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THE LAVA TROLLS

THE CRYSTAL OF ELDUR



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To My Dad - Guðjón Þorgils Kristjánsson

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Chapter 1:

The Unearthly Underground

In a part of Iceland so remote that even Google Maps gave up and suggested users "Just Stay Home," there exists a world unlike any other. A world where the sky was made of rock, and the ground was, well, also rock—but the molten kind. A place inhabited by creatures as peculiar as the land itself. They were the Lava Trolls, and they lived their lives in a way that would make even a yoga instructor say, "Whoa, that's balanced."

But don't let the term "Lava Trolls" mislead you. These were no grim, snarling behemoths of folklore. Picture, instead, short and round beings, like a sack of potatoes in a slightly too-tight burlap sack. They sported delightfully large feet, noses that you'd bet were more for show than smell, and a smile that wouldn't seem out of place at a garden gnome convention.

Now, these Lava Trolls weren't like your garden-variety trolls, who enjoyed messing around with bridges and travelers. No, they were too busy with lava mining, crafting, singing, and being generally industrious. Their world was a dance of light and shadows, where the glowing magma danced with their ruby-red and ember-orange bodies, casting a warm, inviting glow that made the oppressive dark seem as cozy as a sitting room by the fire. They were hues of orange and red, and their skin color changed with their mood, much like the weather forecast, except this one was always right.

The Lava Trolls were guided by Logi, the elder. A creature of wisdom, Logi understood the importance of balance, of harmony, and carried a sense of reverence for the earth and nature. His son, Sparky, was the torchbearer of his father's wisdom, and a flame of his own, literally. Blessed with the ability to create fire from his hands, Sparky was the light in the darkness, the spark in the abyss, the hero in every Lava Troll's bedtime story.

Sparky had a glow. He was a bit brighter than the rest, in luminescence and perhaps in intellect too. And yet, Sparky



Logi The Elder

was restless. Each day, as he molded lava rocks into abstract shapes—his version of Lava Troll art—he wondered if there was more to life than just "being."

It was on one of these ponderous days that Sparky found himself at the Elder's Stone, a rock formation so ancient it had its own MySpace account. Here, the wisest of the Lava Trolls, Elder Molta, often shared stories and life advice, mostly unsolicited.

"Ah, Sparky, contemplating life's great mysteries again? Or just wondering what's for dinner?" Elder Molta chuckled as her skin turned a shade of teal, the color of wisdom.

"Both, actually. But mostly the first one," Sparky replied, his hue shifting to a curious yellow.

"Ah, the eternal question of 'why.' Well, my dear, sometimes the answer to 'why' is another question: 'Why not?'"

Sparky considered this, then shrugged. "That's just like answering a riddle with another riddle, Elder."

"Ah, but isn't life the greatest riddle of them all?" Elder Molta's skin turned a shimmering gold.

Just as Sparky was about to delve deeper into this philosophical banter, a rumble echoed through the caverns. Rocks tumbled, and the lava pools rippled. Something was amiss.

"By the Great Geyser, what was that?!" exclaimed Sparky, his color flashing to an alarmed red.

"It seems, young Sparky, that your quest for 'more' might just have found you. Brace yourself; a journey like no other is about to unfold," said Elder Molta, her color shifting to a serious shade of indigo.

As the rumbling ceased, Sparky felt a strange sensation, as if destiny itself had texted him, "New adventure, who dis?"



Molta The Elder

Chapter 2:

The Call to Adventure, (or Misadventure?)

The morning after the ground-shaking, rock-tumbling, existential-pondering day, Sparky woke up with a sense of purpose. Or maybe it was indigestion; the two feelings were quite similar for a Lava Troll.

As he stepped out of his molten rock abode, he was greeted by his best friend, Smudge. Smudge was aptly named for the ashy blotch on his cheek, a birthmark or perhaps the remnant of a culinary disaster—it was hard to tell.

"Morning, Sparky! Ready to make some Lava Art? I was thinking of sculpting a reinterpretation of 'The Scream' using molten rocks. You know, get all existential," Smudge grinned, his hue turning a playful pink.

"Smudge, something big is about to happen. I can feel it in my toes," Sparky said, looking down at his disproportionately large feet.

"Your toes are always tingling, mate. Last time it happened, you said it was a sign from the Lava Gods. Turned out you'd just stepped on a hot pebble," Smudge chuckled.

Just then, another rumble shook the cavern, louder and more unsettling than before. But this time, the rumble was followed by a voice—deep, echoing, and coming from the very walls of the cavern itself.

"Sparky, chosen of the Lava Trolls, your time has come. Journey to the Surface World, retrieve the Crystal of Eldur, and return balance to the Underground!"

Smudge's color turned a shade of pale orange that could only be described as "What the heck was that?!"

"See, told you it wasn't my toes this time!" Sparky exclaimed, his color a mix of excitement and terror—sort of a sparkling purple.

"You've got to go, Sparky," said Elder Molta, appearing as if on cue. Her color was a shade of dark green that Sparky had never seen before, the color of seriousness with a hint of "I told you so."

"But what is the Crystal of Eldur? And where is the Surface World?" Sparky questioned, his hue shifting to a puzzled blue.

"The Crystal of Eldur is an ancient artifact that maintains the balance, not just in our world, but in the ancient realms that border ours. I can feel that the Elves in the mountains are chilled by this imbalance. Their silence has grown unusually deep."

"The Elves?" Sparky asked, surprised. "I thought they were just stories to scare trollings with."

Molta's smile didn't reach her eyes. "The stories are older than you, young one. And truer. They exist, but the lack of balance has silenced them. For too long." She gestured upward. "As for where the Surface World is—well, it's up."

"In that case," said Sparky, his color turning a resolute gold, "I'm going on an adventure."

And so, armed with a sack of lava rocks (for snacks and potential art projects), Sparky set off on his journey to the Surface World, not knowing that his life—and perhaps the lives of all Lava Trolls—would never be the same again.





Smudge

Chapter 3:

The World Above and the Friends Below

As Sparky journeyed upwards through the tunnels, he couldn't shake off a sense of both excitement and dread, much like someone about to try hákarl for the first time. For those not in the know, hákarl is an Icelandic delicacy involving fermented shark. It's the kind of dish that makes you question not just your food choices, but your life choices.

But I digress.

Sparky emerged from the tunnel, blinking in the harsh sunlight. He had reached the Surface World, a place filled with greenery, mountains, and a sky that wasn't a rocky ceiling. It was so bewilderingly open that Sparky felt like he was in one of those 360-degree virtual reality videos, only

way more existential and without knowing what a VR video was.

As he took his first steps in this new world, he heard a rustling in the bushes. Out popped a creature that was definitely not a Lava Troll. It was a sheep, and not just any sheep—a sheep with a personality.

"Ah, a Lava Troll, is it? Name's Woolsworth. You look lost, mate," said the sheep, his Icelandic accent as thick as a woolen sweater.

"Um, yes. I'm Sparky. I'm here to find the Crystal of Eldur," Sparky replied, his color turning a curious shade of green.

"Ah, the Crystal of Eldur! I've heard legends. Follow me, I know someone who can help," Woolsworth said, trotting off with an enthusiasm that seemed almost illegal for a sheep.

Sparky followed Woolsworth through meadows and streams, past geysers and volcanoes, until they reached a

quaint little cottage that looked like it was stolen from a fairy tale and dropped in the middle of nowhere.

"Meet Freyja. She's a witch, but the good kind, you know? Not the 'turn-you-into-a-frog' type," Woolsworth explained.

Freyja welcomed them in. Her home was filled with all sorts of oddities: crystals, potions, and what appeared to be a rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle.

"You seek the Crystal of Eldur. A dangerous quest, young Lava Troll," Freyja said, peering into a cauldron that bubbled with a mysterious brew.

"I have to find it to restore balance to my world," Sparky said, his hue turning a determined shade of red.

"Then you should take this for the journey," Freyja said, handing Sparky a small, glowing rune. "It will guide you to

the Crystal. But beware, the path is fraught with peril. You are not the first to seek this balance. Another went before you, but he lost his way and his light in the shadows. Be wary of him."

As Sparky took the rune, it glowed brighter, resonating with his own luminescence.

"Thank you, Freyja, Woolsworth. I won't let you, or my people, down," Sparky said, his color now a radiant gold.

With a newfound sense of purpose and a rune in his sack, Sparky set off towards the mountains in the distance, where the Crystal of Eldur was said to be hidden. Little did he know that his greatest challenges lay ahead.

And so, our hero ventured forth, his steps as bold as they were wobbly, into a world as unknown as it was utterly, utterly confusing.



Chapter 4:

Trials, Trolls, and a Touch of Treachery

As Sparky ventured deeper into the mountains, the terrain grew harsher, and the air colder. Even the sheep he passed looked like they could use an extra layer of wool.

"Just keep moving, Sparky. One foot in front of the other," he muttered to himself, his color shifting to a grim shade of blue. "Or in my case, one massive foot in front of the other equally massive foot."

Suddenly, a loud growl echoed through the valley. Out of a cave emerged a creature so terrifying it could only be described as an Ice Troll. It was like a Lava Troll but colder, grumpier, and significantly less cute.

"You shall not pass!" roared the Ice Troll.

"Seriously? Are we doing the whole 'Lord of the Rings' thing now?" Sparky retorted, his hue turning to a sarcastic shade of orange.

"Silence! What business does a Lava Troll have in the realm of Ice Trolls?" growled the Ice Troll, his icy breath fogging up the air.

"I seek the Crystal of Eldur to restore balance to my world. And possibly yours too, Mr. Grumpy Pants," Sparky said, his color a blend of bravery and annoyance.

The Ice Troll paused, his frosty exterior melting just a bit. "Very well, but you must prove yourself worthy. Solve my riddle."

"Oh, come on! A riddle? What is this, a fantasy cliché convention?" Sparky moaned.

"Just answer the riddle! What has a heart that doesn't beat?" the Ice Troll huffed.

"An artichoke!" Sparky blurted out.



The Ice Troll

"No! Wait, does it? No! The answer is a glacier. You may pass," the Ice Troll grumbled, stepping aside.

As Sparky passed the Ice Troll, he couldn't help but wonder how many more trials awaited him. His thoughts were interrupted by a glimmering light emanating from his sack. The rune Freyja had given him was glowing brighter than ever, guiding him through a hidden passage in the mountains.

After what felt like hours (or perhaps just a really long, dramatic minute), Sparky finally arrived at a chamber illuminated by the radiant Crystal of Eldur. It was mesmerizing, its glow reflecting off his own luminescent skin.

But just as he reached out to grab the Crystal, a dark figure emerged from the shadows.

It should be noted that most Lava Trolls knew of Sparky. He was a sort of influencer in the Underground, and tales of his

unique glow traveled between caverns faster than gossip in a breakroom.

And where there is light, there is often a shadow watching with envy.

It was Shadowspark, a Lava Troll turned rogue, his color a dark, murky red.

"Well, Sparky. You made it all this way," Shadowspark hissed. "You, who always wore the light so effortlessly! I sought my own strength in the darkness, and now the Crystal will be mine!"

He lunged forward, placing a darkened hand on the artifact, and its light immediately dimmed. Sparky felt a wave of despair, but then he remembered Molta's words about balance and Freyja's warning.

He placed his own hand on the other side of the Crystal, focusing on all the good he had experienced.

The Crystal flickered, torn between the darkness in Shadowspark and the hope in Sparky. Finally, with a cry, Sparky threw Freyja's rune onto the center of the Crystal. A surge of light burst forth, enveloping Shadowspark and purifying his darkened hue.

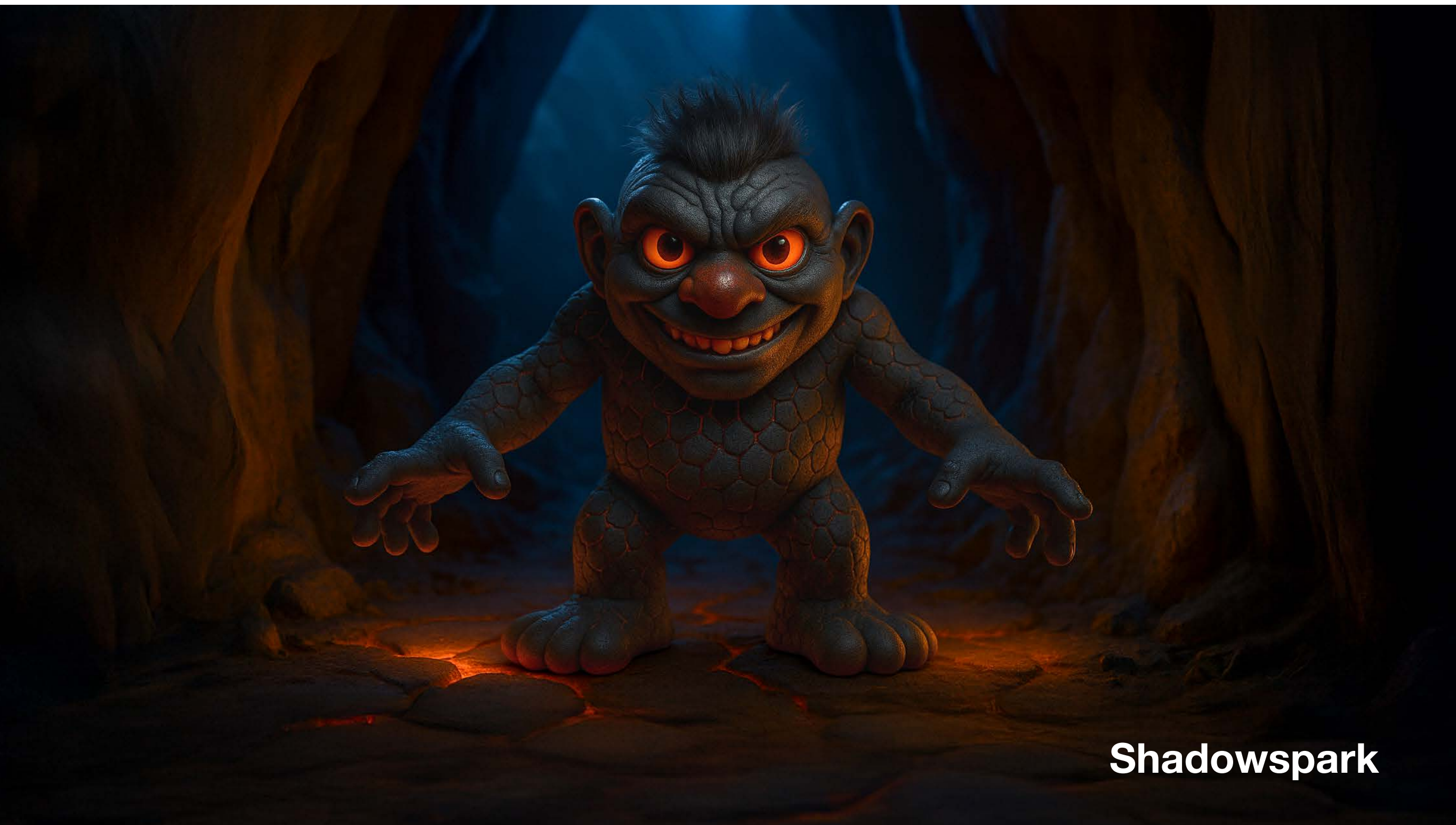
"No! What have you done? I feel...good," Shadowspark muttered, his color turning to a lighter, more peaceful shade.

"Restored your original, not-so-evil self. Now, let's take this Crystal home," Sparky said, his color a triumphant gold.

With the Crystal of Eldur in hand and a reformed Shadowspark by his side, Sparky returned to the Underground, hailed as a hero, a legend, and a pretty decent riddle solver.

And thus, balance was restored, friendships were forged, and adventures were had. But as every hero knows, the end is just another beginning. And Sparky couldn't shake the feeling that another adventure was just around the corner.

But for now, he was content, basking in the glow of his triumph, and of course, his own natural luminescence.



Shadowspark

Chapter 5:

The Elves of Eyjafjallajökull

After the heroics with the Crystal of Eldur and Shadowspark's unexpected personality makeover, one might assume Sparky would return home for some well-deserved R&R. But, as the laws of fantasy literature dictate, there's no rest for the heroically inclined.

Guided by a new curiosity—perhaps sparked by the Crystal's light, which now seemed to illuminate new pathways in the world—Sparky decided to explore the outer caves of Lava Troll City. According to legend and Elder Molta's long-winded tales, these caves led to the realms of the enigmatic elves.

As Sparky trudged through the dark tunnels, his natural glow illuminating his path, he stumbled upon an ethereal gateway veiled in a shimmering mist. Stepping through it was like walking into a dream—only with fewer flying pigs and less existential dread.

Before him stood an assembly of resplendent elves, draped in silky robes and clutching ornate staffs like they were auditioning for "The Next Top Wizard." Their golden eyes fixed on Sparky with a blend of curiosity and suspicion.

"Ah, a Lava Troll. What brings you to the Elven Kingdom?" asked Elthor, the Chief Elf, his voice as smooth as a well-aged mead.

"Call it wanderlust or a hero's perpetual misfortune. I'm Sparky," he introduced himself, his hue shifting to a diplomatic shade of aqua.

After a moment of tense silence, Elthor broke into a smile, which in Elven terms is like a human writing a ten-page endorsement letter.

"Very well, Sparky. Welcome to our realm," Elthor gestured grandly, like a game show host revealing the grand prize.

Sparky couldn't believe his eyes as he toured the Elven Kingdom. It was an ecological utopia, where even the fireflies recycled. He was introduced to Queen Elira and her court, who were so elegant they made swans look clumsy.

As he wandered the iridescent halls, he stumbled upon a hidden chamber. Inside were creatures that looked like miniature, winged Lava Trolls. They were Lava Beetles, dormant for ages and just waiting for the right song to wake them up.



Lava Beetles



Queen Elira

Chapter 6:

Aurora, Slægur, and the Cave of (Not-So) Solitude

As Sparky continued exploring the Elven Kingdom, he was drawn to a peculiar melody echoing from deeper within the caves. Following the entrancing sound, he discovered a scene that would leave even the most jaded bard in awe.

There, bathed in the glow of luminescent fungi, was Princess Aurora, an elven royal with a rebellious streak thicker than an Icelandic saga. By her side slithered Slægur, her pet lava worm, who wore an expression of mischief so evident it was practically embroidered on his scales.

Aurora was strumming a harp, a melody as enchanting as the Northern Lights. Slægur accompanied her, belching fire in rhythmic bursts—like a pyrotechnic metronome.

"Ah, a Lava Troll audience. I hope you appreciate fine music and mild pyrotechnics," Aurora smirked, her eyes twinkling like stars.

"Music and fire? You're speaking my language, Princess," Sparky grinned, his hue shifting to a harmonious purple.

"In that case, let's make this a trio," Aurora suggested.

What followed was a jam session that would've left even the most epic of rock bands feeling inadequate.

Aurora's harp, Slægur's fiery exhalations, and Sparky's impromptu lava drum set created a symphony that reverberated through the caverns, awakening ancient magics and probably annoying some bats.

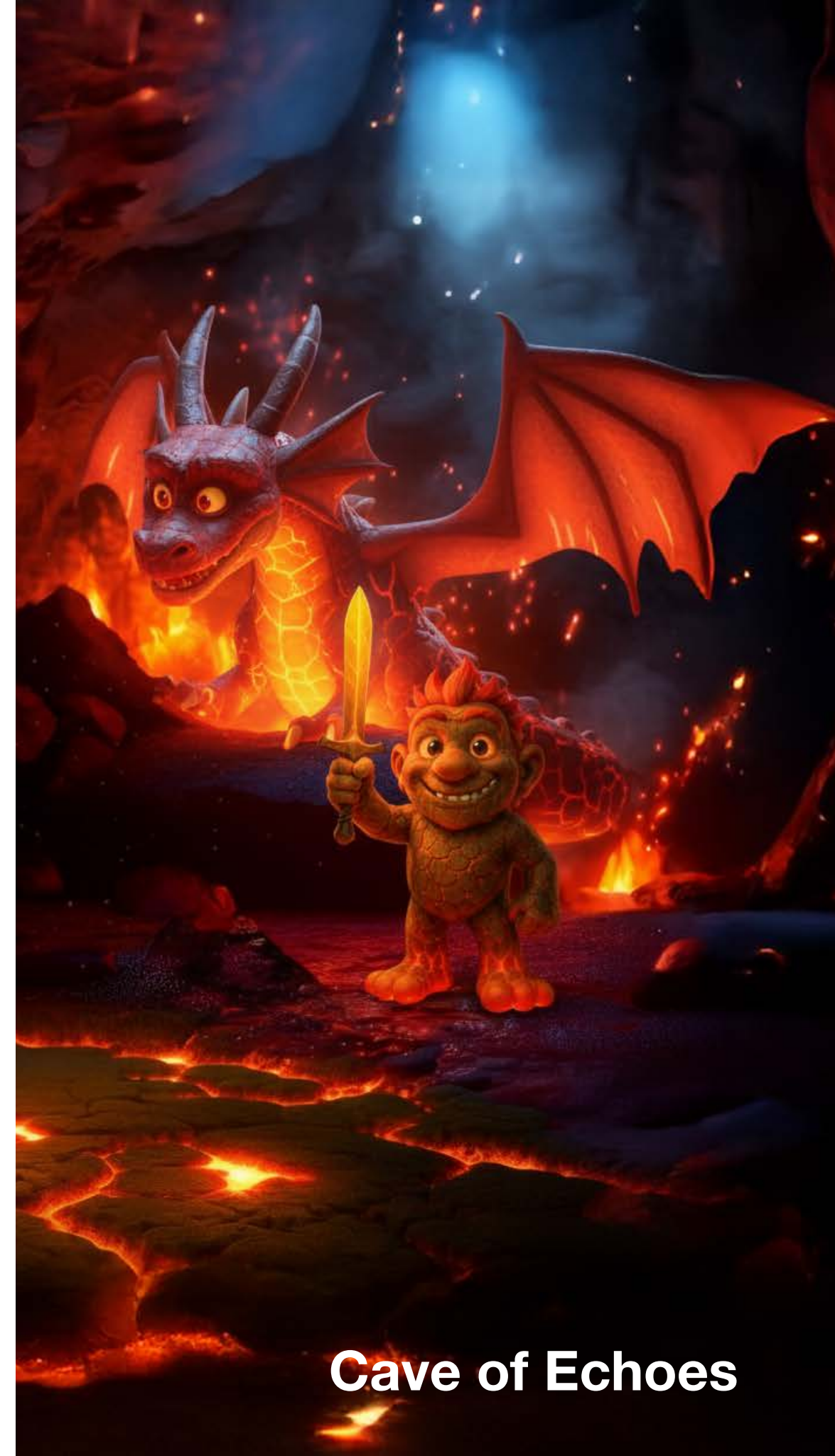
As they played, Sparky felt a connection not just with the music but also with Aurora and Slægur. Despite their mischievous nature, he sensed a kindred spirit in their lust for life and adventure.

"Sparky, how would you like to join us on an escapade? We're going to explore the Cave of Echoes. Legend has it there's a treasure hidden there, guarded by tricky cave spirits," Aurora offered, her eyes gleaming with the promise of adventure.

"Treasure and cave spirits? Sounds like a typical Tuesday," Sparky chuckled. "I'm in."

And so, armed with musical instruments, a sense of invincibility that only young adventurers possess, and a pet lava worm who was really good at carrying stuff, they set off towards the Cave of Echoes.

Little did they know, this would be an adventure that would test not just their courage but also their friendship.



Cave of Echoes



Princess Aurora

Chapter 7:

The Cave of Echoes, (and Egos)

Upon reaching the Cave of Echoes, our trio found themselves standing at the mouth of a cavern so dark it made existential dread look like a sunny afternoon. The walls seemed to breathe, pulsating with an eerie light. If caves could smirk, this one was grinning ear to ear—or stalactite to stalagmite.

"As the ancient Elven proverb goes, 'If the cave's a-rockin', don't come a-knockin'," Aurora quipped, her eyes twinkling with a mix of excitement and trepidation.

"Good thing we're more of the 'barge in uninvited' type," Sparky replied, his hue a bold shade of blue.

With a deep breath and a shared nod, they stepped into the cave, each step echoing like a whispered secret. Slægur

slithered alongside, his fiery scales casting dancing shadows on the walls.

As they ventured deeper, they encountered the cave spirits—ethereal entities that looked like floating balls of light with an affinity for riddles and dad jokes.

"Greetings, travelers! To proceed, you must answer this riddle: What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?" one spirit intoned.

"The letter 'M'!" Aurora exclaimed, barely missing a beat.

"Correct! You may pass, but beware, the final challenge awaits," the spirit said, vanishing in a puff of ethereal smoke that smelled suspiciously like cinnamon.

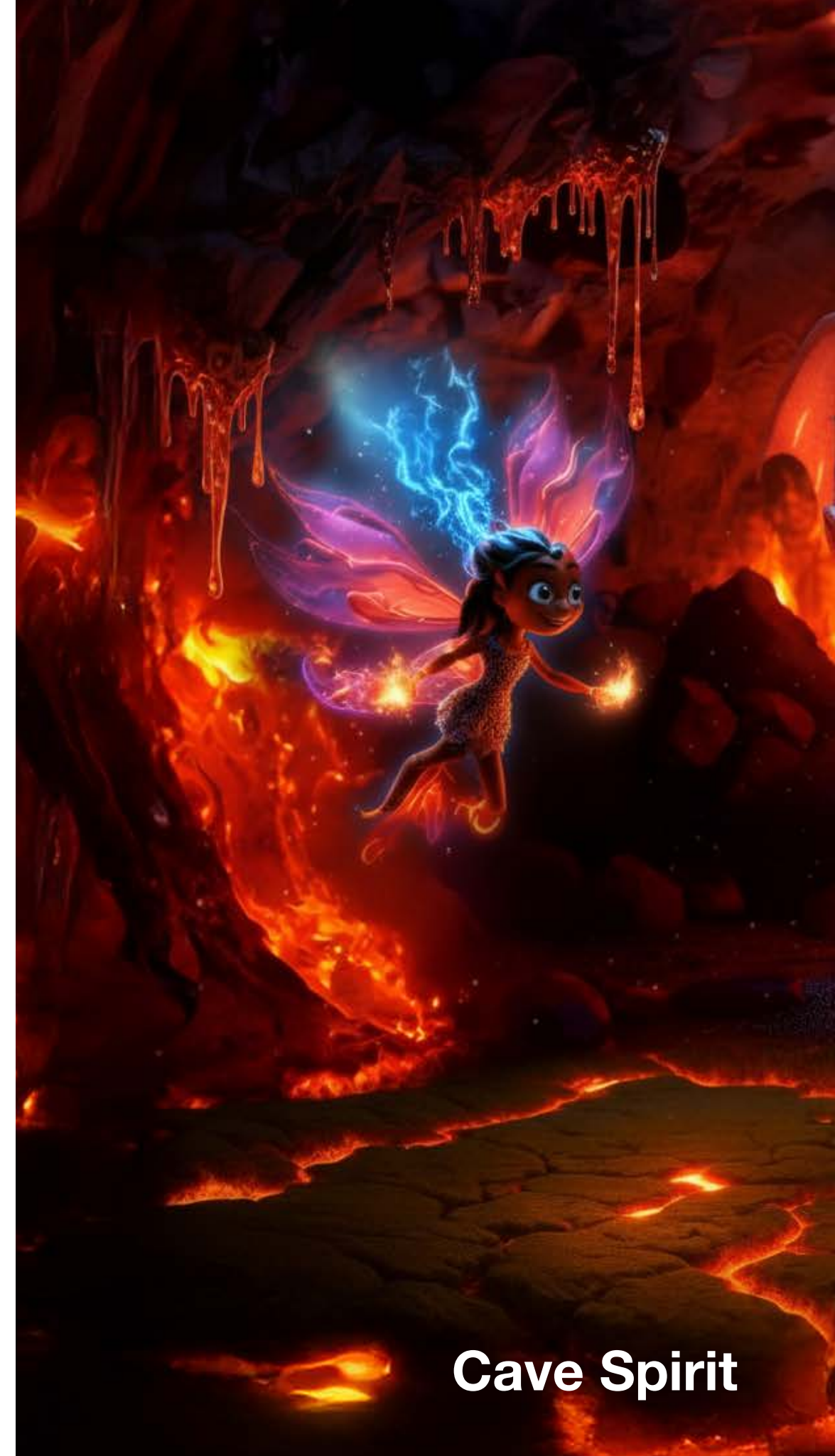
Finally, they reached the heart of the cave, where a treasure chest sat bathed in a celestial glow. But guarding it was the Cave Guardian—a creature that looked like a rock but could move, shout, and apparently write strongly-worded complaint letters.

"To claim the treasure, you must prove your worth in a duel of... dance!" the Guardian boomed, its rocky face somehow expressing sheer delight.

What followed can only be described as the most epic dance-off in the history of both Elven and Lava Troll kind. Aurora dazzled with balletic grace, Sparky broke out some breakdancing moves, and Slægur... well, he did the Worm, naturally.

Impressed and slightly outdanced, the Cave Guardian relented. "The treasure is yours, worthy adventurers."

Inside the chest were artifacts of ancient magic, scrolls of wisdom, and a lifetime supply of glow-in-the-dark stickers. But the real treasure? The friendships solidified in the face of rhythmic adversity.



Cave Spirit



Slægur

Chapter 8:

Return of the Heroes, (and a Lava Worm)

Triumphant and laden with treasures that would make a pirate blush, Sparky, Aurora, and Slægur made their way back to the Elven Kingdom. Their return was greeted with the kind of fanfare usually reserved for winning sports teams and exceptionally cute internet cats.

Even the often-stoic Elthor couldn't help but crack a smile, a seismic event in Elven emotional history. Queen Elira hosted a grand feast in their honor, with a menu that included every magical fruit and ethereal beverage you could imagine—and a few you couldn't.

Yet, despite the celebrations, Sparky knew he had to return to the Lava Troll realm. With heartfelt goodbyes and promises to visit, he stepped back through the mystical gateway, the Elven Kingdom fading into a soft glow behind him.

Back in the Lava Troll realm, Elder Molta was waiting, her color a warm shade of golden-yellow that said, "I knew you could do it, but hurry up; I've got other prophecies to attend to."

Sparky shared tales of his journey, of friendships forged and dance-offs danced. As he spoke, he realized the kingdom felt different—renewed, as if it had been listening to a self-help audiobook.

"Your journey has brought balance not just to our realm, but also to the Elven Kingdom. You have united worlds, Sparky," Elder Molta declared.

"Speaking of uniting worlds..." Just as Sparky was about to delve into a philosophical pondering worthy of an Elder, a magical shimmer appeared in the air, and out stepped Aurora and Slægur.

"It turns out the Cave of Echoes was a binding contract. You're stuck with us now," Aurora grinned.

"Wouldn't have it any other way," Sparky replied, his hue turning a radiant gold.

In the days that followed, the Lava Trolls and Elves collaborated like never before. New farming techniques were shared, and architectural wonders built—each realm enriching the other.

As for Sparky, Aurora, and Slægur, their adventures were far from over. They had realms to explore, friendships to forge, and—most importantly—dance-offs to win.

Thus, our tale comes to a close, but as any hero will tell you, the end is just another beginning.

