

ONE



THE BEGINNING OF BEGINNINGS



CLINGING TO THE CLIFFS ON THE SHORES OF THE BAY OF Temparus, on the northeastern edge of the continent of Mael, was the elven city of Ishk'aldu. Night had fallen and the air was abound with the sound of waves reaching the beach, a gentle breeze blowing inland from the water with the sweet, salty, scent of the sea. Within the city, in the palace of King Talasith Seawhisper, leader of the Mistborne clan, was his eighteen year old daughter Alithis. She sat on the edge of her bed, and sitting beside her was her grandmother, Lenari, who began reading to her from a book in her lap. It was an ancient book, cobwebs clinging to its spine and yellowed pages, tattered and delicate.

“Long ago, before the creation of this world, before all we know came to be, the universe was ruled by beings of great power, the beings we worship as gods. The ruler of these gods was Lord Temparus, Igniter of Stars. He was the most powerful of all, bringing forth many worlds into the universe and breathing fire into the stars so they would shine. But despite all his power, he was alone. While he created many worlds and ignited many suns, nothing brought him fulfillment. That was until he met the goddess Almithara, whom he fell in love with. But she was betrothed to Zarenthrix, god of the underworld. She was unique among the gods and goddesses, who all had silver hair and dark eyes. Her hair was black as night and her eyes glowed a brilliant blue. Zarenthrix, the one she would marry, had a good and gentle heart long ago, but all that had changed. He was to be named lord of all the gods as part of the Hevorian Conclave: the assembly of all the gods and goddesses of the universe. But Temparus was chosen over him, and that turned his heart bitter with jealousy and hatred. Almithara saw the change in him and her love for him vanished.” “Wait a minute grandmother,” said Alithis, “why was Zarenthrix denied

leadership of the conclave?” Her grandmother smiled, “I would think that the gods and goddesses would have known what was truly on his heart. I’m sure they probably saw an evil which resided there.”

Alithis nodded, “I see.”

Her grandmother looked at her, slightly annoyed, “may I?” she asked.

Alithis nodded, “Sorry, please continue.” Her grandmother looked back down at the book and continued reading...

“One day Lord Temparus approached Almithara and expressed his love for her. She told him that she was betrothed to Zarenthrix, but no longer loved him. She opened her heart to Temparus, and soon fell in love with him. Temparus, overjoyed he had won her heart, told her he would create a world unlike any other in the universe. A world that would be the most beautiful ever created and it would bear her name for all eternity. For six days he crafted that world, our world, and when it was done he showed it to Almithara. She was delighted and he gave it to her to cherish and to do with as she pleased. But Zarenthrix soon discovered she had spurned him and had ended their betrothal. His rage was so great the stars began to explode around him. On her new world, Almithara carefully brought life into being. First she created our people, the elves, then the sprites and all forms of beautiful creatures, flowers, trees and every blade of grass. Before long the world of Almithara was glowing with life and beauty.

One day as she stood upon the mountain at the very center of our home continent of Mael, Zarenthrix appeared before her. He unleashed his rage and told her she would die for her betrayal. He told her to look to the southeastern coast of Mael. Using his powers, a massive volcano rose from the Mistborne Sea, spewing molten rock in all directions. Within a few seconds a new island had formed with the volcano on its northern slope. He told Almithara that the island would be known as Hade and would be her tomb. In an instant he struck her down and as she lay on the ground dying, he picked her up and threw her body into the gaping maw of the volcano. She screamed in agony as her body was incinerated in the hot magma. Her spirit rose into the sky and spread out among the clouds.

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Far off in the cosmos, Lord Temparus felt Almithara die and rushed back to the world he had created for her. There he found Zarenthrix corrupting the world that she had made so beautiful. He created men, human-kind, who were greedy and wicked. He corrupted their bodies and created the dwarves and filled them with mistrust for other races and a lust for treasures within the earth. He made human-kind lust for elven-kind, creating the half-elves. And he created the Orcs from the slag and ashes of Hade, filling them with the same rage that filled his own heart.

But before Temparus could face Zarenthrix the spirit of Almithara spoke to him and instructed him to pull her bones from the mouth of the volcano and forge them into a mighty sword. He did this and quickly forged the sword from her bones and he plunged the sword into the sea, a cloud of steam erupting from the waters. When he retrieved it, there was a flash as the spirit of Almithara bound with the sword. Then he made his way to find Zarenthrix.

He found him mounted upon a massive dragon which he had named Sethranar, hovering over the Mistborne Sea. Temparus confronted Zarenthrix, telling him he would avenge the death of his beloved. But Zarenthrix told him it was not he who would die, but Temparus. Then he would become lord of the Hevorian Conclave and display Temparus' broken body to all the other gods and goddesses.

Temparus charged at Zarenthrix with the sword, bringing his rage down upon the god of the underworld. The dragon countered each blow of the sword, its scales were like that of diamonds. But Temparus' rage brought down each blow with greater and greater force. He cried out in rage and with one tremendous blow Temparus severed Sethranar's head which fell down into the sea, its body falling out from under Zarenthrix. Outraged, Zarenthrix howled and attacked Temparus, but Almithara's soul within the sword kept Temparus safe as the sword deflected every strike. Zarenthrix began to tire, suffering wounds on his body from the sword. His blood dripped down onto the land, killing the life there and turning the land into a desert. Zarenthrix cast a blinding spell and, leaving Temparus struggling to regain his sight, jumped across the world to Mael, where we call home. There he hid to recover from his wounds. But Temparus found him and with one final stroke Zarenthrix was defeated and

with that final blow the sword shattered, sending shards upward into the sky so high that they rained down upon the world as streaks of fire. The soul of Almithara too was shattered. The force of the explosion bored a hole deep into the world, down to its very core. As Zarenthrix pleaded for mercy, Temparus grabbed him and told him there was no mercy for the treacherous, and he would never be lord of the conclave. Rather, he would be lord of the souls damned to eternal torture in the underworld! With that he threw Zarenthrix into the pit and he fell down into the underworld where the dead suffer in eternal torment. The world of Almithara quaked and a fissure opened from the pit down the northern slope and out to the sea.

Looking at the damaged hilt of the sword, Temparus' rage turned to anguish and his tears filled the pit, which became Stonewater Lake. His tears overflowed and spilt out into the fissure, which became the Stonewater River. He took the hilt and threw it into the ocean and left the world he had made, never to return.

Over time, the wickedness of outsiders forced our people to vanish into The Green and anyone not of elf-kind who entered that forest would never see another turn of Almithara. But friction and corruption were not isolated to human-kind or dwarf-kind. Soon the elven people too became greedy and selfish. War followed. For over two thousand years our people have been at war, and of the seven elven tribes, only five remain. Only time will tell if peace can be realized before our people become extinct from hatred."

Lenari closed the book, sending a puff of dust into the air. She looked at Alithis, "Now you know the story of how our world, how we, came into being. This story has been told to your ancestors for hundreds of generations, when they have reached the age of Ta'shalu, when they ceased being a child and became an adult."

Alithis nodded, "But what happened to Zarenthrix? If he was not killed, what became of him?" Her grandmother frowned, "He still lives, deep in the underworld. And one day he will return. On that day, all that we know, all that we love and cherish, will be taken from us," she patted Alithis' shoulder, "but you need not worry about such things, you have an important ceremony to

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focus on tomorrow. So get your rest!” She kissed Alithis on the cheek, “I love you granddaughter, sleep well, and may Umgås and Ninna watch over you before they set at the dawn.”

“I love you too grandmother, thank you,” said Alithis, now climbing beneath the soft down quilt her mother had made for her when she was a child. Lenari got up, book in hand, and walked out of the room.

But sleep would not come for Alithis. She tossed and turned and finally decided to get up. Walking over to her desk she sat down and pulled out a loosely bound journal. With feather quill in hand she began writing onto one of the blank pages. Her long white hair flowed gently down her shoulders, her fair skin glistened in the delicate beams of moonlight streaming in through the boughs of the tree above her.

“I have just been told the Ba'alathisit by my grandmother as is our custom. My Ta'shalu is tomorrow, when I will cease being a child and become an adult in our clan. As it is written, the war between the five clans continues unabated. Even now my clan battles to defend our ancestral lands,” she paused and looked up at the crimson moons, Umgås and Ninna, as they rose high into the night sky. She let forth a deep sigh and returned to her journal, “To add to my anxiety, I am keeping a dangerous secret from my father. I have never written about this, but now I feel I must record it should something happen to me,” she stopped and bit her bottom lip as if reluctant to reveal her secret, then she continued, “I have been, without anyone's knowledge, involved in a love affair with none other than Nolthar Riverstone, prince of our mortal enemy the River Clan. Should my father find out, he would have no choice but to have me put to death as it is written in our laws. But I cannot ignore my heart,” she stopped as a tear escaped her eye and fell onto the page. Wiping it clean she continued, “for many months now, the River Clan has attacked us. When this happens, I have been escaping into the forest to meet up with Nolthar, who leads the assaults. I can only hope that someday we can put aside this hatred, this violence. It is my sincere hope we can be a united people once again.”

Getting up from her desk, she walked over to her bed and laid down, feeling sleep beckoning to her. The words of her grandmother echoed once more within her mind, ‘only time will tell if peace can be realized before our people

become extinct from hatred.' She sighed and rolled over, then rolled over to her other side. But sleep would still not come as thoughts raced through her head. She hated the fact that her people were at war. She sat up in bed, her white hair falling around her slender shoulders. She looked out through the open walls of her room and saw the horizon with the bay down below it. The faint sound of waves lapping upon the shore and the scent of the sea was carried upon a gentle breeze that caressed her skin, her hair dancing upon it for a moment.

She wondered if there was any chance she could bring some kind of peace to her people. But her father's voice came into her head, "Alithis, you know I want peace more than anything. But our people are in grave danger of being lost to this land. I cannot afford to think of peace while others seek to slit our throats. The Mistborne Clan must endure."

She remembered his words, spoken only a few days ago. It made her heart weep to know that this war was pitting elf kind against elf kind. Finally giving in to the knowledge that she could do nothing, she laid back down in her bed and closed her eyes. She thought about Nolthar. She thought of being in his arms, feeling his gentle touch and as she did she finally fell asleep.

As night turned to dawn, the warm sunlight peered through her open window, the birds awoke from their slumber and began singing their songs. Alithis rolled over, groaning, not wanting to leave the world of dreams. She slowly opened her eyes, and squinting, gazed upon the beams of sunlight shining into her room. She lay there, peaceful and content not to get up. She also knew that today was a very special day, as her people would escort her to Deso, the place of ceremony and rest for those who have died, to conduct the rite of Ta'shalu: the time of growth, when youth is replaced by adulthood. Her thoughts about the ceremony were interrupted by a knock on the door and the muffled voice of her grandmother, "Alithis! Alithis! Are you awake? I hope you are, it's almost time." The door opened and Lenari rushed inside and gasped to see Alithis still lying in bed.

"Get up! Get up! You're going to make everyone wait for you, and that's not a very good thing on your day of Ta'shalu!"

Grunting and complaining Alithis sat up, turned, and put her feet on the cool floor. Lenari went through Alithis' wardrobe, shuffling clothing back and

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forth, “Now where did you put your ceremonial robe?”

“It’s in there, somewhere,” replied Alithis, wiping the crust of sleep from her eyes. Her grandmother was talking to herself as she frantically looked for Alithis’ robe, “I tell you, this is a disgrace! You young people are so disorganized! Look at these clothes just piled up in here, not folded, all wrinkled! How on earth you are able to go around in public wearing such wrinkled clothing I don’t know. Where on earth is that robe!?” Alithis rolled her eyes, got up, and walked over to the wardrobe, reached in and pulled out the robe. Lenari looked with shock at the robe and then at her, “How in the name of Temparus...” She took the robe from Alithis and held it out in front of her, it was very wrinkled. “How on Almithara do you expect to get these wrinkles out in time? Oh I just don’t know,” complained Lenari, walking over to a stone shelf, and placing the robe upon it. She picked up a glowing stone, sitting on the shelf, and used it over the robe, rubbing out the wrinkles.

“It’s a good thing I have time to be ironing out your wrinkles young lady! On my day of Ta’shalu, I was up very early, my robes were pristine, and I was ready for my ceremony before anyone else was awake!”

“I’m sorry grandmother,” replied Alithis, feeling badly that she had slept in, “but I was not able to sleep until very late.”

Lenari stopped ironing and looked at her grand-daughter, “Why is that? Are you nervous about the ceremony? There’s no need to be nervous sweetheart.” Alithis looked at the floor, and then back up at her grandmother, “No. It’s not that.”

Seeing something was genuinely wrong with Alithis, Lenari walked over and placed her hand upon Alithis’ shoulder, “My dear child, then what is wrong?” Alithis’ mind was racing in all directions, she thought to herself, “should I tell her? Should I reveal my secret affair? If she tells father, I will be put to death, but I don’t know if that is certain. Maybe I’ll be exiled, or beaten, I don’t know if I should tell her.”

“You’re in love,” replied Lenari, “aren’t you!”

Alithis looked at her grandmother in awe, she replied nervously “In love? Me?!” As she said this she blushed unknowingly.

“You are! You are in love! Who is it?”

“I,” she paused and looked away from her grandmother, “I cannot tell you,” Suddenly Lenari’s excitement faded into concern, “My child, you are keeping a secret from your father aren’t you?”



Alithis' eyes grew wide, and she thought to herself, "how does she know?!" Lenari walked over and embraced her grand-daughter, hugging her tightly, and whispered in her ear, "It's someone outside our clan, isn't it?" Alithis pulled away from Lenari, anger striking her features, "No! How could you even suggest such a thing! I would be put to death for such treason!" "Alithis, you are my grandchild, and I have been on this world for many turns. I have a way of sensing things you may not understand. And what is this talk about being put to death? Nonsense! You must follow your heart my dear, you must not allow anything or anyone to stop you from loving someone that you cherish so much, even if they are not a part of our clan. It's Nolthar is it not?" Stunned, Alithis looked at her grandmother. She relented with a sigh, "Yes, it's Nolthar."

Smiling and shaking her head Lenari embraced Alithis again, "My child, your hopes are noble and righteous. Pursue them, and do not fear what might happen. The rewards of taking that chance could be greater than you could imagine."

"But what about my father. Our laws say such treason is punishable by," but her grandmother interrupted her, "Nonsense!" Walking over to the robes, she picked them up, and handed them to Alithis, "now get these on and we need to hurry, they'll be waiting for us." Alithis nodded and changed into the robes. When she came out from behind her dressing partition, her grandmother smiled, "Oh you look so lovely! Come, let us go."

Outside, in the palace courtyard, were hundreds of elven soldiers on each side, with a walkway through the middle of them. Standing on this walkway, by the gate leading out of the palace grounds, was Alithis' father, King Talasith Seawhisper. His hair, long and white, fell upon his shoulders and part way down his chest. His seasoned countenance bore many scars, and a small goatee encircled his mouth. He wore battle armor, shining brightly in the sun, a short sword on his hip, and a bow and quiver upon his back. As Alithis appeared with Lenari, his stern expression melted into a prideful smile. They walked toward him, and as they did the soldiers to their left and right bore their weapons skyward and yelled, "Long live Princess Alithis! Long live the Mistborne Clan!" A band then struck with marching music as they grew ever closer to the king. Reaching her father, Alithis embraced him. He looked down upon her, being much taller than she, "My dear, sweet, Alithis. You look lovely!



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I am so proud of you.”

“Thank you father,” replied Alithis, blushing.

He turned and faced Lenari, “Mother of my wife, I am indebted to you for all you have done for my daughter. Since the death of her mother you have filled that void for her and I’m forever in your debt.”

“Thank you my lord,” replied Lenari. Nodding, the king signaled to his commander, General Nivari Ranelthia, to call the troops into formation, in preparation to march to Deso.

The soldiers marched toward one another, and being spaced one elf apart, they came together like teeth of a gear, meshing into one massive column. The band began playing a different march. A carriage waited for the king and his daughter outside the gate. After they climbed aboard it, the entire entourage began marching at a slow, but steady, pace down a cobblestone path that led into The Green, the great forest that covers nearly the entire northern side of Mael. Bit by bit, they vanished into the shadows of the forest, until all that remained were the distant strains of the band.