

The Magic Train



Yavuz DEMİRKİRAN

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Oliver was eight years old and small for his age, with curly black hair, freckles across his nose, and a gap-toothed smile. One midnight, a soft chuff-chuff woke him up. He tiptoed to the window in his blue striped pyjamas and red dressing gown. Outside stood a magic train, glowing like a rainbow in the dark. "The midnight adventure is starting!" it seemed to hum.



Oliver pulled on his fluffy slippers, clutched his little silver star pendant, and climbed out onto the lawn. The magic train had carriages of red, gold, and deep green. A tall conductor stepped down, her silver hair in a bun. "Welcome, Oliver," said Madame Lumina, her violet eyes shimmering softly. "The train leaves once every hundred years. Will you come aboard?"



A small squirrel in a green waistcoat popped out of the door. He wore round spectacles and a red neckerchief, and his fluffy tail wiggled. "I'm Pip, the ticket collector!" he chirped, showing a chipped front tooth. "Do you have a ticket?" Oliver shook his head. Pip laughed. "Just joking — tonight your smile is your ticket! Come on, every carriage is a different enchanted world!"



Oliver stepped into the first carriage, and it opened into a kingdom of toys. Toy soldiers marched, dolls danced, and a teddy bear offered Oliver a tiny cup of tea. Pip rode on his shoulder, chatting happily. "Every journey teaches something new," he said wisely. Oliver drank his tea and laughed as a toy drum played a cheerful march.



The next carriage held a jungle of giant flowers, taller than houses. Bright petals opened like doors, and buzzing bees flew by. Pip showed Oliver how to hop across soft green leaves. "Careful of the puddles!" cried Pip, and Oliver tiptoed across a slippery leaf, arms out like a tightrope walker. The flowers smelled like honey and rain.



Then a gentle voice said, "Hello." A small guardian with pale blue skin and short white hair stood among the petals. Tiny wings sparkled on her back, and a crystal circlet glowed on her head. "I am Crystal Keeper Elara," she said shyly. "I watch over the train's engine crystal. It keeps all the enchanted worlds shining."



The third carriage opened into a city in the clouds. Soft white streets floated in the sky, and towers of mist glowed at the edges. Oliver peeked over a cloud and gasped. "It's beautiful!" he whispered. Elara smiled for the first time. "This is my home," she said quietly. "Though I have never had a friend to visit before."



Suddenly the train coughed and slowed down. The lights flickered. Madame Lumina checked her brass pocket watch and frowned. "The engine crystal is missing!" she said. "Without it, the magic fades and the train cannot finish its journey before sunrise." Everyone gathered in the corridor, looking worried. Oliver's heart thumped. He wanted to help.



"Where did it go?" asked Oliver. Elara pointed a shaky finger. "The crystal slipped out during the cloud city. It fell onto a drifting cloud." Pip pulled a small telescope from his satchel. "I see it! It's stuck on a fluffy cloud, glowing far below!" The passengers began to talk at once, each with a different idea. Nobody was listening to anybody.



Madame Lumina raised her hand. "Quiet, please," she said calmly. "A magic train cannot run on shouting. It runs on teamwork." She turned to Oliver. "Every journey teaches us something new. Tonight, the lesson is working together." Oliver nodded. "Let's make a plan," he said. "Everyone can help in their own way!"



Oliver thought hard. "Pip, you're small and quick — you can climb down and reach the crystal. Elara, you're the keeper, so you can catch it safely. The toy soldiers can form a ladder. And the giant flowers can grow a soft net!" The passengers cheered. Everyone hurried to their places. Elara looked nervous but stood up straight. "I can do this," she whispered.



Pip scurried down the toy-soldier ladder, his tail swinging. The giant flowers stretched their petals into a wide, soft net below. The crystal wobbled on the cloud. "I'm slipping!" cried Pip. Elara flew down on her tiny wings, caught the crystal, and landed safely in the flower net. "I did it!" she cried. Everyone clapped and laughed with relief.



Back on the train, Elara held out the glowing crystal. "I know how to repair it," she said. "It needs starlight and a wish from a friend." Oliver cupped the crystal in his hands and wished for everyone to arrive home safely. The crystal blazed bright, and the engine hummed again. Madame Lumina smiled warmly. "You united us all, Oliver," she said.



The sky turned pink and gold. Sunrise was coming! The magic train flew through the dawn, dropping everyone home. Elara hugged Oliver goodbye. "You helped me find my courage," she said. Pip pressed a shiny ticket into Oliver's hand. "For the next midnight adventure," he chirped. Madame Lumina tipped her cap. "Every journey teaches something new."



Oliver waved as the train faded into the morning light. He climbed back through his window and into bed, still smiling. His little silver star pendant glowed softly, warm against his pyjamas. He had seen a kingdom of toys, a jungle of giant flowers, and a city in the clouds. But best of all, he had made three true friends.



When Oliver woke up, the sun was shining and his slippers sat neatly by the bed. He wondered if it had all been a dream — until he found a small golden ticket tucked beneath his pillow. He grinned his gap-toothed smile. Every journey teaches us something new, he thought, holding his star pendant. And maybe, just maybe, there would be another one.