

## Tales of the Eternals—Prologue

Fire leapt into the air, which was thick with ash and dust. Rivers of red lava flowed across the black and grey rocks, gouging anything in its path. Occasionally a flash of lightning illuminated the black clogging clouds in the sky, a bright white light against the dark, or else mingling with the red glow from the roaring volcanos.

Far away, in a small valley, away from the hot mountains and rivers, a mist of ash hung low in the air. The whole place was silent and still, not a sign of life anywhere. Then, far above in the sky, another flash of light appeared, illuminating the clouds much like the lightning....except it did not vanish, but grew and grew in intensity. Then a shape emerged from behind a cloud. It looked like a smooth horseshoe, with that bright light surrounding it like an aurora.

It landed with a soft whisper, and the light around it disappeared. It stood there, silent and unmoving like the world around it. It was deep blue in colour, with gold highlights, forming swirling patterns across the surface. It looked as though it was made from a smooth material, no marks or scratches adorned it.

Suddenly, from between the two arms of the horseshoe shape, the surface cracks open, and light spills out onto the barren ground. Something appears in the arch of light, a shadow, slim of shape but tall. It steps out onto the ground on two legs, which look as though they are armoured and made of a smooth blue and gold material, interlocking sheets running from upper leg to foot. The lighted arch instantly disappears, and everything is thrown into darkness once more.

The figure surveys the area, its upper body hidden in the shadow of its craft. After getting its bearings, it moves off, circling the valley, as though looking for something. It stops occasionally, picking up a few stones, turning them over in its hand before putting them back on the ground. Finishing a whole circle of the valley, the being takes one last glance at its craft, before climbing up the valley's ridge. Beyond, is a vast, shallow lake, its surface red with the light of a nearby volcano and from a nearby lava river. Jagged rocks poke from its depths, covered in a strange greenish growth.

The figure wanders around the banks, studying the lake and the rocks. It picks up a stone, covered in the growth from the shallows and takes a small clear cylinder from a belt around its waist and passes it over the growth. Inside the cylinder appears a microscope-like image of minute cells and bacteria, floating and moving, splitting apart and growing. Putting the cylinder away, the being then takes out what looks like a lump of clear crystal, shaped into an oval. He presses one part of the object to the stone. The crystal starts shining a soft gold light, which envelops the stone, becoming brighter and brighter until it is out of sight.

Eventually the light dies and the stone is now bare, no growth visible. But the crystal meanwhile, is now a dark green, with cells and bacteria clearly visible inside. The figure moves away from the lake and its profile is suddenly lighted by a burst of flame from the lava lake. It had a smooth, armour-like face, no mouth or nose visible, only a pair of blank golden gashes which could have been eyes. ...

It moves away from the lava, back into shadow and moves away, back to its vessel.

Next chapter: The realm of the dinosaurs