

# *Journey to Rainbow Island*



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DALLAS, TX

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Suite #530  
Dallas, TX 75231  
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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

TK

Editing by Kyle Duncan  
Copyediting by Annie Gottlieb  
Proofreading by Michael Fedison and Amy Zarkos  
Cover and interior illustrations by Ralph Voltz, [www.ralphvoltz.com](http://www.ralphvoltz.com)  
Cover design by Sarah Dombrowsky  
Text design and composition by Publishers' Design and Production Services, Inc.  
Printed by Bang Printing

Distributed by Perseus Distribution  
[www.perseusdistribution.com](http://www.perseusdistribution.com)

To place orders through Perseus Distribution:  
Tel: (800) 343-4499  
Fax: (800) 351-5073  
E-mail: [orderentry@perseusbooks.com](mailto:orderentry@perseusbooks.com)

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# One



## Conjured

**T**HOUGH IT WAS DAY, it was quite dark, with no sun in the slate grey sky. The ocean was all froth and rage. The wind and rain slammed against the waves as the elements crashed against one another with violent fury. In the distance was an enormous mass of rock—a desolate grey island alone in a vast ocean. Waves crashed against steep, treacherous cliffs. There were no beaches or bays—just walls of rock and cliff surrounding the entire island. High on a bluff, a dark opening could be seen: a cave. Inside was a strange dwelling, full of old scrolls, bones, books, and items of enchantment. It was the dwelling of a sorcerer.

Inside the cave a bent figure waved his arms about him slowly, from side to side, hands whipping to and fro, front to back, back to front. The man seemed neither young nor old, but mysteriously ageless. His eyes were pale—the color of moonlight on a cold winter’s night. He was tall and thin as death, with dark robes draped across his bony shoulders.

The light of a nearby fire danced off his shaved head, his skin nearly as pale as his eyes. He was in a trance. Over a large murky pool before him, arms outstretched, he held a huge skull—the skull of a long-dead creature. Though you wouldn't know to look at it, the skull was a very rare specimen, belonging to a race of dragons long thought erased from the face of the world.

The pale-eyed sorcerer lowered the skull into the water, and immediately the dark, still surface began to roil and turn as smoke rose from the inky waters. The roiling turned to violent crashing as waves of water spouted upward; and soon, out of the angry black liquid the outline of a dark, scaled head rose slowly. A pale yellow eye appeared, followed by a long, hard-scaled neck. It was indeed a *Darq* creature—a black dragon. And it was the first of its kind to rise from dark waters in 100 years.

The man smiled, closed his eyes; his hands stopped their macabre, slow beating, and rose in front of him. His creation at last was born. The creature continued to rise from the water and stepped onto the floor of the sorcerer's dwelling, dark water pouring from its body onto the hard, smooth surface of the grotto. The sorcerer stood before the creature, took its enormous head in his hands, and whispered an indecipherable incantation into the black creature's ear. The dragon pulled back, stared into the man's eyes, and, ever so slightly, nodded its head in recognition.

The creature ambled toward the entrance of the cave and moved to the precipice of the cliff. It beat its massive leathery wings three times and took flight into the dusky sky. It rose higher and higher into the stormy elements, racing through

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cloud and rain. Lightning flashed intermittently, revealing rock-hard, obsidian black scales as it flew into the coming night. Its blackness merged with the ever-darkening sky, a black shadow that blended into the young, violent night.



## Two



## Home

**I**T WAS ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL DAY on Rainbow Island. The sky was soft baby blue, and plush cotton clouds darted across the azure expanse. A comfortable breeze blew as summer's mild sun pulsated gentle rays onto the Island, warming it slowly and sweetly. A brilliant, gigantic rainbow covered the sky over the Island; its seven-banded light streaked out from the Island as far as the eye could see.

Beneath the large rainbow were lush, verdant trees, mountains of green, and grasslands that rolled for miles, speckled with colorful flowers. Large morpho, hairstreak, and swallowtail butterflies skipped through the afternoon air as honeybees drank sweet nectar from voluptuous tropical blooms. The calls of resplendent quetzals echoed from the cloud forest above, while lower on the slopes military macaws, toucans, and blue-crowned trogons hunted for ripe fruit in the thick forest canopy. The Island was surrounded by

pristine ocean, and a dazzling tropical reef ringed the entire Island—a beautiful band of teeming life and color.

This was paradise—the most beautiful and joyful place in the universe.

A dark-haired girl of eleven sat blissfully in the middle of a field of heliconia, plumeria, and hibiscus flowers. Her frame was petite, and her long, dark brown hair was pulled loosely into a ponytail, renegade wisps blowing across her face in the breeze. She swept the hair out of her face as she leaned over to escort a ladybug from a blade of grass onto her finger.

Her large, round brown eyes focused on the tiny creature as a smile danced across her open, beatific face. Her spirit was one with the bountiful nature that surrounded her, glowing, joyful, and luminous.

But she was not any ordinary child. This particular girl was endowed with powerful spiritual and healing gifts—abilities she had received from birth. This special place was called Rainbow Island. As with all the children of the Island, she had a purity and goodness of heart that gave strength and vibrancy to the rainbow that shined above. Though only eleven, she was the leader of all the Island children and was deeply adored by all. You see, there was nothing known of jealousy, strife, or hatred on Rainbow Island.

Her name was Yu-ning, which means love and serenity.

Yu-ning smiled happily as she basked in the splendor of her surroundings. She began each morning lying in this exact field of flowers, daily filled with the same wonderment and delight. She gently placed the ladybug upon the leaf of an orange plumeria blossom. As she did, she swept her right hand across all the flowers in front of her. A wave of warm

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pink light appeared and began to sparkle and spread across the entire field. Sparkling, heart-shaped pink gemstones could be seen all across the field, shimmering in the sun. These were the precious pink crystals of Rainbow Island, Yu-ning's favorite gemstones. Yu-ning looked into the distance beyond the field with excited expectation. Her eyes gleamed with joy as a huge smile spread across her face.

Across the field a cluster of happy children and animals skipped, ran, and twirled toward her. "Yu-ning, Yu-ning!" they called out, laughing as they approached. Some of the children were dripping wet, having spent the morning frolicking on the beach. Others wore garlands of flowers in their hair, and all were admiring the beautiful pink crystals. Some of the children trailed colorful pieces of silk as they ran through the field, the diaphanous material blowing above them in the breeze.

Several children bit into mangos and papayas freshly picked from surrounding trees. As they gathered to play and dance, melodious music played softly beyond the meadow. A gigantic kapok tree loomed in the distance, its full, lush leaves shining subtly in the soft sun. The base of the kapok was vast, its massive trunk branching out in many directions. The noble tree was 40 feet in diameter and rose 150 feet into the sky. As Yu-ning gazed up into its great branches, she saw a riot of life, including large, elegant bromeliads and other colorful epiphytes. The late morning sun grew warmer and they enjoyed the cool grass and shade beneath the shelter of the massive tree. Families of colorful toucans, parrots, and toucanettes landed on the outstretched branches and sang playful summer melodies to the children.

“Hello, my friends, it is such a beautiful song you are singing,” Yu-ning called to a boisterous flock of red-lored parrots on the branch above.

The parrots squawked, “Hello, Yu-ning. We are singing this song for you.”

“Thank you,” Yu-ning laughed. “Let’s all sing together.”

Yu-ning and the other children produced wooden flutes, small lyres, and harps from small, colorful bags. Yu-ning sang a beautiful melody as she strummed her lyre to the tune of the parrots. As she rested her head against the trunk of the tree, a flash of rainbow colors undulated through the bark and moved upward into all of the branches. The tree too began to sing—the voice of the wind, but with words that were clear and bright.

“My rainbow tree,” she sighed with reverence as she looked up into its leaves. All the children were enraptured by its magical presence. They felt the power as the tree radiated light and energy, and Yu-ning heard enchanting music playing on the other side of the great trunk. Yu-ning walked to the other side of the tree, following the gentle, sweet sounds of a flute. A handsome eleven-year-old boy with large round eyes and brown hair sat with his back against the trunk. The melody he played was sweet but sad. Yu-ning jumped happily at the sight of her best friend. “Romeo!” Yu-ning exclaimed.

Romeo looked up and smiled tenderly, lowering his flute. “Hi, Yu-ning,” he sighed, his voice filled with apprehension.

Yu-ning knelt down next to him and furrowed her brow. “It’s such lovely music you are playing. Why aren’t you happy?” she asked.

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“I had a dream filled with many dark faces, and one face in particular. It was large and black, with yellow, dead-looking eyes. Almost like stone,” he said softly.

Yu-ning looked at him pensively, concern filling her eyes. She could see the vision. She leaned in to hug her friend and said, “Don’t worry, Romeo, there’s only the rainbow in the sky and beauty all around us.” Together they looked up through the leaves of the kapok tree to see the clear blue sky and sunshine.

“Let’s play more music. It will make you feel better,” Yu-ning encouraged him.

Romeo was quiet. Yu-ning nudged him to look at the rainbow above them. “Look, Romeo, the rainbow! I’ll sing a song for you. You are like that shining rainbow in the sky!”

Yu-ning opened her arms wide toward the sky. “Whatever our lessons, Romeo, always remember that only the light and color in this world matters. Come on; let’s sing a song together. Let’s sing a song with the birds,” Yu-ning said eagerly, trying to distract her friend.

“All right . . .” Romeo nodded and smiled slightly as he started to hum with Yu-ning. He picked up his flute and played his gentle tune.

“Romeo! Let’s play in the tree!” Yu-ning exclaimed. “We’ll make our music with the tree.” Together they watched as the massive branches swept down, grabbed hold of them, and carried them high into the foliage above. Yu-ning laughed with delight as the tree pulled them higher and higher until they were sitting in the center of its vastness. Romeo looked down at all the children as they danced and sang below. Yu-ning leaned back and tucked herself into a comfortable



nook within the branches. "Let's play, Romeo." Together they played a lilting melody and smiled together as they closed their eyes and felt the coolness of the bark beneath their bodies.

Yu-ning looked up as four large leaves fluttered into her right palm. Slowly she inspected each leaf, reading each one like a book. She saw words, drawings, and little pictures etched into the green chlorophyll veins of each sheath, and nodded slowly as she thanked the tree. She looked at her friend compassionately, with a deep, knowing gaze. "It's going to be all right, Romeo. I will be here for you."

Romeo just looked at her and nodded. He asked no questions and stared out across the serene ocean. Yu-ning looked back at the leaves and whispered, "Thank you, wisdom tree." She placed the leaves gently on the branches.

"I have something for you, Romeo." She reached into her pocket and produced a particularly brilliant purple crystal heart, attached to a red silk thread, which she handed to Romeo. He held it up as soft purple light flowed out of the crystal and out from the tree. "Keep this close to your heart when you are in need of comfort, and hold it before you when you need light to guide your way."

"Thank you," he whispered as Yu-ning tied the necklace around his neck. It was identical to one that Yu-ning had around her neck, except his stone was dark lavender instead of pink. "May its light always remind you of my friendship," said Yu-ning. "Now play some music, Romeo, and let's sing with the parrots; it will make you feel better!"

A crooked smile slowly broke across his face. "All right," said Romeo. He played music on his flute and started singing,

along with a chorus of three-wattled bellbirds, blue-crowned motmots, and sleek rufous-tailed jacamars in nearby trees. Afterward, the boy and girl gazed out at the Island, taking in the beautiful view.

“Race you to Rainbow Meadow!” Romeo pushed Yu-ning sideways on the branch as he raced down the tree. They descended the tree as the limbs of the kapok grabbed them and gently passed them down to lower limbs, which deposited them softly on the springy green turf. They ran across the field, leaving the other children to play near the great kapok tree.

They began to slow down as they reached a steep cliff with a narrow path that zigzagged back and forth to a higher meadow above. Romeo picked a pink plumeria blossom and handed it to Yu-ning. He reached for a yellow one, then orange, red, and blue-violet. “All the colors of the rainbow,” he said tenderly, handing her the flowers with a nod of his head. “You are my closest and dearest friend, and I know I am not alone with you by my side,” Romeo said softly.

Yu-ning held the aromatic bouquet in her small hand and, with her other hand, reached for Romeo’s fingers. “It’s going to be all right, Romeo. We’re together and we’ll always have each other.”

“Last one to the Seven Sacred Crystals is a tortoise!” Romeo yelled as he pushed her sideways and raced to the head of the path. Yu-ning gave chase, just steps behind him as they ascended the steep trail up the side of the cliff. Many of the other Rainbow Children had followed them, along with their animal friends Leonidas the lion; Shamza the zebra; Stout and Madrigal, who were black and brown bears; Lightmere the deer; Prometheus the horse; and several members of the

pink rabbit clan. But most important of all was Octavian the owl, Yu-ning's closest animal friend—her mentor in all things of nature and wildlife.

From a rock that overlooked the path, a green tree frog leapt into the air, headed right for Yu-ning. Yu-ning laughed as the frog landed on her chest, the surprise of it knocking her to the ground as she rolled over giggling. It was Magic, Yu-ning's tiny pet frog—a ball of energy and green lightning. “Hi, Magic!” called Yu-ning, scratching the frog on top of its head as it croaked with delight.

The three ran across the meadow toward a green cliff and were joined by the other Rainbow Children. Cascading waterfalls dotted the side of the steep, lush green cliffs. As they crested the cliff onto a small plateau, before them was a large, flat golden rock. On top of the rock, resting on a natural stone altar, were seven beautiful crystals, each the size of a man's forearm, each with its own beautiful, hand-crafted placeholder hewn into the top of the stone altar.

Out of the seven crystals streamed brilliant translucent lights, the source of the Island's stunning rainbow: red, green, yellow, violet, orange, indigo, and blue. The colors rose in smoke-like wisps above the stone; they intertwined and danced like the most beautiful aurora borealis, reaching well above the Island and outward across the blue sky. This was the sacred rainbow of Rainbow Island, its light going out into the world.

As Yu-ning approached, she saw an unusually tall figure standing near the rock. His hair and beard were long and white, and he was wearing a grey robe and a conical hat that was old and careworn. In his right hand was a shining yellow staff with a large quartz crystal encrusted on the top.

His eyes were filled with wisdom as he waved warmly at Yu-ning. It was Metatron, the Island's master teacher. The large rock upon which sat the Seven Sacred Crystals was surrounded by a glass-like, translucent dome, "unbreakable by any creature," said the kindly wizard to the children now standing by his side. "The first Rainbow Children found the stones in different parts of the Island and brought them together in this meadow," explained Metatron. "They were surprised and delighted to discover that the seven separate stones, when brought together, formed this beautiful prism of light—this rainbow—that has shined brightly over Rainbow Island for multiple generations."

Though the children had heard this story many times in school, they never tired of it. As long as Yu-ning could remember, in fact, she never wearied of Metatron—either sitting with him in silence, or hearing him tell his tales. After all, the wizard was the closest thing to a parent she had ever known. All she really knew was what Metatron told her: as a newborn, she had been brought to the Island by night and left on the steps of the Rainbow School, not far from the main beach. No one knew who brought her, or whether or not her birth parents were still alive. In the morning, the only sign of visitors was the track marks of a small boat that had been pulled high onto the sandy beach.

What she did know was that all the adults on Rainbow Island were wise, kind—and, well, rather mysterious. They themselves were all former Rainbow Children. Metatron was always quick to say that while all children are special, Rainbow Children possessed extraordinary and unique wisdom and spiritual sensitivity. The Island and its school had been built with the express purpose of educating Rainbow

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Children, who came from all corners of the realm to live and learn from the gifted instructors.

Though many of the children had not seen their parents for years, they knew this was where they needed to be. Twice a year, on Visitors' Day, many of their parents would travel by ship to visit with their gifted children. That was always a tough day for Yu-ning, who typically sat alone, watching the other kids receive gifts and hugs from their proud parents.

"We all have light within us," said Metatron, interrupting Yu-ning's thoughts. "And everyone's light is important and different. But only when we work together, as one, does that light form a beautiful prism—like our beautiful Island's rainbow! The love flows through us, into the crystals, and out into the world. Without love, the crystals are just, well—interesting rocks." He winked as he said this to Yu-ning.

"Metatron, what do you mean that we all have light inside us?" asked Yu-ning. "Do you mean we are lit up on the inside?"

Metatron offered an easy laugh. "Well, not exactly, my dear. It is like this: our light is born of the human heart and spirit. In other words, goodness, kindness, love, and selflessness are an outgrowth of a person being in touch with their inner light—their inner 'spark' of humanity and love. Light is in all of us, we just need to tap into it, exercise it like a muscle, and embrace it. As we do, it is released through us."

Yu-ning pondered this and said, "But what about the rainbow and the crystals—aren't they the source of our light?" She said this as she pointed up at the beautiful display of colors shooting from the crystals at the base of the huge rainbow.

"The goodness comes *through* us, Yu-ning. Without love from our hearts, these stones are lifeless. But as we love one

another, that force can flow outward,” added Metatron, with a sweep of his arm toward the arc of the rainbow above them. “The light inside us becomes brighter when we share it with others. If we keep it within, it becomes extinguished—like a flame that receives no oxygen. It is always our choice alone, Yu-ning, to embrace the light and allow it to flow, or to reject it, in which case it can die. Outside forces, such as the rainbow here, can encourage the light and spread it. However, the opposite is also true: if we don’t nurture the love in our hearts, we can be influenced to make unwise choices—or even to embrace evil.”

Yu-ning and Romeo paused, taking in Metatron’s words. He could see the looks of confusion on their faces, so he tried a different tack.

“Have you ever seen a stagnant pond?” asked Metatron.

Yu-ning and Romeo looked at each other with quizzical looks and said, “Yes.”

“In order for a pond or lake to remain fresh, there must be an outflow,” continued Metatron. “If all that happens is that water flows in without flowing out, that body of water will eventually stagnate and die. That is like love: unless there is outflow, a way for us to share our light, it is in danger of dying inside us.”

Yu-ning looked thoughtfully at the wizard and nodded that she understood.

“Enough of my lecturing now, and follow me!” he invited, a twinkle in his eye. They walked down the same jungle path, and from this height, their entire village of bamboo huts and cottages lay below on the grassy knolls leading to the main beach. To the left was the Rainbow School. This was a school like no other, where the children were encouraged to

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study the subjects they chose, to create and dream and imagine, and to explore any subject that inspired them. Yu-ning's favorites were Folklore and Archery.

In her Folklore classes, she read every book she could get her hands on about the history of Rainbow Island and the world surrounding this idyllic land. She knew that for the last 100 years, as Rainbow Island thrived under the teaching of the masters and the community grew, the light of the rainbow had grown stronger. Each year the rainbow's light stretched farther out into the world, reaching islands hundreds of miles in every direction.

Yu-ning loved to spend time on the beach, because that was where she received news of the outside world. The pink dolphins of Rainbow Island were master storytellers, and on many evenings, Yu-ning and the children, along with their teachers, would gather in nearby Rainbow Cove to listen to their tales. By the light of glowing torches at the water's edge, the dolphins would swim in from the open sea and take their positions in a semicircle at the edge of the pool. The children would gather round, perched on rocks at the edge of the water, sitting on soft blankets, listening to the majestic pink creatures take turns sharing news of the outside world. Torchlight would illuminate the heads of the pink dolphins as they bobbed in the gentle waters of the cove. These gatherings were a highlight for Yu-ning, as she had never left Rainbow Island to see the world for herself.

Yu-ning also knew that before the rainbow was manifested from the seven stones, a great darkness had shrouded the world, snuffing out the love in many a man's heart. Evil came in the form of black dragons, or obsidigons, that battled against the mightiest warriors, called the Darq Renders. But

the books on this subject were scarce, many having been destroyed by the terrible fires lit by the dark dragons in attacks long forgotten, or lost in the mists of aging, distant memory.

Metatron walked down the path, staff in hand, and took a turn on a seldom-used trail leading further along the side of the mountain. There, off yet a smaller, hidden path, behind thick trumpet vines, was a cave. "This way, child," Metatron said, as he used his staff to pull back the vines to reveal the entrance. Yu-ning turned to smile at Romeo, who entered behind her. Throughout the cave was an array of colorful furniture creating a relaxed, intimate atmosphere: a pink bed, red coffee table, violet sofa, green cabinets, blue drawers, and a well-stocked pantry. The entire cave was filled with beautiful shining colors.

Yu-ning saw a pink knob on the wall next to the bed. She pulled it open to reveal a large walk-in closet. Inside was a wardrobe of dazzling, colorful clothes in just her size. Yu-ning realized in that instant that this was her cave. Everything was scaled down to her size in a dreamy, cozy wonderland. She squealed with glee and plopped down onto the soft, cushiony sofa.

Metatron smiled and looked at Yu-ning with kindness in his eyes. "Yu-ning, you are old enough now to have your own space, as do all the Rainbow Children around their twelfth birthday. And now, this is your home. But don't worry, Yu-ning—you can hit my cottage with a rock from the entrance of your cave! I am always close by."

Yu-ning looked at the wizard as a bright round light floated into the room. It was like nothing Yu-ning had ever seen before. The light halted before them and hovered there. Then, materializing before their eyes, it became a man

wearing a soft, white, long-sleeved shirt open at the neck, white cotton pants, and leather sandals. Magic was frightened, and as was his way when he was nervous, he jumped straight up into the air, landing on the ceiling and clinging there upside down.

Though nothing was spoken, Yu-ning heard a message in her head: “Yu-ning, I am One, your divine protector, and I am always with you. No matter what comes, I will stand with you. There is strong darkness engulfing the world, child. And you must combat it.” And with that, there was a bright flash, and the man turned back into a floating white light and drifted out of the cave.

Metatron stared long at Yu-ning, compassion in his eyes. Yu-ning broke the silence by asking, “What did One mean, Master?”

“What did you hear?” asked Metatron.

“He said a darkness is covering the world, and that I will need to combat it.”

Metatron showed Yu-ning an ancient book resting on the table, covered in soft, hand-tooled leather. This was a book she had never seen in the stacks of the great Rainbow Library, where she had spent many lazy afternoons. Metatron explained that as a Rainbow Child, she was now old enough to learn more about the Island’s history and significance. He turned to a particular section toward the center of the book that talked of strange creatures returning 100 years after the death of the last obsidion, when the light had grown in strength.

“Yu-ning, I have seen a darkness growing in the skies to the east, and in the sea, which has grown grey and stormy around many of our neighboring islands. Rumors abound of

ships lost in storms, islands under attack, and darkness coming over the waters. And this year marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the Darq Renders' defeat of the obsidigon army. As you have learned in school, the Renders were warriors who gathered on the plains of Darqendia to defeat the obsidigons. That is what is revealed in this book, and it is that of which One spoke," said Metatron.

"This is my dream!" added Romeo. "The dream I told you about, Yu-ning."

"I'm not sure I understand," countered Yu-ning. "I have heard of the Obsidigon War, but the dark dragons were defeated, and none have been seen in the world for many years, according to what our instructors have taught us."

"What you don't know, Yu-ning, is that a sorcerer of the kind that created the first race of obsidigons is rumored to have risen out of the east. Our dolphin scouts tell us that there is disturbing news from the Imperial Palace of Tunzai: one of the royal princes stole the last obsidigon skull in existence and disappeared. Only from one of the dragon's skulls can a sorcerer conjure an obsidigon. The fear from the Floating Imperial Palace is that this sorcerer is Hobaling, grandson of the Darq wizard who helped unleash the fury of the last Obsidigon Conjuring."

"What is an *Obsidigon Conjuring*, Metatron? I don't understand," persisted Yu-ning.

"These creatures are called *Darq* because they are not natural. They are *conjured*, or crafted using dark magic, and live only to destroy and bring darkness to the world. In the dark is where they thrive and breed, and only through the light of love can they be defeated."

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“When will it come, Metatron—this darkness?” inquired Yu-ning.

“We do not know, my child. And the trick is that recognizing the dark is not always easy. Sometimes, telling the difference between good and bad—light and dark—takes more than your physical senses. The key is to also measure a thing in your heart to help you tell the difference. Remember, everyone has light within their heart—only some choose to ignore it, or allow it to be extinguished. And so it’s important to always lean on your friends for guidance and wisdom.”

“How can we stop it . . . this sorcerer, from creating another obsidion? Isn’t there something you can do to contain it, Metatron?”

“I cannot predict its arrival or discern how it will be stopped,” said the wizard. “No one knows the future. All we have is today, Yu-ning. Each day is its own page in life’s mysterious book. If we try to read ahead, we lose the story.”

“But Metatron . . .” said Yu-ning, before the wizard leaned down and took her face in his hands.

“It is late, the hour past midnight. Sleep, and we will talk more of these things in the morning.”

And just as suddenly as he had arrived, the wise wizard was gone.

