

PROLOGUE

Eons ago, in an ancient hidden sanctuary high atop rugged mountains, a huge black bird spread its wings and wheeled up into dark stormy skies, chased by a flash of flames and an angry, deafening roar.

The black bird's powerful wings struggled against stronger winds as it descended away from the cloud-shrouded mountains. Clutched tightly in its claws was a large egg.

The stormy skies darkened. Heavy rains began to pour. Lightning flashed the air brilliant white, silhouetting the dark bird, still struggling against the wind and rain, straining to hold on to the huge egg.

Out of the dark, a jagged streak of lightning struck the black bird. In a spasm of pain, the bird lost its grasp, and the huge egg plummeted to earth.

The egg landed in a soft, spongy moss amid a circle of saplings and began to sink into the wet ground, until only a gold-rimmed crest, painted on the side of the egg, could be seen, bearing the words "DORASHER MANTARO."

