

Die Flamme der Verheißung

The background of the cover is a dark, swirling composition of fire and smoke. On the left, a woman's profile is shown in silhouette, facing left. Her hair is depicted as a massive, flowing flame that transitions from bright orange and yellow at the roots to deep red and finally to a cool, ethereal blue at the tips. The flames have a fluid, almost liquid quality, with intricate patterns of light and shadow. The overall mood is one of intense passion and spiritual fire.

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Chapter 1: The Village of the Forgotten

The fog hung heavy over the moss-covered stones of the village of Eldoria, where life followed a constant rhythm of work and silence from sunrise to sunset. Here lived Elara, a 17-year-old young woman with a restless heart. She grew up with her grandmother Arinna, a resolute old woman with silver-gray hair and an unwavering belief in the magic of times gone by.

The villagers hardly talked about magic. They pretended that it was a fairy tale intended for children and fools. But grandmother Arinna secretly told Elara stories – of twinkling stars in the sky that once pointed the way to a magical world, and of an ancient power that was supposed to flow in her family's blood.

Elara's days were filled with work: drawing water, baking bread, gathering herbs, but at night, when the wind blew through the old oaks in front of the house, she felt a strange longing. It was as if something was waiting inside her, hidden and forgotten.

One night, when the full moon bathed the village in silvery light, she dreamed. It was no ordinary dream.

A soft but urgent voice whispered her name: "Elara... the flame will be rekindled. Look for them."

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The villagers hardly talked about magic. They pretended that it was a fairy tale intended for children and fools. But grandmother Arinna secretly told Elara stories of twinkling stars in the sky that once pointed the way to a magical world, and of an ancient power that was said to flow in her family's blood. These stories were like small sparks in Elara's otherwise monotonous life. While other girls her age were dedicated to weaving, baking, or preparing for married life, Elara longed for something bigger, something she couldn't put into words.

The days in Eldoria were always the same. In the morning the water was fetched from the well, at noon Elara cooked simple dishes with Arinna from the herbs and roots they collected in the surrounding forest. In the afternoon, she often returned with dirty hands and tired legs after helping in the fields. But while she fulfilled the duties of a villager, her spirit was elsewhere.

She imagined herself traveling distant lands, crossing unknown forests, and uncovering secrets that no one else seemed to know.

Elara's grandmother often watched her out of the corner of her eye and seemed to sense that her granddaughter was destined for more. But she said nothing. Instead, she instructed Elara every now and then to draw certain ancient symbols on parchment or to repeat a few enigmatic words that sounded like a long-forgotten spell. "It's just a game," Arinna had once said when Elara asked what the strange exercises meant. But the seriousness in her grandmother's voice made her doubt it.

One evening, as the sun disappeared behind the distant hills and the light of the stars lit up the village, Elara and Arinna sat by the fire.

The smell of dried lavender was in the air as the wood crackled and small sparks rose into the chimney. Arinna told another of her stories, but this evening something was different. Her voice sounded more serious, and there was an expression in her eyes that Elara could not interpret.

"Do you know why our family never left, Elara?" she began. Her hands held a small cup of herbal tea. Elara shook her head. "We are bound here, by an old obligation. There are things we need to preserve, even if we don't always understand them." "Sometimes life

requires us to choose between what's easy and what's right."

Elara wanted to ask more, but Arinna quickly changed the subject and spoke of a distant kingdom that had sunk into the sea a long time ago. But her grandmother's words did not let her go. What did she mean by "obligation"? And what was there to preserve in Eldoria, in this small, secluded village that hardly anyone could find on the map?

The answer was to come sooner than Elara suspected. When she went to bed later that evening, she couldn't let go of the thought of her grandmother. The little house was quiet, only the gentle creaking of the wooden floor and the distant howling of the wind could be heard. Elara looked at the old beams on the ceiling and tried to organize her thoughts. She remembered a conversation she had overheard as a child. Two villagers had talked about Arinna, about her idiosyncrasies and her strange knowledge that seemed to be out of this world.

"She's an old witch," one of them had said, half jokingly. "Or worse, a guardian of ancient magic."

But before Elara could pursue this thought any further, her eyelids slid shut.

The day had been long, and the silence of the night lay like a blanket over her senses.

When the moon was at its highest and its silvery light fell through the small window in Elara's room, she slept soundly. The wind outside had died down, and the village lay in complete silence. Elara's dreams were mostly unspectacularly fleeting images of fields, forest paths or the small market square. But this time it was different.

In her dream, she stood on a wide plain, surrounded by high mountains that glittered in the light of a strange sky. The air was warm, and a strange scent, sweet and spicy at the same time, filled her lungs. In front of her flickered a flame, small but unnaturally bright, like a star growing out of the earth. A voice, calm and insistent, spoke to her.

"Elara ... the flame will be rekindled. Look for them."

The words resonated with her, but she didn't understand them. She wanted to ask who was speaking, but her voice failed. Instead, it was flooded with a warmth that was both calming and unsettling. She wanted to touch the flame, but when she stretched out her hand, she woke up with a jerk.

The room was silent, and the moonlight was gone. Only the stars sparkled faintly in the sky. Elara sat up and felt her heart beat fast. She looked at her bedside table, on which lay a small book, an old volume that her grandmother had given her years ago. On the cover was embossed a symbol that she had never been able to interpret: a flame surrounded by a circle.

The dream did not let her go. She reached for the book, opened it, and looked at the first pages, on which there were strange characters. For the first time in her life, she felt that her grandmother's stories were more than just fairy tales.

Elara's journey had begun, even if she didn't know it yet.

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There was no answer that evening. But while Elara finished the tea and later went to her bed, she felt a strange restlessness inside her. It was as if her grandmother had wanted to tell her something important, but couldn't find the words. The wind outside rustled through the old trees, and the stars twinkled faintly in the sky.

The next morning, the day began like any other.

Elara fetched water from the well, cut wood for the stove and took care of the small herb pots that her grandmother loved so much. But one thought stuck with her: Had Arinna intentionally told her so many stories to prepare her for something? Was it all part of a larger plan?

Elara was not a dreamer who believed in fairy tales. She knew that life was hard and full of duties. But deep inside her, the question

arose as to whether there might not be more truth that transcended the world as she knew it.

As the day passed and the shadows of night fell over Eldoria again, Elara was determined to ask her grandmother about the meaning of her stories. But when she saw the old woman humming softly and with a mysterious smile cutting herbs, she decided against it. It wasn't the right moment.

Instead, she sat down at the old desk in her room and pulled out a small book that Arinna had once given her.

It was an inconspicuous book with worn corners and yellowed pages, but Elara had always found it special. She leafed through it and looked at the strange symbols and drawings that ran through the book. Some seemed familiar to her, others were completely foreign to her.

As she went through the pages, she felt calm, almost comforted. Her grandmother's words echoed in her head: "Sometimes life requires us to choose." But what decision did she have to make?

And why did she feel that her grandmother knew the answer, but didn't want to confide in her yet?

That evening, Elara fell asleep with a slight sense of foreboding. She knew that something would change, not today or tomorrow, but soon. And whatever might come, she would be ready.

The fog drifted heavily through the narrow streets of Eldoria, while the last rays of light of the day slowly disappeared. Elara had done her tasks for the day and had returned to her small room.

The familiar smell of dried herbs and old wood filled the air, while the gentle crackling of the fire from below calmed her thoughts. She sat down at her desk and opened the old book her grandmother had given her.

The symbols on the yellowed pages seemed to come alive as she ran her fingers over them. Something about them called them a deep, indescribable connection.

The days in Eldoria might have been monotonous, but Elara had learned to pick up on her grandmother's little cues. Every word she said, every action she did, seemed to have a hidden meaning. This night was no exception. Arinna had casually mentioned at dinner that she needed to "sort something out" and had withdrawn earlier than usual.

Elara had only half noticed them, lost in thought in the old symbols of the book.

As the night grew deeper and darkness enveloped the village, Elara realized she was alone. The sounds of the fire had died away, and her grandmother's soft snoring, which usually came from the next room, was absent.

Elara stood up, felt the cold floorboards under her feet and opened the door to Arinna's room. It was empty.

The blanket was neatly folded, the herbs carefully draped on the table, but there was no trace of her grandmother.

A disturbing feeling spread through her. Arinna had never disappeared without a message or a hint. Elara hurried through the house, searching in the kitchen, in the small pantry, and even outside in the cool night air, but her grandmother was gone.

When she stepped back into the house, her eyes fell again on the book on her desk.

But this time something was different. The book had opened by itself, and on one of the pages a symbol shone in a soft, golden light. It was a flame surrounded by a circle, which had been only a simple drawing the nights before.

With trembling hands, Elara approached the book. The words on the page seemed to form as if they were alive, and even though she didn't know the language, she understood the meaning. "The heiress is called when the flame passes. Find the truth before the darkness finds you."

Elara backed away, the book in her hand. Her thoughts raced. What had her grandmother concealed from her?

What did these symbols mean, and why had Arinna disappeared that night?

An inexplicable feeling of fear came over her when a dull knock at

the door startled her.

She turned around, her heart pounding, but when she opened the door, there was no one there. Instead, a single, burnt parchment lay on the threshold. The edges were still faintly glowing, and the same symbol was engraved on the middle of the paper as in the book. Underneath were three words that Elara said aloud without knowing why.

"The seekers are coming."

At that moment, the light of the house went out, and an icy wind swept through the room. Shadows moved in the darkness, and Elara felt an eerie presence around her. But instead of panicking, she gripped the book tighter and looked for a way out. Her grandmother had told her stories of ancient magic, of protective spells and hidden powers. Now it was time to find out if this magic really existed.

Elara remembered a symbol her grandmother had taught her, a simple pattern that was supposed to bring protection. With a

trembling hand, she drew it in the air and spoke the words Arinna had once taught her. "Lumen custodis."

A light blazed before her, bright and warm, and the shadows receded. The presence disappeared, and the darkness in the room slowly receded.

Elara stood panting, the book still in her hand. The danger had passed, but she knew it was only the beginning.

When she looked around, she noticed that the parchment on the threshold had been burned. But where it had lain, a map was now visible, which seemed to be drawn in the ground. It showed an area that Elara did not know: forests, mountains and a lonely symbol that reminded her of that of her book.

Elara knew she had to find answers.

Her grandmother was gone, dark forces were after her, and the book contained secrets that could help her understand everything. She

was no longer a simple villager. She was an heiress, and whatever that meant, she would find out.

Elara spends the rest of the night studying the book and the map, but her thoughts keep revolving around her grandmother.

The morning brings no answers, only an even deeper emptiness. As the sun rises, Eldoria is silent, as if waiting for something. But little does Elara know that the search for her grandmother will not only be a journey of knowledge, but has also attracted the attention of forces that will irrevocably change her past and future.