



Prologue- Part 2

Years had passed since the day Laglock found Korba, and the two had traveled across many lands and seen wonders that most could only dream of. The boy, now a teenager, had grown into a skilled mage under Laglock's teaching. One afternoon, their journey took them to a quiet pond, fed by a small creek that ran down from a nearby mountain deep within the lands of Pinnacle. The sun hung low in the sky, casting golden light over the water.

“Korba! Tie up the horses over by that tree and prepare camp,” Laglock called out, with a mischievous smile as he stepped down from his horse. “Oh, and Korba!... Happy birthday, lad! Happy birthday!”

Korba, surprised, caught the rope Laglock tossed to him. “Thanks, Laglock!” he said, grinning as he led the horses to a tree nearby.

“It’s not every day a person turns seventeen, after all,” Laglock chuckled. “Once you’re done setting up camp, I’ve got something special for you. A little surprise.”

Korba’s heart swelled at the thought. Though they weren’t related by blood, Laglock had become like a father to him since the loss of his parents. After tying up the horses and setting up camp, Korba managed the fire, watching the flames dance under his control as Laglock settled down beside him.

“So, what is it?” Korba asked eagerly, sitting down across from the old wizard, his eyes bright with excitement. “What do you have for me?”

Laglock shifted closer to the fire, his face illuminated by its warm glow. “It’s not just what, boy, but what and where,” Laglock said, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial tone. “We’ve arrived, Korba. We’ve reached the hidden entrance to the cave. It’s just up that hill there...” He pointed toward the nearby rise.

Korba blinked, startled. “The cave? You mean the cave?”

“Aye,” Laglock replied, his smile widening. “The map I’ve followed all these years was right. This is the place where the Darken Stone lies hidden.”

Korba furrowed his brow, glancing at Laglock’s worn map. He’d seen it a hundred times, but there was always one symbol that intrigued him. “I’ve never asked before, but your map has a symbol drawn on it that looks just like my music box.”

Laglock leaned forward, his expression serious now. “That’s because, boy, you’ve been carrying the key to this cave the whole time.”

Korba’s eyes widened as he pulled the small music box from his pack, turning it over in his hands. “The key? But... how?”

“The legends say that the music from that very box will open the way,” Laglock explained. “It won’t be easy, but our goal is simple. We’ll use your box to unlock the entrance and slip inside. Once we get in, the only thing we need is the Darken Stone. Once I have it, the Darken that protect the cave will be under my control.”

Korba nodded, but there was still a nervous flutter in his stomach. “What if we don’t reach it in time? What if the Darken sense us?”

Laglock leaned back, his face calm but determined. “I’ll have my hand on your shoulder, Korba. I’ll use your eyes to see them, and if all goes well, they won’t even know we’re there. We’ll be in and out before they have time to react.”

The fire crackled softly as Korba considered the weight of their task. He watched the flames flicker and began shaping them with his magic, making them twist and dancelike figures swaying to the silent tune of his music box.

“Laglock?” Korba asked, his voice quieter now. “Why did you pick me to help you? Why not someone else?”

Laglock turned his head toward the boy, his expression softening. “Well, lad,” he began, “when you’re on the run for as long as I’ve been, you don’t make many friends. I didn’t trust anyone else.”

Too many men would have tried to take the gem for themselves or collect the bounty on my head. I couldn't risk that."

He paused, watching as Korba's flames danced in the night air. "But you, Korba... you're different boy, you are family. Since the day I found you, your magic has grown stronger, almost as strong as mine once was. You've worked harder than any apprentice I could've asked for. Your power should be more than enough to get us through."

Korba looked up from the fire, touched by the old wizard's words.

"But that's not the only reason," Laglock continued after a moment. His voice was softer now, almost hesitant. "You've become like the son I never had. And you're the only one I've ever trusted with my knowledge. I didn't want to die without passing it on. You've proven yourself time and again, Korba."

Laglock reached into his long, worn robe and carefully pulled out a dagger. Its blade shimmered like red crystal, and the handle gleamed, crafted from white gold. He held it out to Korba, the firelight reflecting off the blade's sharp edges.

"This is the Fira Dagger," Laglock said with a knowing smile as he placed the weapon into Korba's hands.

Korba stared down at it, his eyes wide with wonder.

"There are only four of these in the world," Laglock continued, calm but filled with significance. "Each one a different color, each with a unique power. This one, the Red Fira Dagger, is known as the 'Dagger of Truth.' It has the power to reveal when someone is lying."

Korba's eyes sparkled as he held the dagger in his lap, tracing the smooth, cool surface of the blade. "Wow! Thank you, Laglock! I love it! How... How do I use it?" he asked eagerly.

"It's simple," Laglock replied with a grin. "Just channel your Meta through the handle, and the blade will ignite with red fire. Go on—try it on that tree over there!"

Without hesitation, Korba jumped up and ran toward a nearby tree. He gripped the dagger firmly, the way a warrior might hold a sword before battle. Closing his eyes for a moment, he focused, feeling the familiar rush of energy surge through him. A second later, flames erupted from the top of the dagger's handle, forming a glowing fire blade—three feet long and three inches wide.

Korba's eyes snapped open as he marveled at the flaming blade. The fire swirled and danced along its edges, casting flickering shadows on the trees around them.

“Strike the tree, boy! Strike the tree!” Laglock called from where he sat by the fire, his voice filled with encouragement.

Korba raised the dagger high and swung with all his might. The blade cut through the tree effortlessly, as though slicing through air. For a moment, nothing happened. Then, with a groaning creak, the tree began to lean, the cut slowly revealing itself as the trunk gave way. Leaves whipped through the air, and the limbs cracked as they hit the ground. Finally, the tree crashed down with a thunderous boom, its fall echoing through the forest.

“Wow...” Korba whispered, still holding the dagger aloft as the flames crackled at its tip. Then his Skill Tree projected just above his arm showing the beginning of a new branch “Magical Weaponry”, skill “Blazing Strike”. He looked it over a second and turned back to Laglock, a wide grin on his face. “Thank you, Laglock!” he said gratefully.

The old mage gave Korba an encouraging smile. “Keep at it, lad. Take down a few more trees before you rest. Tomorrow's going to be a big day—a very big day.”

Korba nodded, and turned back to the tree line, gripping the hilt of the fiery blade tightly. “Blazing Strike!” he called out, feeling a surge of energy and knowledge ripple through him. Korba had handled daggers before, but this—this was something entirely different. The sword felt natural in his hands now, as though the stance and form had been locked away in his mind, now becoming a returning memory to his body.

His feet shifted, and his grip adjusted, as if on instinct. The sword, blazing with red fire, hummed with power as he swung it through the air. Another tree crashed to the ground, leaves and branches scattering everywhere. The fire flickered, glowing fiercely, as Korba took down tree after tree.

Over the course of a few minutes, the strain of wielding such power began to wear on him. The more he channeled his Meta into the blade, the heavier it felt in his hand, and soon exhaustion crept over him. With one final swing, he let the flames die out and made his way back to the campfire where Laglock sat, watching him closely. Panting, Korba collapsed onto his blanket beside the fire, his heart still racing. He couldn't help but grin as he looked up at the sky.

"You've done well, Korba," Laglock said, if not covered by the cloth his eyes would have been gleaming with pride. "Keep at it, and you may one day become a powerful wizard, perhaps even taking the Oath of the Elementals."

Korba staring up at the stars pondering asked "Laglock, what can you tell me about the Elementals?"

Laglock's voice softened, but his words held the weight of ancient knowledge. "To understand the Elementals, you must first learn about the Ragnarok... a time long past, when the land of Verdue held six great kingdoms—There was Lith, Altaire, Pinnacle, Galica, Melgar, and Fimbulvetr. But Fimbulvetr's king, Mazra, was betrayed by the one he trusted most—his wife, Nella. She loved him not for his heart, but for his wealth and power. Their hollow love set in motion events that would change the fate of kingdoms..."

As Korba drifted to sleep, Laglock's voice wove tales of forgotten lands and tragic kings, of magic that shaped the world, and the ancient power that still lingered in the air. The journey had only just begun.

His wife, Nella, was said to be the most beautiful woman in all the lands, yet her love for Mazra was as empty as their union. She had married him not for his heart, but for his wealth and his fame, and their relationship was nothing more than a brittle shell of what it could have been.

One fateful night, during a grand feast at the castle of Altaire, hosted by Lord Thyorsan, Mazra wandered the halls, drunk and searching for his wife. The sounds of celebration still echoed in the corridors, but as Mazra searched, he heard a different kind of sound—whispers and soft laughter, coming from behind a closed door. His heart froze. Pushing open the door, Mazra found Nella in the arms of Lord Thyorsan himself.

Enraged, Mazra drew his sword, but before he could act, Thyorsan called his guards. They rushed in to arrest him, but Mazra's elite warriors—his most loyal soldiers—fought their way through, buying

time for their king to escape. They led Mazra to safety, sacrificing their lives to ensure his return to Fimbulvetr.

Mazra's heart burned with hatred, and war was declared between the two kingdoms. Yet despite his best efforts, his armies were no match for the might of Altaire. Defeated, Mazra fled his kingdom with only the remnants of his wealth and his last ten loyal guards, retreating into the cold, barren lands of Lith.

Consumed by thoughts of revenge, Mazra sought out anyone who could wield dark magic, desperate to find a way to destroy those who had betrayed him. It was on this grim journey that he encountered a band of mysterious gypsies who guarded an ancient artifact: the Grimoire. The book, they said, could grant a man control over his life force, power to manipulate the souls of others and can summon great monstrosity. But its secrets were hidden behind ancient, unreadable text, and no one had ever mastered it."

Laglock paused, letting the words sink in.

"They began the ritual in the dead of night, while Mazra's guards slept soundly. One by one, the gypsies drained the life from his men, their bodies writhing in agony before falling still. Mazra stood there, watching in silence, his soul teetering between fascination and horror. He thought himself prepared for what would come, but no man—no matter how broken—can truly be ready for what he unleashed."

Korba frowned, leaning forward. "Unleashed?"

Laglock nodded grimly. "A beast. A colossal nightmare from the ancient times. The gypsies poured the stolen life force into the earth, summoning something far worse than any could have imagined. From the depths of the abyss, a creature began to rise—an ancient terror long forgotten. A monster the size of a castle. Cloaked by smoke, its body grew upwards into a massive creature that stood upright taller than any tower built by man. Out from its back sprung huge wings. The beast's head had become that of a dragon filled with only thoughts of evil and the want of destruction. An unstoppable juggernaut they called the Ragnarok."

Korba's eyes flickered with recognition. The name was one of legend, whispered in dark corners of the world. A creature of destruction, unstoppable, unrelenting.

“Mazra believed he could control it, that his rage was enough to bind the beast to his will,” Laglock continued, his voice growing softer, as though speaking the words too loudly might bring the monster back. “But he was a fool. As soon as the beast emerged, Mazra’s fate was sealed. The Ragnarok’s eyes—like twin suns burning with hate—turned on him. There was no hesitation, no recognition of the man who had summoned it. To Ragnarok, Mazra was nothing more than prey.”

Laglock’s voice dropped lower, barely more than a whisper now. “The gypsies fled in terror, but it was already too late. With a single strike, the beast crushed Mazra beneath its massive claws. His body was broken before he could even scream. The man who sought to control death found only his own.”

Korba’s lips tightened. “And the beast?”

“It turned its attention to the castle of Altaire. No stone was left standing, no wall strong enough to withstand its fury. All inside were slaughtered, including the ruler, Lord Thyorsan, and his mistress, Nella. The castle was reduced to rubble and ash in mere moments. But legend says that two souls survived that night. A simple servant maid and Thyorsan’s own son, the heir to the kingdom. She took the boy and fled into the night as the castle fell behind them, the only spark of hope in an ocean of devastation.”

Korba shifted slightly, his brow furrowing, but he remained silent.

“The destruction didn’t end there,” Laglock continued, “the Ragnarok, in its madness, spawned the Belrok—smaller creatures made in its image. These monstrous beings spread like wildfire, overwhelming the armies of the kingdoms that had gathered to stop Ragnarok. In fact,” he said, lowering his voice conspiratorially, “they say the Belrok still nest not far from Pinnacle.”

“For a time, it seemed all hope was lost. The armies of Verdue were no match for the Ragnarok and its minions. But just when despair gripped the hearts of men, five of the most powerful wizards from Pinnacle stepped forward. Their studies were to master one of each elemental force of the world—earth, fire, water, air, and spirit. Together, they sought to draw upon the planet’s lifeforce, hoping to wield its ancient power.”

The flames crackled, and Laglock’s voice lowered, drawing Korba in closer with the gravity of his words. “The battle raged on, fierce and bloody, through the long night. The Ragnarok’s Belrok tore through the ranks of soldiers, but the wizards did not falter. They worked tirelessly, summoning the lifeforce of the planet itself. As dawn approached, their power grew.

And then, something unexpected happened.”

“What?” Korba’s voice was barely above a whisper.

“The Great Eagles,” Laglock said with a smile. “They were drawn to the power the wizards were summoning, sensing the energy flowing from the earth. They swooped down from the skies, fierce and untamable, and fought alongside the forces of man. In that moment, everything changed. Where once the Great Eagles were hunted, now they became allies. Their strength in the battle was undeniable, and it was from this moment on the people of Pinnacle began to breed and ride the eagles instead of fearing them.”

Korba’s eyes gleamed with fascination, and Laglock smiled inwardly. He had the boy’s full attention now.

“The wizards,” he continued, “finally gathered enough of the planet’s lifeforce. They unleashed it upon the Ragnarok in a torrent of raw, elemental energy. The blast tore through the behemoth’s chest, a light so bright that it was said to rival the sun. With a thunderous crash that shook the earth, Ragnarok fell. The beast was dead, its body broken, its reign of terror at an end.”

Korba’s mouth parted slightly, lost in the tale.

“Seeing their creator slain, the remaining Belrok fled, their courage shattered. They scattered to the winds, hiding in fear of destruction. The forces of man, having survived the onslaught, gathered what was left of Ragnarok’s massive corpse and threw it into the Sea of Lith, ensuring it could never rise again.”

Laglock leaned back, his voice softening as the story neared its end. “But that wasn’t the last of it. The five wizards—those who had channeled the planet’s lifeforce—did not remain unchanged. The power had seeped into their very souls, giving them wisdom and strength beyond that of any mortal. They were hailed as the new rulers of Pinnacle, and from that day forward, they were known as the Elementals. Each generation, the lifeforce is passed down to a new chosen one, ensuring that the magic of the earth continues to guide our people.”

The fire crackled softly, and Laglock's voice grew softer still. "As for Thyorsan's son, when he came of age, he reclaimed Altaire, and with it, all the land of Fimbulvetr. That kingdom became his own, and the name of Fimbulvetr faded into legend."

Korba blinked, eyes heavy with the weight of the story. Laglock smirked and glanced at him. "That, lad, is how the Elementals came to rule Pinnacle, and how the Great Eagles became our allies."

Korba remained still, his eyelids fluttering shut, finally succumbing to sleep.

Laglock chuckled quietly to himself, laying back beside the fire. "Good night, lad,"

The next day after a long hike..

The journey through the jagged mountain path had been treacherous, but now Korba and Laglock stood before the ancient stone wall—a sheer face of solid rock, stretching impossibly high into the mist-covered peaks. There was no door, no visible opening, just an unbroken expanse of stone. It was as if the mountain itself had no intention of letting them pass.

Korba's breath came in short gasps, the cold air biting at his lungs as he gazed up at the imposing wall. His eyes fell to the single marking etched into the rock—a strange symbol, worn and ancient, half-obsured by time.

"We're here," Laglock muttered, his voice low and reverent. He gripped his staff tighter, as though the weight of the moment pressed down on him. "This is it."

Korba stared at the symbol. It seemed so small, almost insignificant, against the vastness of the mountain. "There's no door," he said, uncertainty creeping into his voice.

Laglock gave a sharp, humorless chuckle. "No, boy. There's no door. The entrance to this place isn't so simple. It's been sealed for centuries."

Korba frowned. "Then how do we—"

“The music box,” Laglock interrupted, already reaching into his worn cloak. His fingers closed around a small object, and he pulled it free—a tarnished, hearth shape skull, its intricate carvings glinting faintly in the dim light.

It was old, far older than Laglock, its face covered in strange runes that pulsed with quiet, ancient magic.

“Step back,” Laglock commanded, his tone growing sharper. “The magic in this box... it’s not to be taken lightly.”

Korba did as he was told, retreating a few steps as Laglock moved closer to the symbol etched in the stone. His hands worked swiftly, turning the key and opening the delicate lid of the music box with a soft click. For a moment, there was silence. Then, from within the box, came the haunting melody—soft, slow, and full of sorrow.

The sound echoed through the mountains like a ghost’s lament, winding through the air and sinking into Korba’s bones. The tune seemed to belong to a time long forgotten, where magic and ancient rites still ruled the world.

As the music played, the symbol on the stone wall began to glow, faint at first, then brighter, as though the melody itself had breathed life into it. The lines of the etching shimmered with a golden light, pulsing in time with the mournful tune.

Korba’s heart pounded in his chest, he took a step back, instinctively sensing the power that was being awakened.

The mountain rumbled.

The ground beneath their feet trembled as cracks began to spiderweb out from the glowing symbol. Korba’s eyes widened as the solid stone wall—the impenetrable barrier that had stood for centuries—began to move.

With a deep, grinding sound, the stone shifted, groaning like an ancient beast stirring from its slumber. The symbol split apart as the rock began to slide, revealing a dark, yawning entrance behind it. Dust and debris fell from the edges as the mountain slowly parted, creating a passage large enough for them to walk through.

Korba swallowed hard, his gaze fixed on the blackness beyond. It was as though the mountain had opened its jaws, inviting them inside.

Laglock smiled grimly, closing the music box with a soft click. The melody ceased, but the weight of its magic lingered in the air. "There," he said, turning to Korba. "The way is open."

Korba stared into the depths of the passage, a knot forming in his stomach. The darkness was thick, and suffocating, and it seemed to pulse with an unnatural energy. Something waited for them in the shadows. He could feel it.

"What... what's in there?" Korba asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

"Power," Laglock replied, his eyes gleaming. "The kind you've never dreamed of. And we're the only ones left who know how to claim it."

Korba hesitated, the weight of the moment pressing down on him. The air around him felt heavy, thick with the promise of danger and something far greater than either of them could comprehend.

"Come now, lad," Laglock said, stepping toward the open passage. "We've come too far to turn back now."

With a deep breath, Korba followed.

Together, they crossed the threshold, disappearing into the mountain's embrace as the stone wall slowly groaned shut behind them, sealing them in with whatever waited in the dark.

She knew they were coming. She could feel them—like ripples in a long-still pool, their presence disturbed the silence that had held her prisoner for so many years. She had been bound to others before, always to serve, never to be asked what she desired. She had been a tool, an object of power, and nothing more.

For too long, she had waited. For too long, she had been alone.

But no longer.

The boy—he would be different. She could sense him already, feel the pulse of his youth and the endless years stretched ahead of him. He was not like the others who had come before. She didn't want to be used anymore. She wanted more—needed more. She wanted to breathe, to feel, to love.

She would have him. He would be hers. The old man could not stop her, not now. Nothing would keep them apart.

Not even Laglock.

The cave pressed in around them, damp and cold, its darkness swallowing them whole as they descended deeper into the earth. The air smelled of ancient stone and forgotten things. Korba's footsteps echoed faintly in the distance as he led the way, his breathing shallow, the weight of the shadows pressing on his chest.

"Laglock... It's very dark," Korba whispered, his voice wavering as if the darkness itself might swallow it.

"Well, boy, just keep going straight. You're doing fine," Laglock replied, his voice calm, but there was an edge of impatience. "I can see through the dark. We've passed all the traps. All is looking well, lad, all is looking well."

The old man's hand rested on Korba's shoulder, steadying him, while the other clutched his staff. But something wasn't well—not for them. Not now. Not with her watching.

“I am what you want,” a woman’s voice whispered in Korba’s ear, soft as the wind but laced with an ancient hunger.

Korba stopped, his heart pounding. “What was that?” he asked, his voice barely above a breath.

“What was what?” Laglock’s grip tightened. “I hear nothing, lad. Carry on, we’re almost there... almost.”

But Korba’s feet felt heavy, his legs unwilling to move. His skin tingled with something cold, something pulling at him. “I keep hearing... a voice. A woman.”

“Nonsense, boy. Just move. We’re so close.”

Laglock gave a sharp push, forcing Korba forward, but the boy’s head swam, and the whispers grew louder.

“I am what you desire,” the voice cooed, curling around him like a tendril of smoke. “Let me in...”

Her words wrapped around his mind, seductive, promising. Korba stumbled, blinking into the dark, but the voice was everywhere now, circling him, drawing closer.

“I am all you need... let me in...”

“Laglock,” Korba gasped, panic creeping into his voice. “I—there’s something here. Someone. I can hear her.”

But Laglock ignored him, pushing him faster, his desperation rising. He was close now. He could feel the power just beyond the next turn. He needed it, craved it. Nothing—not even the boy’s fears—would stop him from reclaiming what was his.

“Korba, he wants me for himself, but I can be yours. I want to be yours” the voice whispered, sweet and venomous. “Let me in, and I will make you more than he ever could.”

Korba faltered, his breath catching as the cave grew colder, the air thick with her presence. Her voice curled in his ear, soft and coaxing.

“I will give you power beyond your wildest dreams. They will all bow before you. Let me in...”

Korba’s heartbeat thundered in his chest. The whispers became a chorus, a seductive promise that pulled at the edges of his mind.

“Let me in, Korba. Let me love you.”

Laglock’s grip tightened on Korba’s shoulder, pulling him sharply forward. “There’s no voice, lad. It’s just the cave. Don’t lose your focus, not now.”

But Korba wasn’t listening anymore. The woman’s voice was inside him, her words a promise of something he had never dared to dream. Power. Love. Control. She was offering him everything.

Everything.

Korba swallowed hard, his breath quickening. He could feel her pressing against his mind, soft and warm, like the memory of a gentle hand. For a moment, his thoughts swam in the darkness, torn between Laglock’s urgent commands and the woman’s irresistible promises.

And deep inside, Korba felt something shift. Something break.

“I... I...” he stammered, his feet dragging as the weight of her presence bore down on him. His pulse pounded in his ears.

“I am all you need. Together, we will be unstoppable.”

Laglock’s eyes flickered with something—fear, perhaps, or frustration—but his voice remained sharp. “We’re so close, Korba. Just a little further.”

But it was too late. The boy had already heard her. And now, she was inside.

She had found her way in.