

*The Adventures of Rupert Starbright ~ Book Two*

# The Secret of My-Myst



**Mike DiCerto**



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Rupert Starbright  
Book 2

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THE SECRET OF MY-MYST

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For Suzy. My Musy.

*All You Need is  
Love*

*– The Beatles*

# Chapter 1

## A Calm and a Storm

The remainder of Rupert and Dream Weaver's journey on the hippoboatus was calm and uneventful. By the time Story's docks appeared, clouds had blotted out all of the blue sky, and rain was falling hard. The two umbrellas had been raised again, and Rupert and Weaver sat beneath their cover.

The hippoboatus drifted up to the dock, circled around to line up with the pier and, with a bit of strain, lifted its heavy body. There were pools of water on the wooden surface from the downpour.

Beyond the pier was a narrow street lined with small houses. Not a single light burned in a window nor did a single footstep splash a puddle. A lone street lamp shone with yellow oil-fire, lighting the wet cobblestones with a soft glow.

Weaver and Rupert stepped from the hippoboatus onto the dock. Their clothing, which had dried in the warm sun, was quickly getting soaked again.

Weaver looked about.

"Seems oddly quiet, even for Story."

"How far away does your friend live?"

"Just a short walk," Weaver said, adjusting his pack. He turned to the hippoboatus. "Thank you for the ride."

"Yes," Rupert agreed. "Thanks."

"You are quite welcome. Please imagine me again should you need transport," the large creature replied then simply dissolved into the air and was gone.

Rupert looked at Weaver and tapped his temple with a smile.

"He's up here."

Weaver smiled back and headed off, his boot steps joining the rain in breaking the silence. Rupert walked beside him.

The stones that paved the narrow twisting roads of Story were polished and smooth as glass. Oddly, they were not slippery, even wet with fresh rain. The homes were all made of hewn stones and had been assembled with great care. Rupert noted that some of the doors were wide open, and in the front yards of others there were tools scattered about, rusting in the rain.

"That's odd," Weaver noted. "Folks of Story are not known for being so careless with their belongings. Tools are kept in tool sheds and doors tend to be kept closed when it rains."

"Seems kind of early for everyone to be in bed," Rupert said.

"You're right. Seems like everyone has left."

A chill raced up Rupert's spine. Why would everyone leave?

"Come, let's see if my friend is home."

Weaver stepped up his pace and led Rupert down the main street and off onto a very narrow side alley that wound up to the top of a small hill. At the end of a narrow lane sat a two-story home made of deep red stone and capped with a roof of blue wood.

A round stained glass window was set above three regular windows. The door was made of hammered brass and on its surface was a knocker shaped like a hand holding an Illuminator, backed by the image of a majestic mountain peak skillfully stamped into the metal.

"This is Summit's home. That's his emblem on the door."

"Doesn't look like he's home."

"Let's have a see."

Weaver stepped through the front gate. He tapped on the door. The sound bounded down the lane like a skipped rock. When there was no reply, he tried again. Nothing. Again. Weaver tried the doorknob. It turned, and the door swung open. To Rupert's surprise, Weaver entered.

"It's okay, Dullz. It's an unwritten rule amongst Illuminorians. Our houses are always open to each other."

Rupert followed him in.

The home was simple and cozy. The furniture was handmade of deep red wood, and a large fireplace was in one corner of the room.

Weaver called out, "Anyone here?"

There was no reply.

"Let's get that fireplace busy."

He retrieved some wood scraps from the fire closet and made a small tent of kindling. He took a small silver rod that sat atop the mantel and held it out to Rupert.

“This is a special device. A spark-lighter. Imagined by Summit when he was a child. Watch.”

Weaver flipped a small lever on one end of the rod, and a glowing cloud of energy swirled around his hand. The energy condensed onto the rod and crept to the top end, where it burst into a small yellow flame.

“That’s pretty good. In Graysland, we just have matches—wooden sticks that light into fire when you strike them on walls and stuff.”

“Sounds a bit dangerous. Must set a lot of houses on fire.”

“No. But my mother always yells at me if I play with them.”

“Your mother is a smart lady.”

Weaver set the kindling ablaze, and in a matter of minutes, the room was illuminated by the roaring hearth. After a quick search, he had enough canned food for a hearty meal of beef stew and sugared carrots that he cooked on a special oil stove in the small kitchen. For dessert, they enjoyed sweet meeki-meeki pudding, made from a fruit that sizzled and tickled your tongue with millions of tiny bubbles.

It was all a wondrous feast for Rupert’s mouth, and for a little while all was great with the world. His clothes were dry, his belly full and his mind had calmed and cleared.

After they ate, Rupert examined all the paintings and artifacts that decorated the room. Over the mantel was a large portrait of a man with smiling eyes and a head of snow-white hair that fell to his shoulders.

“Is that your friend Summit Wonder?” he asked.

"No, that's his father, Rain. He was a famous artist. All of these paintings are his. That's Summit's mother, Melody," Weaver said, pointing to the lovely portrait of a serious-looking woman with beautiful long black hair and elaborate silken headwear. "She was a musician. Played for the Royal Orchestra that tours all around Far-Myst."

Rupert stepped up to a large shield that sat atop a wooden chest. On the bronze relic was the number 12. He turned to Weaver.

"Why did you quit the Twelve?"

"I'd had enough of people's squabbles. I wanted my children to be influenced by only positive things."

"I thought the Twelve *were* positive?"

"The Twelve were all good folk. Smart, dedicated men and women. In recent years, though, as things became more and more peaceful in Far-Myst, folks became more and more unkind to the Truseens."

"Didn't they leave and go somewhere else?"

"Yes, but folks can be funny. Sometimes when things are good they try to find bad things even where they don't exist. People started making the Truseens seem like some great enemy that was going to storm back into Far-Myst and make us all their slaves."

"Were they?"

"Nonsense. It was just stories dreamed up by boring-headed dolts who had nothing better to do. The Truseens were happy where they were."

"How do you know?"

Weaver looked away a moment then pointed to the paintings on the wall.

"Summit's father was also Truseen. Moved on to live with them. Summit would visit every so often

and tell me stories about the mystical lands of the Truseens. He fell in love with a Truseen woman and married her.

"I learned that the Truseens are good folk as well. It was all just a difference of how people wanted to live. I got tired of the rumors."

"So, you became a gardener?"

Weaver smiled and nodded.

"I grew to really love the solitude of the gardens. Especially after Celestia's death."

"Your wife, right?"

Weaver nodded. He drew the Illuminator, and it came to life in a display of sparkling colored light.

"This was hers."

Rupert's eyes widened.

"Your wife was one of the Twelve?"

Weaver nodded and smiled with great pride.

"Yes, she was."



Across the road from Summit Wonder's home, two shadowy figures hid within a thick hedge. Quix and Xerks were spying. When they saw the spectral lights of the Illuminator flash, their eyes widened, and a devilish smile crawled across Xerks's face like a bunch of insects.

"There they are. An honest-to-goodness member of the Twelve and his runt companion!" he sneered. "Let's kick the door down and rush them. Get the element of surprise on our side!"

"Didn't you listen to anything Murkus told us?" Quix snapped. "We have to handle this with care. We have to assume that boy has power."

"If you're too queasy, I'd be honored to deal with him myself," Xerks offered, gesturing to the knife that hung from his belt.

Quix grabbed him by the collar and glared at him.

"That will be *my* honor. Do you understand me, Xerks?"

"Yeah, yeah. Relax. I'll take care of wonder boy."

"We are gonna make friends with him. Like Murkus ordered."

Xerks frowned, but then he agreed with a half-hearted nod.

## Chapter 2

### The Shadows Strike

“Celestia and me were the first married couple to ever serve as members of the Twelve. She was very skillful but could often be rash in her decisions. She was always a very impatient woman. That’s what killed her.”

“Was she in a duel? Or a battle of some sort?”  
Rupert asked.

“No. She was on a training mission. We had just celebrated Fancy’s first year with us. Fancy was adopted—I found the little angel in a basket by the waterfall pines. Wrapped in a white blanket with a rose on it. That’s her name—Rose. I called her my Fancy Rose. Then it became just Fancy.” Weaver smiled wide as his thoughts filled with images of his little girl.

“Even as an adult, Celestia had some use of her Imagining powers. We are trained to never use them in dangerous situations. Only the children can fully

harness that energy. It often fails adults. Celestia used her Imaginings to build a bridge to cross a chasm in the foothills of the Feigns. She could not stay focused. It faded away, and she fell."

"I'm sorry," Rupert said, and meant it.

"Thank you, Rupert. That's why I was so against your using your own abilities. I wasn't confident of them. I'm sorry I yelled at you for using her Illuminator. No one but she and myself have ever held it.

"You were very brave to put yourself in danger with those black moths. That saved my mind—those things have the power to make a man daffy. Turn you into a walking dead man who fears his own shadow. Thank you, Rupert Starbright."

"You're welcome, Mr. Weaver. I don't think I was even thinking. I just did it."

"That's how courage works. A hero is just a person who acts out of desperation to save his or another's life. If you'd thought about it too much, you would have run for the hills like any sane man."

Rupert smiled and yawned wide.

"Will we make it to Flowseen tomorrow?"

"We should. It's a good half-day's walk from here. Much of it is, unfortunately, uphill."

"Great," moaned Rupert, rubbing his sore calves. "But at least you'll be free then to do more important things."

"Getting you home safe is important, Rupert."

They locked eyes, and Rupert felt a lump form in his throat.

Weaver looked away.

"Anyway, you must be exhausted. You can sleep in the bedroom—it's at the top of the stairs. I'll sleep on this chair. We'll need a solid night's rest."

"Okay. Is there a bathroom somewhere?" Rupert asked, standing up.

"There's an outhouse. Around back."

Rupert headed for the door, and Weaver called him back. He was holding out the Illuminor.

"Here, Starbright, take this with you. In case you have a run-in with one of those moths."

Rupert was surprised by the gesture.

"Are you sure? It's your wife's."

Weaver nodded. Rupert took the very special dagger in his hands and nodded to him.

"Thanks."

"Make some noise before you enter – rabbicoons like to hide in there. They scare easy but can bite if you corner them."

Rupert nodded and exited the house.

The rain was nothing more than a fine mist that felt nice on his face. He looked up at the sky and noted a few of the brighter stars were shining through breaks in the clouds. He hoped morning would bring more sun and warmth.

He walked along the neatly manicured path of gray and white stones that led to the door of the small structure he thought looked quite a bit like a phone booth back in Graysland. He tapped on the door a couple of times to scare off any animals hiding inside.

Without warning, someone grabbed his shoulders and threw him up against the door of the outhouse.

"Hello, there, wonder boy," a boy rasped in his ear.

Rupert tried to speak, but a hand was over his mouth. He tried to struggle free, but his attacker's

strength was too much. Another, taller boy leaned close to him and sneered.

"What are you doing here?"

Rupert's mumbles were incoherent. The second boy gestured to the first to remove his hand.

"I have to go," Rupert innocently answered.

"You're coming with us."

"Well, what have we here?" his captor said as he freed the Illuminator from Rupert's grasp.

"Give me that!" Rupert demanded.

The hand went back over his mouth.

"Shut up. So, a future Knight of the Twelve with his own special dagger."

"I'll take that," the taller boy said, reaching for the Illuminator.

The other one pulled it away.

"Finder's keepers!"

"I said I'll take that!" He yanked the dagger away.  
"Let's go."

"What about the man? Shouldn't you go in and take care of him?"

The other one nodded.

"Take him to the crossroads. I'll tend to the gardener and meet you there."

"And don't try anything funny, puny one," the wild-haired boy threatened with a wicked, green-tinted smile. "I have a sharp blade filled with powerful Imaginings. It'll turn you into a rotted rat if I choose. I am not afraid to use it."

"Could you at least let me pee first?"

"No."

"Let him," the taller one ordered.

The other boy frowned.

"Hurry up," he said, pushing Rupert toward the outhouse. "And no tricks."



Rupert stepped into the small structure and closed the door behind him. Quix grabbed Xerks by the shoulder and spun him around angrily.

“Fool! We were suppose to befriend him!” he said, trying to keep his voice down. “Now he’ll never trust us.”

“Relax, Quix. We’ll use the old good guy, bad guy routine. It’ll keep him off balance.”

Quix sighed hard and gave in.



Rupert tried to overhear the conversation, but only muffled whispers made it to his ears. He had to think of something. His parents had taught him to never go anywhere with strangers, even ones his own age.

There was only one thing to do—he would slam open the door and make a mad dash back to the house. He had to let Weaver know what was going on.

“Hurry up in there!” the shorter boy ordered.

“Just a minute,” Rupert replied.

“Let the boy do his thing,” the taller boy said. “Give him a minute.”

A minute was more than he needed. He grabbed hold of the doorknob, took a deep breath and pushed the door open as hard as he could.

“Weaver!” he shouted as he threw himself past the two boys and raced down the path to the house.

“Hey!”

Rupert’s heart was pounding as he came closer and closer to the door. The boys were on his tail. He pushed open the door with his shoulder and entered.

"Weaver!" he shouted again. He entered the living room. Weaver was not there. "Mr. Weaver!" he called, looking in the kitchen. Only dirty pots, empty cans and jars greeted him.

He heard the door close then two sets of footsteps. He stepped back into the living room. The two boys stood with arms folded, smiling.

"So, where's your friend?" the short one mocked.

The taller boy was quickly scanning the room.

"Where is he?"

Rupert swallowed hard. *That's a good question.*

Where, indeed?

## Chapter 3

### Into the Night

Quix held the Illuminor in his hand, but its colorful, powerful lights were not glowing. Not that it would do much against Weaver or Rupert if it *were* on.

Illuminors worked using the good intent of the owner's Imagining, child or adult. It could not create anything, as Rupert had with the fish key and the blue fire and the hippoboatus. It could only repel those who tried to create destructive objects or, like the darkledrooms, the nasty objects themselves. It held no power against the forces of positive creative energy.

"I smell stew!" Xerks said, drooling.

"No time for your stomach," Quix said as he looked at Rupert. "Is he upstairs?"

He had to be, Rupert thought. Where else could he be?

"Stay with our friend. I'll check."

Quix turned on the Illuminor. He took a small blade from his belt and held it in the other hand, and quietly climbed the wooden staircase. Each step had its own voice, speaking in a vocabulary of creeks and squeaks.



In the dark, Weaver sat. A secret door located just under one of the living room windows had sprung open and caught him completely off-guard. He had fallen at least twenty feet onto a dirt floor and could only watch as the spring-loaded hinges closed the trapdoor above him.

There was a flow of warm air, and peering into the blackness, Weaver guessed he was in a long tunnel. There were rumors of underground passageways that led all the way to Truseen lands. He knew Summit Wonder had taken secret journeys there. Now he knew the tales were true.

He could hear talking but could not identify the speakers, as the sound was far too muffled.

“Rupert!” he called out. “Rupert!”

His voice seemed to dissolve down the long tunnel. No matter how hard and loud he called out, he feared no one above would ever hear.

The walls were too smooth to climb. His ankle ached, and he feared the fall had broken it. He sat in the dark.



“Stop staring at me,” Rupert said, glaring at the short boy, who stood with arms folded.

The boy smiled and made his eyes wide like a madman.

“What’s the matter, wonder boy? Afraid I might use my evil eye to rip out your brain?”

"No."

"Well, you should be!" the boy snapped. "I am very powerful. Did you see that rock down the road? The big one?"

Rupert shrugged.

"That was some busybody who wanted to know what we were up to. He came out and tried to hit me with a rake. I laughed and imagined what the creep would look like as a rock. A big rock. I closed my eyes, and when I opened them, there he sat. If you listen real close, you can hear him moaning for help!"

Rupert pouted. He didn't believe the story but said nothing. He looked the boy over and noted his clothes and boots were caked with dirt and mud.

"Were you sleeping in the woods?"

"Don't ask me any questions! You answer. I ask!"

"Just wondering," Rupert muttered. "You should learn how to use the bullfrog-stool. Or at least find a lushroom to sleep on."

"Shut yer mouth! The next lushroom I find I will crush with my feet just to spite you!"

"You're gonna wake up the dead! Quiet!" the taller boy ordered as he came down the steps.

"So?" the other one asked. "Anyone?"

"No one upstairs," his companion said, still wearing a concerned expression. He turned to Rupert. "So, where did your friend go?"

Rupert shrugged again.

The boy's expression softened, and he stepped closer.

"Don't worry. We won't hurt you. My friend is a bit hotheaded—I wouldn't get him mad at you. But we want to be friends. What's your name?"

"Rupert."

"Okay, Rupert. Who was your friend?"

"Just some guy helping me."

"Helping you, huh?" the shorter one sneered.

His companion ignored him.

"Rupert, listen to me. That man may be a traitor to Queen Chroma. We are spies for the queen. On a special quest."

"Weaver wasn't a traitor! He was a brave man."

"Weaver? *Dream Weaver*?" the tall boy said the name as if he were eating rotted cabbage. "I know of him. If you're friends with that traitor, how do we know you aren't here to gather an army and take control?"

"An *army*?" Rupert was stunned. "I just came here because I imagined a fish key. I wanted to see someplace that wasn't as boring as my home. But then those smelly flying things attacked."

"So, you do have powers," the boy charged.

"No. Maybe. I really don't know. How about you two? I thought all the children of Far-Myst had the Imagining ability, so why can't *you* help stop Murkus?"

"What do you think we're *doing*? We're the only two who weren't taken by Murkus. We're too smart for him and his stinking wingers. Where was Weaver taking you?"

"He wanted to get me to a place called Flowseen. So I can get home. He saved my life."

"From what we've heard, you're powerful enough to save your own."

"That's not true. All I did was imagine a blue fire and a boat. All I want is to find a cure for my grandmother's sickness and go home."

The short boy looked at the tall one and smiled.

"A cure? What sort of sickness does she have?"

"It's called the coffus. The medicine my mother gets from the doctor doesn't seem to work. That's the only reason I came here with Pie O'Sky in the first place."

The short one shook his head. "Didn't Weaver tell you about the treatmentia bush?"

"No. What's that?"

"'What's that?' he says." the boy chuckled. "It's only the most powerful medicine plant in all of Far-Myst. It only grows in one place—on the shores of Melderwind Pond in the foothills of the Feigns."

Rupert defended the gardener.

"Weaver knew about every plant. He would have told me if there was such a thing!"

"There is. My own uncle was cured of a deadly mind disease," the boy argued. "Treatmentia can cure anything."

"Mr. Weaver would never lie to me."

"Where is he now?" challenged the other boy. "He's gone off without you. He just wanted to get rid of you. He didn't care a thing about you or your grandmother."

"I don't believe that," Rupert insisted, folding his arms.

"Believe it, kid. You should come with us."

Rupert sighed hard. Where *was* Weaver? Why would he run off and leave him in danger?

"Where?" he asked.

"We're on an assignment to spy on a village beyond Flowseen. A secret group of Murkus supporters. We'll be able to journey to Melderwind Pond and get some leaves from the treatmentia bush. Then you can go home and help your grandmother. Unless you're lying to us. I wonder if you even have a sick grandmother."

"I do, too! Her name is Folka."

"Fine. But if you *are* an infiltrator, you'll rot in the dungeons of the Everstood forever. Like that lying traitor Weaver will," the tall boy vowed.

"I don't even know what an infiltrator is," Rupert confessed with a blush.

"Maybe he's telling the truth," the tall boy said to his companion, putting his hand on Rupert's shoulder. "Maybe, Rupert, you can even help us."

"Maybe," Rupert said with a shrug. Should he believe these two? Was Weaver really a liar and a traitor? Where was he? Why would he give him the Illuminor and leave?



Beneath the living room, Weaver sat stunned. The voice of one of the intruders was familiar, a voice he had longed to hear. A few scattered words, filled with anger, had descended and stabbed him through his heart. Words like traitor and liar.

"Quix, my son. Why do you talk of me in such dark ways?" he softly murmured through the terrible lump in his throat. *It's that monster Murkus. He has corrupted my boy. My flesh and blood. My son.*

Just then, three balls of light floated down the long, long tunnel. They glowed with a softness that was pleasing to his eyes — pink, soft yellow and sky blue. Closer and closer they came, until they enveloped his entire body, and he felt himself drift off as if into a dream.

He heard a voice in his mind, the voice of an old friend.

— *You will come with us, Dream Weaver.*

— *Summit? Weaver thought. Is that you?*

— *Yes, old friend. You have discovered our secret passage. We cannot let you tell a soul about it. You will come with us.*

With that, Weaver became part of the lights and was taken down the secret tunnel.



“Are you willing to come with us and prove you are no threat to Queen Chroma?” Xerks asked with a hard poke to Rupert’s chest.

“I have no way to *be* a threat. I just want to go home, I swear. That’s all I want.”

“Fine, then, let’s go,” Quix said.

“And no tears, boy,” Xerks warned Rupert, “or we’ll give you something to really cry about.”

He pushed Rupert towards the door. Quix led the way and let his hand brush Rupert’s shoulder.

“Don’t worry, Rupert. Do as we say, and you’ll get home with your grandmother’s cure. I promise.”

As they exited the house, Xerks whispered into Quix’s ear, “Murkus will make us his top commanders for this.”

Quix nodded but hushed him up with a stern glare, and they were off into the night.

## Chapter 4

### The Clown and the Worm King

The steam had gathered into a thick paste that covered everything in Murkus's lair like too much butter on toast. From deep in the mist, terrible moans and deep growls sounded. Murkus jerked and threw himself about as if he were in great agony.

He was.

The horribly painful change he was going through had reached its final phase. A giant of a man only a few days before, he was now part-man, part-dragon.

Murkus had doubled in size. His head was capped with a crown of thick horns connected by a sheet of thick, scale-covered skin. A long, curved horn had sprouted from his chin like some deadly beard.

He now stood on all fours – thick tree-stump legs with taut, powerful muscles and tipped with dagger-like claws. His tail had tripled in length and came

to a spearlike point. He had become a walking, fire-breathing killing machine with a mind set on one thing – the destruction of Far-Myst as he knew it.

He would bear the painful changes and become full Dracoleen – a complete Dragon – although he feared he was the only one left. All but the egg he protected.

As one last great spasm tore through his body, he reared his head back and let go a cry of agony, and thick blood-red flames flashed across the lair and sent the door flying off its hinges.

In the corridor, Slog hid trembling behind a stone column many yards away. He closed his eyes as the heated wind blew across his face. This was not the first transformation the winger had witnessed.

It had been a long time ago when Murkus went through the first of the three changes any Dracoleen goes through in its life. Slog had gotten too close that time, and when he'd turned to flee the great blast of fire all he could do was close his eyes and wait for the pain.

The wall of flames had slammed across his back, and his once-agile flying ability was gone. Slog's wings had been burned down to two ragged stumps.

It was not done out of anger or spite. It was uncontrollable, and after Slog was healed as best he could be, Murkus took him on as a private servant.

Murkus's voice boomed down the hall. It had changed. It was not only deeper in tone but it rang with fiery passion and sizzled with authority.

"Slog! Come here at once!"

Slog peeked out from behind the protective rock. Murkus's huge head seemed to fill the hallway top to bottom.

“Yes, yes, my king! My, you look filled with power, M’lord!” Slog approached gingerly. He kept one foot dragging behind to better be prepared to turn and run should another fiery explosion occur.

“We are ready to reveal ourselves to the humans. The sight of my Dark Sun will burn a hole of terror into their hearts forever. Bring the clown to the Fire Tower. I want him to bear witness!”

“On it at once, M’lord!”



The courtyard was filled with the normal sounds of digging and soft chatter. Deep in her hole, little Fancy sipped from a small greasy cup. Her brother was right about one thing—she had to eat and drink as much as she could. She needed to keep her strength up. She would need it for the plan she was forming in her head.

She swallowed the last slug of the lukewarm water and took a quick peek up at the walkway high above the yard. The winger that guarded her section was not in sight. That was good. Surely, he *was* there, just out of sight past the rim of the hole, but not seeing him made her feel better.

She felt calmer. Less fearful. This was a good thing, because her imagination needed a clear, fear-free head to work.

She closed her eyes and brought the object into her mind’s eye.

Fancy had done it before, the first time when she was only four years old. Lying on the warm grass that surrounded the pond near her home, she saw something wondrous in her imagination. An object so beautiful she wanted to hold it in her hands. She

wanted to see it sitting in the sun in front of her eyes instead of behind her closed eyelids.

So, she thought real hard about it. She asked the object to become real. She watched as it dissolved behind her closed eyes, and when she opened them, there it was!

It was a glass bird. Its feathers were made of such fine crystal that only in a little girl's imagination was it possible. No glassmaker in Far-Myst could work such fine detail.

The bird reflected the sunlight and sprayed rainbows on the grass. Fancy laughed and danced and clapped her hands as the bird whistled the most beautiful tune her young ears had ever heard. Then it had flapped its wings and taken to the air, leaving a great trail of colored lights that arched across the land.

She never saw the bird again, but she never forgot it.

Since being taken prisoner, she'd thought of that bird often. She thought about the powerful imagination she had in her head. She was waiting for a time to use it again. Use it to help her to escape from this terrible place she had been brought to.

There was a new image drifting in and out of her mind. It had been for days. She focused on it. It would be big—bigger than any of the wingers and even bigger than Murkus.

Fancy had always been fascinated by the Illuminator her mother had had when she was a Knight of the Twelve. After she died, Fancy would beg her father to light it up so she could see its wondrous colors. Sometimes he would, but most of the time he would not. So, the vision of its dazzling spectrum had to stay inside her imagination.

In her mind, those colored lights were woven into feather-like strips of silken bands gathered into a giant mass that formed, slowly but surely, a gigantic bird. An eagle! A huge eagle that would spread its wings and terrify the wingers, and perhaps Murkus himself, with the power of good Imaginings.

It was becoming crystal-clear in her head. In moments, if she used her abilities right, it would shine before her.



As Pie O'Sky hung in the dark, clearing his mind as best he could of the shadow-light of Murkus that still shone on him, he sensed the spark of Fancy's Imaginings. It was like a stone dropped into a calm lake. The ripples raced from her mind to his.

Pie O'Sky had that special ability. His mind was very sensitive to the Imaginings of children. He was not like any other adult in Far-Myst. Some whispered that he came from another land entirely. He smiled. Fancy was working something special. Something powerful!

A distraction perhaps? So she could escape?

The girl, Pie O'Sky knew, was not aware how difficult that would be. Impossible. She would need his help.

"How powerful she is. Such a young one. Such a clear mind. A great ability to put her fear aside and let the Imaginings work," Pie O'Sky whispered to himself as his own mind began to clear.

He was inspired by her courage. He knew there was only one way her escape would work. She needed his bagoon.

He would call for it. The bagoon would come, lift from its place beneath Everstood. The wingers could

not stop it. Not if he focused. Not if he Imagined they would not even see it.

It was suddenly as if the shadowlight held no power over him. He called to his great bagoon.

"Clown!" cried Slog. "You will come with me to see Lord Murkus in the Tower of Fire!"

Pie O'Sky ignored the winger's orders. He called again to the bagoon. He could see it rising from the space below the grounds of Everstood. There was a tug. Slog released the rope, and Pie O'Sky fell to the ground.

"Up, clown!"

Pie O'Sky got to his feet and smiled at Slog.

"Why do you dare smile?" Slog asked.

"I am very happy to see you, Slog."

"Humph! Move it. And no tricks."

"I would never use trickery on one who could never get the joke!" Pie O'Sky mocked.

"Move! M'lord waits for no one!" Slog cried, giving him a push.

"Indeed."

He did not resist. He walked off with Slog and set his mind again on the bagoon.

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