**Arkin: Guardians of the Light**

*Book 1: The Secret*

Arkin is a lonely, anxious boy who’s always felt like he’s a bit different – but he’s also smart and a gifted artist. It’s been eight months since he lost his mother, and the void she left behind feels like it’s devouring him completely. Everything changes the day a mysterious old janitor at Arkin’s school leaves him with a mysterious riddle. And when he solves that riddle, a new, magical world opens up to him…

*Arkin: Guardians of the Light* is a beautiful portal fantasy where dreams come true, where loneliness and longing save lives, and where the smallest person can cast the longest shadow… if he dares! The series is captivating, beautiful, touching, warm, and artful – all the ingredients of a proper epic!

Book 1 in the *Guardians of the Light* series has a tragic opening; we’re introduced to Arkin, a young boy whose mother has just died, leaving him an orphan. He is sent to live with his paternal grandmother in the town of Elvenfall.

Eight months later, a thirteen-year-old Arkin is living with a grandmother who wants nothing to do with him. He spends most of his time alone – mostly reading and drawing – and has no friends besides a little neighbor girl he walks to school. He struggles with being bullied for being different and can’t seem to think about anything besides his mother; he feels like all the magic in his life is gone without her. At school that day, his project partner doesn’t show up to class because he allegedly fell – and it turns out this happens almost every day, but the teacher brushes it off as clumsiness.

Arkin spends recess alone, but today, he starts talking to an older man who introduces himself as the janitor. They talk about everything from imagination to what’s real versus fake, and just before the janitor heads off, he pats Arkin on the shoulder – seemingly with some kind of magic passing through his hand. The next day, Arkin is back in his usual spot and the janitor stops by again. He asks him why he’s always on his own, and Arkin tells him he doesn’t quite fit in. The janitor tells him he’s like a rare book and calls him by his name. This surprises Arkin since he doesn’t remember introducing himself, but the janitor says he saw it written on his schoolbooks.

Arkin waits in his usual spot every day for the next few days, but the janitor doesn’t return. He asks the headmaster what happened to him… and learns that the school doesn’t actually have a janitor. Feeling alone once again, he returns to his spot – and discovers a message written on the window. It seems to be some kind of riddle, and Arkin is up all night trying to solve it, to no avail.

On his way to school the next day, he sees his project partner, Gerbil, getting beaten up. He considers helping for a brief moment, but thinking there’s nothing he can do to help, he decides just to walk away. He goes to the library as soon as he gets to school, where he is finally able to figure out the riddle: the answer is “a book with no title.” He hesitantly asks the librarian if she knows about such a book, and she tells him the janitor left something for him.

He opens the book when he gets back home and finds it is filled with signatures of great minds and legends such as Da Vinci, Abraham Lincoln, Marie Curie, Michael Jordan, and more. He gets nervous that the book wasn’t actually meant for him and starts obsessing over all the bad things that could happen. There’s yet another riddle in the book that Arkin can’t quite figure out, but otherwise, it’s completely blank. Not quite knowing what else to do, he signs his own name in the book, which suddenly starts doing all kinds of magical things! He wakes up and realizes it was all just a dream but decides to sign his name anyway. In that moment, he starts to understand the riddle’s message: magic is something you yourself choose to create. All he wants is to see his mother again, and he is inspired by all the legendary signatures in the book to start taking more chances and create his “own world.”

Arkin spends time on his visions and dreams for the next few days. He still feels lonely, but he’s started to see the difference between dreams and reality more clearly. On his way to school one day, he sees Gerbil being bullied again on his way to school. He considers helping out, but gets scared – until he remembers his mother’s advice: if you’re afraid of something, you should do it anyway. He tells the bullies not to bother Gerbil again and ends up getting punched. Gerbil helps him up when he comes to and says he’s never been happier. He tells Arkin to pack a bag and meet him in the woods at midnight. That night, Arkin is getting ready to head out, but starts to doubt himself again until he remembers a story his mother told him about bravery.

He sneaks out to the woods and follows Gerbil to a strange sort of clearing. Gerbil tells him he came from another world and that they’ve been following human activity – how people are destroying the earth and treating each other poorly. He says he’s a “Guardian of the Light” who’s decided to save humanity from a “Cleanser” coming to wipe out humans to try to put a stop to the destruction of the earth. Gerbil is on a mission to prove there is goodness in humans and traveled to our planet to find someone with a pure heart. He has until the next full moon to return to his world with proof. Arkin doesn’t believe him, but Gerbil says he’s incredibly important; Arkin is, in fact, the pure of heart that Gerbil wants to take back as proof. He says his special “omnicompass” led him straight to Arkin and that some people have a much greater purpose than they know. “Magic is everywhere,” Gerbil says – which is precisely what Arkin’s mother used to say to him. Gerbil says he wants to take Arkin back to his world as proof of goodness in humanity. Gerbil transforms into an enormous lion with a tremendous magical flourish and says his real name is Melion Layt. He is a Guardian from a place called Hevádrial, and he says Arkin must come with him now…

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*Book 2: Hope*

Book 2 in the series picks up where we left off. When Arkin pets Melion Layt, he’s quite literally “shocked”; the lion doesn’t seem to be any ordinary creature. He tells Arkin he is a so-called “elemental” – a being made of pure energy. Arkin gets on his back, and they start flying towards Hevádriel.

Arkin dozes off, and when he wakes up, they’re standing on top of the “ambulo”, which apparently will allow them to travel anywhere in the omniverse from within Hevádriel. They wander around this strange, beautiful world, encountering several different fantastical creatures. Melion is wearing a peculiar necklace and explains to Arkin that the ambulo is only available at certain times so that outsiders can’t get in. A nefarious being called Nemeroth wants to destroy Hevádriel – but Melion says he’ll explain more about that later as they need to rush to the Council to put a stop to the destruction of humanity.

They enter the “Troll Forest”, a beautiful wood in which everything is lit up with pure energy. They meet some gnomes, who tell them that some kind of rot is killing things in the forest. Someone’s – or something’s – dark magic is getting more and more powerful. They used to be able to fix this kind of rot with “light dust”, but not anymore. They also meet a troll, who shows them an “energy ring” that doesn’t light up anymore – indicating that the destruction of Hevádriel has begun in earnest. Melion and Arkin continue into the forest, where Melion tells Arkin that he underwent a transformation; he used to be flesh and blood just like ordinary living creatures. He tells Arkin he, too, can undergo such a transformation, but first, he has to prove himself worthy. They suddenly hear some loud noises: someone is following them – an enormous troll called Megaroc who says he wants to take Arkin. Melion says he can tell something is wrong with Megaroc’s energy since it’s changed colors. When they ask what Megaroc wants with Arkin, he just says that he is following orders and that if Arkin doesn’t go with him, he’ll kill Melion. Frightened, Arkin says he’ll go – and discretely tells Melion he has a plan as they hug goodbye.

Arkin gets on Megaroc’s back to leave and pulls at a flower growing from the back of his head, which gives Melion the chance to attack, and Megaroc collapses. When Melion asks Arkin how he knew to pull out the flower, he says he guessed it was the source of the negative energy and that something about Megaroc seemed familiar. Melion says Megaroc must have been bewitched – and that Nemeroth must be responsible. They rush onwards to warn the Council about Nemeroth.

As they continue on the journey, Arkin asks more about being “transformed”. Apparently, one must carry out acts of goodness – such as when Arkin stepped in to help in the schoolyard. There are different levels of transformation, including one with unlimited powers. They’ve almost gotten to the Council when a leaf lands on Arkin. Melion says this is a great honor; being marked with a leaf from the tree Mentragem has a unique and special meaning, but Arkin has to look inward in order to find out why he was chosen. At long last, they reach the gates to the Council.

Once inside, they discuss how death is just another stage of life. Melion teaches Arkin about what death *can* mean; something isn’t gone just because you can’t see it.

They meet Kaytel, the leader of the Council, and Melion gives Arkin’s background and tells the story about the bullies in the schoolyard. The Council discuss, but decide it isn’t enough. Humans are a weakness in the omniverse and must be eliminated. Arkin speaks up to defend humanity, but Kaytel dismisses him. When he mentions Megaroc, Kaytel accuses him of lying – but Melion confirms the story. Arkin learns more about Hevádriel’s background. It used to be an idyll, but a seed of evil fell and grew into a tree. A young elf studied it, but she lost all of her “energy” and died after cutting off a thorn. This had never happened before in Hevádriel, and for the first time, the inhabitants started to feel grief and fear. They buried the elf next to the tree, but it used her body to grow stronger. A terrible creature eventually emerged: Nemeroth.