged in the crucible of purpose."

Eldric turned to regard each member of his fellowship, noting the fierce resolve that burned in their eyes – the kindling of hope in a world threatened by the encroaching darkness of the Sundering. Their journey was far from over, but in this moment, beneath the watchful boughs of Eldoria's ageless woods, they were more than allies.

They were avatars of an ancient will, champions chosen by time itself to mend the shattered skein of reality.

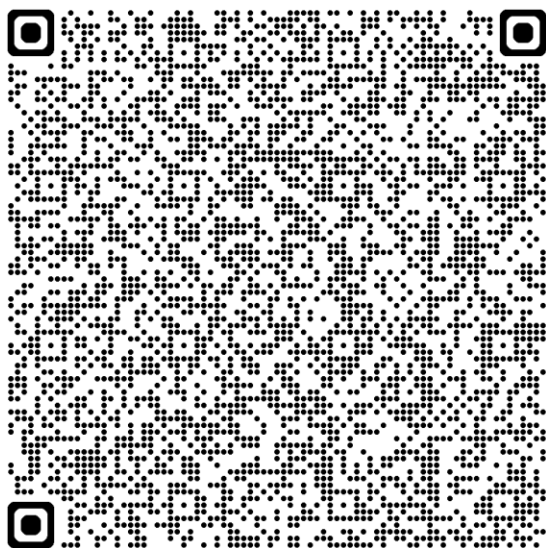
"Forward, then," Eldric commanded, his voice carrying the weight of centuries. "For every shard reclaimed is a step towards salvation – not just for Eldoria, but for all realms that tremble at the precipice of oblivion."

With renewed vigor, the band of heroes set forth, their path illuminated by the unwavering light of purpose. Behind them, the Lost City of Eldor stood silent, a testament to the perils they had overcome and the unbreakable bond they had formed in the heart of adversity.



Onward they marched, the Ancient Crystal of Eldoria their lodestar, the promise of a dawn free from shadow their undying creed.





IN THE REALM OF ELDORIA, WHERE MAGIC COURSES THROUGH ANCIENT FORESTS AND CRAGGY MOUNTAINS, A LEGENDARY ARTIFACT LIES SHATTERED - THE ANCIENT CRYSTAL OF ELDORIA. THIS RELIC, CAPABLE OF UNITING OR SHATTERING THE REALMS THEMSELVES, HAS BEEN MISSING FOR CENTURIES. BUT NOW, ITS FRAGMENTS STIR ONCE MORE, SETTING INTO MOTION A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT COULD RESHAPE THE VERY FABRIC OF EXISTENCE.

ELDRIC THE SILENT BLADE, A BROODING WARRIOR HAUNTED BY A TRAGIC PAST, DISCOVERS THE FIRST SHARD EMBEDDED IN HIS MYSTERIOUS SWORD - A BLADE THAT TRAPS THE MEMORIES OF ITS VICTIMS. THIS GRIM FINDING MARKS HIM AS THE CHOSEN, DESTINED TO REASSEMBLE THE CRYSTAL. LYRA STORMWEAVER, AN IMPULSIVE WEATHER-WITCH FROM THE NORTHERN TUNDRAS, RECEIVES PROPHETIC VISIONS OF REALMS COLLIDING AND ELEMENTAL CHAOS UNLEASHED SHOULD THE CRYSTAL FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS.

THORNE IRONHEART, THE GRUFF CHIEFTAIN OF THE IRONCLAW CLAN, UNCOVERS A DARK BETRAYAL TIED TO THE CRYSTAL'S DISAPPEARANCE. SYLAS WHISPERFOOT, AN ECCENTRIC MAGE, STUMBLES UPON FORBIDDEN TEXTS REVEALING THE CRYSTAL'S TERRIFYING POWER TO OPEN A GATEWAY TO A HIGHER PLANE OF EXISTENCE. ISOLDE FROSTBANE, AN ENIGMATIC ICE PRIESTESS, IS HAUNTED BY ANCESTRAL SPIRITS WARNING OF IMPENDING DOOM IF THE CRYSTAL REMAINS LOST.

AS THEIR PATHS CONVERGE, THEY MUST NAVIGATE TREACHEROUS LANDSCAPES AND THE MACHINATIONS OF RIVAL FACTIONS VYING FOR CONTROL OF THE CRYSTAL'S MIGHT. HOUSE EVERGREEN, SWORN GUARDIANS OF THE REALM, SEEK TO HARNESS ITS POWER FOR PRESERVATION. THE SHADOWY HOUSE SHADOWFALL PLOTS TO OVERTHROW THEIR RIVALS AND WIELD DARK SORCERY THROUGH THE CRYSTAL'S ENERGY. THE ANCIENT WILDOOD DRUIDS EMERGE FROM THEIR SYLVAN SANCTUAMS, DETERMINED TO PROTECT ELDORIA FROM ANY WHO WOULD MISUSE THE RELIC'S PRIMORDIAL FORCES.

WITH EACH REASSEMBLED SHARD, THE CRYSTAL'S INFLUENCE GROWS, UNLEASHING ELEMENTAL CHAOS THAT BUCKLES THE EARTH AND STIRS THE FURY OF PRIMAL STORMS. REALMS BEGIN TO MERGE, AND CREATURES FROM THE FEYWILD, UNDERDARK, AND OTHER MYSTICAL PLANES BLEED INTO ELDORIA. THE WHISPERING VOID, AN INSIDIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS FORMED FROM THE SOULS TRAPPED IN ELDRIC'S BLADE, OFFERS FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE AND IMMENSE POWER TO ANY WHO WOULD MERGE WITH IT - AT THE COST OF THEIR SANITY.

THE STAKES SOAR AS AN ANCIENT PROPHECY UNVEILS THE TRUTH: SHOULD THE CRYSTAL BE MADE WHOLE, IT WILL TRIGGER AN APOCALYPTIC EVENT KNOWN AS THE SUNDERING, SHATTERING EXISTENCE ITSELF. ONLY BY UNDERSTANDING THE RELIC'S TRUE PURPOSE CAN OUR HEROES HOPE TO AVERT THIS CATACLYSM.

IN A CLIMACTIC BATTLE AMID THE CONVERGENCE OF REALMS, ELDRIC AND HIS ALLIES MUST MAKE AN IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE - TO WIELD THE CRYSTAL'S GODLIKE POWER AND RISK EVERYTHING, OR SHATTER IT FOREVER. THE DECISION FALLS UPON ELDRIC, NOW MERGED WITH THE WHISPERING VOID, ITS DARK WHISPERS OFFERING THE ULTIMATE TEMPTATION.

IN THE END, IT IS LYRA'S LOVE THAT PIERCES THE VOID'S INFLUENCE. ELDRIC SHATTERS THE CRYSTAL, SEVERING THE LINK BETWEEN REALMS AS A SHOCKWAVE OF PURE MAGIC WASHES OVER THE LAND. WHERE ONCE THE FEYWILD AND UNDERDARK BLED INTO ELDORIA, NOW THERE IS ONLY AN EERIE CALM. THE HEROES EMERGE BATTERED BUT VICTORIOUS, THE CRYSTAL'S FRAGMENTS SCATTERED ONCE MORE.

YET AS THE DUST SETTLES, A NEW FRAGMENT GLEAMS IN THE HILT OF ELDRIC'S SWORD, WHISPERING OF A NEW CYCLE BEGINNING. THE ANCIENT CRYSTAL OF ELDORIA, MUCH LIKE THE REALMS THEMSELVES, WILL NEVER TRULY BE SILENCED - ITS WHISPERS ECHO ETERNAL, WAITING FOR THE NEXT CHOSEN TO HEED ITS CALL.

