

Synopsis of *Eragon*,  
Book One of Inheritance

Eragon—a fifteen-year-old farmboy—is shocked when a polished blue stone appears before him in the range of mountains known as the Spine. Eragon takes the stone to the farm where he lives with his uncle, Garrow, and his cousin, Roran. Garrow and his late wife, Marian, have raised Eragon. Nothing is known of his father; his mother, Selena, was Garrow's sister and has not been seen since Eragon's birth.

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Later, the stone cracks open and a baby dragon emerges. When Eragon touches her, a silvery mark appears on his palm, and an irrevocable bond is forged between their minds, making Eragon one of the legendary Dragon Riders.

The Dragon Riders were created thousands of years earlier in the aftermath of the elves' great war with the dragons, in order to ensure that hostilities would never again afflict their two races. The Riders became peacekeepers, educators, healers, natural philosophers, and the greatest of spellweavers—since being joined with a dragon makes one a magician. Under their guidance and protection, the land enjoyed a golden age.

When humans arrived in Alagaësia, they too were added to this elite order. After many years of peace, the monstrous and warlike Urgals killed the dragon of a young human Rider named Galbatorix. Driven mad by the loss and by his elders' refusal to provide him with another dragon, Galbatorix set out to topple the Riders.

He stole another dragon—whom he named Shruikán and forced to serve him through certain black spells—and gathered around himself a group of thirteen traitors: the Forsworn. With the help of those cruel disciples, Galbatorix threw down the Riders; killed their leader, Vrael; and declared himself king over Alagaësia. In this, Galbatorix was only partly successful, for the elves and dwarves remain autonomous in their secret haunts, and some humans have established an independent country, Surda, in the south of Alagaësia. A stalemate has existed between these factions for twenty years, preceded by eighty years of open conflict brought about by the destruction of the Riders.

It is into this fragile political situation, then, that Eragon is thrust. He fears he is in mortal danger—it is common knowledge that Galbatorix killed every Rider who would not swear loyalty to him—and so Eragon hides the dragon from his family as he raises her. During this time, Eragon names the creature Saphira, after a dragon mentioned by the village storyteller, Brom. Soon Roran leaves the farm for a job that will allow him to earn enough money to marry Katrina, the butcher's daughter.

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When Saphira stands taller than Eragon, two menacing, beetle-like strangers called the Ra'zac arrive in Carvahall, searching for the stone that was her egg. Frightened, Saphira kidnaps Eragon and flies into the Spine. Eragon manages to convince her to turn back, but by then his home has been obliterated by the Ra'zac. Eragon finds Garrow in the wreckage, tortured and badly wounded.

Garrow dies soon afterward, and Eragon vows to track down and kill the Ra'zac. Eragon is accosted by Brom, who knows of Saphira's existence and asks to accompany Eragon for reasons of his own. After Eragon agrees, Brom gives him the sword Zar'roc, which was once a Rider's blade, though he refuses to say how he acquired it.

Eragon learns much from Brom during their travels, including how to fight with swords and use magic. Eventually, they lose the Ra'zac's trail and visit the city of Teirm, where Brom believes his old friend Jeod can help locate their lair.

In Teirm, the eccentric herbalist Angela tells Eragon's fortune, predicting mighty powers struggling to control his destiny; an epic romance with one of noble birth; the fact that he will one day leave Alagaësia, never to return; and a betrayal from within his family. Her companion, the werecat Solembum, also gives him some words of advice. Then Eragon, Brom, and Saphira depart for Dras-Leona, where they hope to find the Ra'zac.

Brom finally reveals that he is an agent of the Varden—a rebel group dedicated to overthrowing Galbatorix—and that he had been hiding in Eragon's village, waiting for a new Dragon Rider to appear. Brom also explains that twenty years ago, he and Jeod stole Saphira's egg from Galbatorix. In the process, Brom killed Morzan, first and last of the Forsworn. Only two other dragon eggs still exist, both of which remain in Galbatorix's possession.

Near Dras-Leona, the Ra'zac waylay Eragon and his companions, and Brom is mortally wounded while protecting Eragon. The Ra'zac are driven away by a mysterious young man named Murtagh, who says he's been tracking the Ra'zac. Brom dies the following night. With his last breath, he confesses that he was once a Rider and his slain dragon was also named Saphira. Eragon buries Brom in a tomb of sandstone, which Saphira transmutes into pure diamond.

Without Brom, Eragon and Saphira decide to join the Varden. By ill chance, Eragon is captured at the city of Gil'ead and brought to the Shade Durza, Galbatorix's right-hand man. With Murtagh's help, Eragon escapes from prison, bringing along with him the unconscious elf Arya, another captive. By this point, Eragon and Murtagh have become great friends.

With her mind, Arya tells Eragon that she has been ferrying Saphira's egg between the elves and the Varden, in the hopes that it might hatch for one of their children. However, during her last trip, she was ambushed by Durza and forced to send the egg elsewhere with magic, which is how it came to Eragon. Now Arya is seriously wounded and requires the Varden's medical help. Using mental images, she shows Eragon how to find the rebels. An epic

chase ensues. Eragon and his friends traverse almost four hundred miles in eight days. They are pursued by a contingent of Urgals, who trap them in the towering Beor Mountains. Murtagh, who had not wanted to go to the Varden, is forced to tell Eragon that he is the son of Morzan.

Murtagh, however, has denounced his father's deeds and fled Galbatorix's patronage to seek his own destiny. He shows Eragon a great scar across his back, inflicted when Morzan threw his sword, Zar'roc, at him when he was just a child. Thus, Eragon learns his sword once belonged to Murtagh's father, he who betrayed the Riders to Galbatorix and slaughtered many of his former comrades.

Just before they are overwhelmed by the Urgals, Eragon and his friends are rescued by the Varden, who seem to appear out of the very stone. It turns out that the rebels are based in Farthen Dûr, a hollow mountain ten miles high and ten miles across. It is also home to the dwarves' capital, Tronjheim. Once inside, Eragon is taken to Ajihad, leader of the Varden, while Murtagh is imprisoned because of his parentage. Ajihad explains many things to Eragon, including that the Varden, elves, and dwarves had agreed that when a new Rider appeared, he or she would initially be trained by Brom and then sent to the elves to complete the instruction. Eragon must now decide whether to follow this course.

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Eragon meets with the dwarf king, Hrothgar, and Ajihad's daughter, Nasuada; is tested by the Twins, two bald and rather nasty magicians who serve Ajihad; spars with Arya once she has recovered; and again encounters Angela and Solembum, who have joined the Varden. Eragon and Saphira also bless one of the Varden's orphan babies.

Eragon's stay is disrupted by news of an Urgal army approaching through the dwarves' tunnels. In the battle that follows, Eragon is separated from Saphira and forced to fight Durza alone. Far stronger than any human, Durza easily defeats Eragon, slashing open his back from shoulder to hip. At that moment, Saphira and Arya break the roof of the chamber—a sixty-foot-wide star sapphire—

distracting Durza long enough for Eragon to stab him through the heart. Freed from Durza's spells, the Urgals are driven back into the tunnels.

While Eragon lies unconscious after the battle, he is telepathically contacted by a being who identifies himself as Togira Ikonoka—the Cripple Who Is Whole. He offers answers to all of Eragon's questions and urges Eragon to seek him in Ellesméra, where the elves live.

When Eragon wakes, he finds that, despite Angela's best efforts, he has been left with a huge scar similar to Murtagh's. Dismayed, he also realizes that he only slew Durza through sheer luck and that he desperately needs more training.

And at the end of Book One, Eragon decides that, yes, he will find this Togira Ikonoka and learn from him. For gray-eyed Destiny now weaves apace, the first resounding note of war echoes across the land, and the time fast approaches when Eragon shall have to step forth and confront his one, true enemy: King Galbatorix.



## A TWIN DISASTER

**T**he songs of the dead are the lamentations of the living.

So thought Eragon as he stepped over a twisted and hacked Urgal, listening to the keening of women who removed loved ones from the blood-muddied ground of Farthen Dûr. Behind him Saphira delicately skirted the corpse, her glittering blue scales the only color in the gloom that filled the hollow mountain.

It was three days since the Varden and dwarves had fought the Urgals for possession of Tronjheim, the mile-high, conical city nestled in the center of Farthen Dûr, but the battlefield was still strewn with carnage. The sheer number of bodies had stymied their attempts to bury the dead. In the distance, a mountainous fire glowed sullenly by Farthen Dûr's wall where the Urgals were being burned. No burial or honored resting place for them.

Since waking to find his wound healed by Angela, Eragon had tried three times to assist in the recovery effort. On each occasion he had been racked by terrible pains that seemed to explode from his spine. The healers gave him various potions to drink. Arya and Angela said that he was perfectly sound. Nevertheless, he hurt. Nor could Saphira help, only share his pain as it rebounded across their mental link.

Eragon ran a hand over his face and looked up at the stars showing through Farthen Dûr's distant top, which were smudged with sooty smoke from the pyre. *Three days.* Three days since he had killed Durza; three days since people began calling him Shadeslayer;

three days since the remnants of the sorcerer's consciousness had ravaged his mind and he had been saved by the mysterious Togira Ikonoka, the Cripple Who Is Whole. He had told no one about that vision but Saphira. Fighting Durza and the dark spirits that controlled him had transformed Eragon; although for better or for worse he was still unsure. He felt fragile, as if a sudden shock would shatter his reconstructed body and consciousness.

And now he had come to the site of the combat, driven by a morbid desire to see its aftermath. Upon arriving, he found nothing but the uncomfortable presence of death and decay, not the glory that heroic songs had led him to expect.

Before his uncle, Garrow, was slain by the Ra'zac months earlier, the brutality that Eragon had witnessed between the humans, dwarves, and Urgals would have destroyed him. Now it numbed him. He had realized, with Saphira's help, that the only way to stay rational amid such pain was to *do* things. Beyond that, he no longer believed that life possessed inherent meaning—not after seeing men torn apart by the Kull, a race of giant Urgals, and the ground a bed of thrashing limbs and the dirt so wet with blood it soaked through the soles of his boots. If any honor existed in war, he concluded, it was in fighting to protect others from harm.

He bent and plucked a tooth, a molar, from the dirt. Bouncing it on his palm, he and Saphira slowly made a circuit through the trampled plain. They stopped at its edge when they noticed Jörmundur—Ajjihad's second in command in the Varden—hurrying toward them from Tronjheim. When he came near, Jörmundur bowed, a gesture Eragon knew he would never have made just days before.

"I'm glad I found you in time, Eragon." He clutched a parchment note in one hand. "Ajjihad is returning, and he wants you to be there when he arrives. The others are already waiting for him by Tronjheim's west gate. We'll have to hurry to get there in time."

Eragon nodded and headed toward the gate, keeping a hand on Saphira. Ajjihad had been gone most of the three days, hunting down Urgals who had managed to escape into the dwarf tunnels



that honeycombed the stone beneath the Beor Mountains. The one time Eragon had seen him between expeditions, Ajihad was in a rage over discovering that his daughter, Nasuada, had disobeyed his orders to leave with the other women and children before the battle. Instead, she had secretly fought among the Varden's archers.

Murtagh and the Twins had accompanied Ajihad: the Twins because it was dangerous work and the Varden's leader needed the protection of their magical skills, and Murtagh because he was eager to continue proving that he bore the Varden no ill will. It surprised Eragon how much people's attitudes toward Murtagh had changed, considering that Murtagh's father was the Dragon Rider Morzan, who had betrayed the Riders to Galbatorix. Even though Murtagh despised his father and was loyal to Eragon, the Varden had not trusted him. But now, no one was willing to waste energy on a petty hate when so much work remained. Eragon missed talking with Murtagh and looked forward to discussing all that had happened, once he returned.

As Eragon and Saphira rounded Tronjheim, a small group became visible in the pool of lantern light before the timber gate. Among them were Orik—the dwarf shifting impatiently on his stout legs—and Arya. The white bandage around her upper arm gleamed in the darkness, reflecting a faint highlight onto the bottom of her hair. Eragon felt a strange thrill, as he always did when he saw the elf. She looked at him and Saphira, green eyes flashing, then continued watching for Ajihad.

By breaking Isidar Mithrim—the great star sapphire that was sixty feet across and carved in the shape of a rose—Arya had allowed Eragon to kill Durza and so win the battle. Still, the dwarves were furious with her for destroying their most prized treasure. They refused to move the sapphire's remains, leaving them in a massive circle inside Tronjheim's central chamber. Eragon had walked through the splintered wreckage and shared the dwarves' sorrow for all the lost beauty.

He and Saphira stopped by Orik and looked out at the empty

land that surrounded Tronjheim, extending to Farthen Dûr's base five miles away in each direction. "Where will Ajihad come from?" asked Eragon.

Orik pointed at a cluster of lanterns staked around a large tunnel opening a couple of miles away. "He should be here soon."

Eragon waited patiently with the others, answering comments directed at him but preferring to speak with Saphira in the peace of his mind. The quiet that filled Farthen Dûr suited him.

Half an hour passed before motion flickered in the distant tunnel. A group of ten men climbed out onto the ground, then turned and helped up as many dwarves. One of the men—Eragon assumed it was Ajihad—raised a hand, and the warriors assembled behind him in two straight lines. At a signal, the formation marched proudly toward Tronjheim.

Before they went more than five yards, the tunnel behind them swarmed with a flurry of activity as more figures jumped out. Eragon squinted, unable to see clearly from so far away.

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*Those are Urgals!* exclaimed Saphira, her body tensing like a drawn bowstring.

Eragon did not question her. "Urgals!" he cried, and leaped onto Saphira, berating himself for leaving his sword, Zar'roc, in his room. No one had expected an attack now that the Urgal army had been driven away.

His wound twinged as Saphira lifted her azure wings, then drove them down and jumped forward, gaining speed and altitude each second. Below them, Arya ran toward the tunnel, nearly keeping apace with Saphira. Orik trailed her with several men, while Jörmundur sprinted back toward the barracks.

Eragon was forced to watch helplessly as the Urgals fell on the rear of Ajihad's warriors; he could not work magic over such a distance. The monsters had the advantage of surprise and quickly cut down four men, forcing the rest of the warriors, men and dwarves alike, to cluster around Ajihad in an attempt to protect him. Swords and axes clashed as the groups pressed together. Light

flashed from one of the Twins, and an Urgal fell, clutching the stump of his severed arm.

For a minute, it seemed the defenders would be able to resist the Urgals, but then a swirl of motion disturbed the air, like a faint band of mist wrapping itself around the combatants. When it cleared, only four warriors were standing: Ajihad, the Twins, and Murtagh. The Urgals converged on them, blocking Eragon's view as he stared with rising horror and fear.

*No! No! No!*

Before Saphira could reach the fight, the knot of Urgals streamed back to the tunnel and scrambled underground, leaving only prone forms behind.

The moment Saphira touched down, Eragon vaulted off, then faltered, overcome by grief and anger. *I can't do this*. It reminded him too much of when he had returned to the farm to find his uncle Garrow dying. Fighting back his dread with every step, he began to search for survivors.

The site was eerily similar to the battlefield he had inspected earlier, except that here the blood was fresh.

In the center of the massacre lay Ajihad, his breastplate rent with numerous gashes, surrounded by five Urgals he had slain. His breath still came in ragged gasps. Eragon knelt by him and lowered his face so his tears would not land on the leader's ruined chest. No one could heal such wounds. Running up to them, Arya paused and stopped, her face transformed with sorrow when she saw that Ajihad could not be saved.

"Eragon." The name slipped from Ajihad's lips—no more than a whisper.

"Yes, I am here."

"Listen to me, Eragon. . . . I have one last command for you." Eragon leaned closer to catch the dying man's words. "You must promise me something: promise that you . . . won't let the Varden fall into chaos. They are the only hope for resisting the Empire. . . . They must be kept strong. You must promise me."

“I promise.”

“Then peace be with you, Eragon Shadeslayer. . . .” With his last breath, Ajihad closed his eyes, setting his noble face in repose, and died.

Eragon bowed his head. He had trouble breathing past the lump in his throat, which was so hard it hurt. Arya blessed Ajihad in a ripple of the ancient language, then said in her musical voice, “Alas, his death will cause much strife. He is right, you must do all you can to avert a struggle for power. I will assist where possible.”

Unwilling to speak, Eragon gazed at the rest of the bodies. He would have given anything to be elsewhere. Saphira nosed one of the Urgals and said, *This should not have happened. It is an evil doing, and all the worse for coming when we should be safe and victorious.* She examined another body, then swung her head around. *Where are the Twins and Murtagh? They’re not among the dead.*

6 Eragon scanned the corpses. *You’re right!* Elation surged within him as he hurried to the tunnel’s mouth. There pools of thickening blood filled the hollows in the worn marble steps like a series of black mirrors, glossy and oval, as if several torn bodies had been dragged down them. *The Urgals must have taken them! But why? They don’t keep prisoners or hostages.* Despair instantly returned. *It doesn’t matter. We can’t pursue them without reinforcements; you wouldn’t even fit through the opening.*

*They may still be alive. Would you abandon them?*

*What do you expect me to do? The dwarf tunnels are an endless maze! I would only get lost. And I couldn’t catch Urgals on foot, though Arya might be able to.*

*Then ask her to.*

Arya! Eragon hesitated, torn between his desire for action and his loathing to put her in danger. Still, if any one person in the Varden could handle the Urgals, it was she. With a groan, he explained what they had found.

Arya’s slanted eyebrows met in a frown. “It makes no sense.”

“Will you pursue them?”

She stared at him for a heavy moment. “Wiol ono.” For you. Then she bounded forward, sword flashing in her hand as she dove into the earth’s belly.

Burning with frustration, Eragon settled cross-legged by Ajihad, keeping watch over the body. He could barely assimilate the fact that Ajihad was dead and Murtagh missing. *Murtagh*. Son of one of the Forsworn—the thirteen Riders who had helped Galbatorix destroy their order and anoint himself king of Alagaësia—and Eragon’s friend. At times Eragon had wished Murtagh gone, but now that he had been forcibly removed, the loss left an unexpected void. He sat motionless as Orik approached with the men.

When Orik saw Ajihad, he stamped his feet and swore in Dwarvish, swinging his ax into the body of an Urgal. The men only stood in shock. Rubbing a pinch of dirt between his callused hands, the dwarf growled, “Ah, now a hornet’s nest has broken; we’ll have no peace among the Varden after this. *Barzûln*, but this makes things complicated. Were you in time to hear his last words?”

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Eragon glanced at Saphira. “They must wait for the right person before I’ll repeat them.”

“I see. And where’d be Arya?”

Eragon pointed.

Orik swore again, then shook his head and sat on his heels.

Jörmundur soon arrived with twelve ranks of six warriors each. He motioned for them to wait outside the radius of bodies while he proceeded onward alone. He bent and touched Ajihad on the shoulder. “How can fate be this cruel, my old friend? I would have been here sooner if not for the size of this cursed mountain, and then you might have been saved. Instead, we are wounded at the height of our triumph.”

Eragon softly told him about Arya and the disappearance of the Twins and Murtagh.

“She should not have gone,” said Jörmundur, straightening, “but we can do naught about it now. Guards will be posted here, but it

will be at least an hour before dwarf guides can be found for another expedition into the tunnels.”

“I’d be willing to lead it,” offered Orik.

Jörmundur looked back at Tronjheim, his gaze distant. “No, Hrothgar will need you now; someone else will have to go. I’m sorry, Eragon, but everyone important *must* stay here until Ajihad’s successor is chosen. Arya will have to fend for herself. . . . We could not overtake her anyway.”

Eragon nodded, accepting the inevitable.

Jörmundur swept his gaze around before saying so all could hear, “Ajihad has died a warrior’s death! Look, he slew five Urgals where a lesser man might have been overwhelmed by one. We will give him every honor and hope his spirit pleases the gods. Bear him and our companions back to Tronjheim on your shields . . . and do not be ashamed to let your tears be seen, for this is a day of sorrow that all will remember. May we soon have the privilege of sheathing our blades in the monsters who have slain our leader!”

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As one, the warriors knelt, baring their heads in homage to Ajihad. Then they stood and reverently lifted him on their shields so he lay between their shoulders. Already many of the Varden wept, tears flowing into beards, yet they did not disgrace their duty and allow Ajihad to fall. With solemn steps, they marched back to Tronjheim, Saphira and Eragon in the middle of the procession.