



夜靜  
柔光  
月下故事  
清心而听

# 12 Magical Tales

Ziyun Told Yao

by Victor Kharebov

紫雲  
十二  
物語

# Victor Kharebov

# 12 magical tales. Ziyun Told Yao

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## **Аннотация**

«Twelve magic tales» is a journey into a world where the light of a lantern reveals hidden paths, and silence knows how to speak. The girl Yao and the kind spirit Ziyun undergo twelve trials, where they encounter shadows and stars, time, memory, and hope. Each tale is a step toward understanding oneself and the world, a reminder that even the smallest light can change fate. A book for those who can see the wonder in simple things.

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# **12 magical tales**

# **Ziyun Told Yao**

**Victor Kharebov**

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# FROM THE AUTHOR

*Dedicated to all children who know how to listen to silence, see light in the shadows, and find fairy tales where adults simply walk past.*

They say that when a child lights a lantern, the spirits of light smile. This book was born from such a smile.

It tells the story of a girl named Yao, who one day found a forgotten lantern – and with it, an old and kind spirit named Ziyun, who knows how to tell stories so well that even the night grows brighter.

Each tale in this book is a small journey where fire meets water, shadow meets moonlight, and time meets dreams. And each one quietly reminds us: even the tiniest light, trembling in the wind, can still show the way.

May this book become a lantern for you as well.

# PROLOGUE

## How Yao Found Ziyun's Lantern

It happened on one of those evenings when the sky slowly melts the sun into golden mist, and the air is filled with the scent of fallen leaves and cool night freshness.

The small park near Yao's home was almost empty. Only the old plane trees whispered with their branches, as if quietly deciding what stories they should tell the night.

Yao walked slowly, watching the leaves beneath her feet, when she suddenly noticed a soft glow on a low-hanging branch of a plane tree.

A small lantern was hanging there.

It was round and delicate, as if woven from evening air itself. Light ink strokes stretched across its rice-paper surface: clouds, the moon, and a lonely silver bird. A red silk tassel hung below, gently swaying in the breeze.

Yao stepped closer and saw two symbols carved into the wooden handle – a name.

Ziyun.

«Is that your name?» she asked softly.

The lantern trembled ever so slightly. Then it began to glow from within – as if someone deep inside had smiled.

In that shining moment, glowing lines gathered inside the

lantern, and a deng-ling – a lantern spirit – appeared.



He was almost weightless and transparent, like warm light turned into mist. His movements were slow and flowing, filled with an ancient quiet that had lived through hundreds of years.

The glowing mist gently floated out of the lantern, touched the ground, and began to take shape, as if woven from air itself. The light grew warmer and brighter – and in a moment, a small, kind old man stood before Yao.

He wore traditional Chinese clothing. His face was calm and gentle, and the same smile that had lit the lantern now lived in his eyes.

He folded his hands and bowed politely.

«Greetings, Yao, child of light,» he said in a voice like rustling paper and the soft chime of a tiny bamboo bell. «My name is Ziyun. I have lived in this lantern for a very long time... waiting for someone who could hear my stories.»

For a moment, he fell silent, listening to the whispering leaves of the plane tree, where the lantern still swayed gently above.

«If you wish,» he continued softly, «I will tell you fairy tales. Each tale is a journey into a magical land. Every time, you will have to make a choice and move forward on your own. Otherwise, the story will not find its happy ending, and dreams will remain unfulfilled. Are you ready?»

«Me?» Yao asked in surprise.

Ziyun nodded.

«Yes, Yao, child of light. I will tell you the very best stories.»

Yao felt as if a tiny spark lit up inside her heart – warm, shy, and completely real.

«Of course I want to.»

The lantern glowed softly, and that evening, magic was born. That was how their friendship began.

# TALE ONE. The Star Carnival

Ever since Yao brought home the small round lantern with the name Ziyun, her room seemed wrapped in gentle evening warmth. At night, the lantern always shone a little brighter than during the day, and sometimes it felt as if its light had a life of its own – breathing softly, trembling slightly, or spreading quietly like mist over water.

Yao would place the lantern beside her bed or on the low table near the window, and the light inside would turn into a tiny sun, hidden within paper walls. At times, it even seemed to her that the lantern was listening to her thoughts.

But one evening, the light came alive in a different way – deeper, fuller. The lantern flared with a silver glow, and Ziyun stepped out of the light, slowly taking on his familiar form.

«Yao,» he said with a gentle bow, «tonight I want to show you a story that was heard long ago. It was born on the night when the stars decided to dance.»

Yao smiled and made herself comfortable among the pillows. «I'm ready to listen.»

«Then keep your heart open,» Ziyun replied softly. «Because now we are going to a place where even the night wind stands still, afraid to disturb the glow of the sky.»

The lantern filled with golden lines of light, and the ceiling turned into a night sky. Ziyun raised his transparent hand, and

the lantern's glow grew warm and deep, as if the endless sky had opened inside it.

The room faded away, replaced by a silver space. Everything around them looked like silky fabric embroidered with golden points.

«Long ago,» Ziyun continued, «the stars lived each on their own. They shone, but they did not speak to one another. Each had its own story, its own sadness, its own joy. And the worlds beneath them lived on, never knowing that the stars dreamed of being closer.»

At the very center of the sky lived a small star named Lingxiao, which means *Heavenly Music*. She was younger than the others, and her light was soft and barely noticeable. The other stars shone brighter and higher, while Lingxiao hovered low, as if afraid to rise too far.

But it was she who one day heard something no one else could hear – a thin sound, like the breath of the Universe itself. It was like music: gentle, almost invisible, yet so warm that it could melt the heart of any star.

«What is that?» Lingxiao asked the nearest star.

«Silence,» said one. «An echo,» said another. «Emptiness,» added a third.

But Lingxiao knew the truth. No – it was the music of the farthest star.

And she dared to do what no star had ever done before. She sent her light far into the sky, calling out to everyone.

Her ray was small and weak, but it trembled with such honesty that the heavens could not ignore it. Soon, one by one, the stars began to turn toward her – first the closest ones, then those living far beyond the blue nebulae.



Ziyun spread his arms, and around Yao lit up dozens, hundreds, thousands of tiny lights. They moved as if dancing.

«So began the first Star Carnival,» Ziyun said.

At first, the stars simply moved closer to one another. They had never been so near before, and many of them felt shy.

But Lingxiao, the little star with the soft, almost living light, began to sing quietly. She sang of how vast the night was, and how light grows when it is shared. Her voice was simple, like a child's breath, yet it filled the sky with warmth.

Yao listened, hardly daring to breathe.

«And what happened next?» she whispered.

«Then they began to dance,» Ziyun smiled. «But not the way people dance. Their dance was a movement of light.»

Each star stretched out a ray and joined it with another. At first timidly, then with growing confidence. A web of glowing lines spread across the sky, turning into a vast shining map that embraced the heavens.

«That's how constellations were born!» Yao guessed.

«Yes,» Ziyun nodded. «When the light of one heart joins the light of another, a pattern is born. In the sky, they are constellations. In human life, they are friendship.»

The stars spun and changed shape. Some became lines, others arcs, and others small lights guarding the space between them. They created patterns, and each pattern lived with its own melody.

«And Lingxiao?» Yao asked softly. «Did she dance too?»

Ziyun smiled.

«She stood at the center. Her light was weaker than the others, yet it was the one that brought them together. All the stars looked to her, because she could hear the music of the night – the very music no one else could hear.»

Yao thought for a moment. «So... you don't have to be the brightest to be important?»

«Of course not,» Ziyun said gently. «Sometimes the quietest light shows the way better than all the rest.»

But soon something strange happened. When the carnival reached its highest point, Darkness felt lonely. It watched the stars growing closer and did not understand why they were so happy. Darkness had never known how to dance.

So it moved closer. But the stars grew afraid: Darkness was vast, heavy, and shapeless. One by one, they began to dim their light.

Lingxiao trembled. If the stars went out, the carnival would vanish forever.

She stepped forward.

«Do not be afraid,» she said softly. «Darkness is not an enemy. It simply wants to be near – just like we do.»

The stars did not know what to do. But Lingxiao began to sing again, and her song was so gentle that, for the first time in its existence, Darkness felt... warmth.

It did not know such a thing was possible.

And then Darkness did something no one expected. It gently embraced the light. Not swallowed it – embraced it.

Ziyun waved his hand, and an image of night appeared in the room: a deep stillness where Light and Darkness wove together in a single breath.

«That is why night is so beautiful,» he said. «Because Light and Darkness learned to dance together.»

Yao watched in awe. «And what happened to Lingxiao?»

«She rose higher than all the stars,» Ziyun replied. «And became the one that lights up first in the evening sky – to remind everyone that even the smallest light can gather the whole world into one dance.»

When the tale ended, the lantern's glow softened.

Yao was silent for a long time.

«Ziyun,» she said at last, «do you think I will ever be able to hear the music of the sky?»

Ziyun tilted his head, and his light looked like a smile.

«You already hear it, Yao. Otherwise, you would never have found my lantern.»

The girl pressed the lantern to her chest, afraid to let it go. Outside the window, the stars were shining. And it seemed to her that one of them – the smallest one – had just winked at her.

## TALE TWO. The Moon Mill

That evening, the moon rose especially high. It was round, as if carved from pure milky jade, and its light fell into Yao's room so gently that it seemed the night itself had become transparent. Ziyun's lantern stood near the window, and its glow blended with the moonlight, like two breaths joining in a quiet conversation.

Yao sat on her cushions, watching the moon reflections on the wall, when the lantern trembled. A silvery spirit stepped out of the light. His cloud-like form slowly stretched, and moonlight sparkled in his eyes. Soon, the familiar kind old man stood before her.

«Yao,» he said, «tonight the moon is especially old and wise. On nights like this, she loves to tell her secret stories. I will take you to a place no one has visited for many centuries – to the Moon Mill.»

«A mill?» Yao repeated. «On the moon?»

«The mill does not stand on the moon,» Ziyun smiled. «It stands between the moon and the earth – on the path where dreams travel. That is where moonlight turns into golden flour, from which heavenly spirits make human dreams.»

Yao's eyes lit up. «Ziyun, please tell me everything!»

«Then listen carefully,» Ziyun replied. «We are setting off.»

The lantern's light slowly widened and became a silvery circle. Yao's room faded away, replaced by a soft, misty space that

looked like a bridge made of clouds. Streams of light flowed along it – golden, milky white, pale blue, with a hint of violet at the edges.

Standing beside Ziyun, Yao saw it for the first time – the Road of Dreams.

«This is the path along which human dreams travel,» Ziyun said as he led her forward. «But every dream has a source. And that source is the Moon Mill.»

Soon, a structure appeared in the mist. It looked like a huge glowing lotus flower, opened toward the night sky. Its petal-shaped sections shimmered with silver light, and inside them turned large white wheels, like circles of the moon itself.

The wheels moved silently, casting only soft shadows upon the sleeping earth below. They ground the flowing light and turned it into fine golden dust, like flour.

«How beautiful...» Yao whispered.

«This is the Moon Mill,» Ziyun said. «It was built by the moon goddess Chang'e herself, when people first began to dream. Ever since then, moonlight has traveled across the world, becoming dreams.»

But that night, the mill was working too slowly. The wheels barely turned, and the golden flour fell only in rare, shimmering grains.

Yao noticed this at once. «Is it broken?»

Ziyun sighed. «Yes. For many nights now, the Moon Mill has barely been breathing. Because of this, people's dreams have

grown shorter – and sometimes disappear completely. Some no longer see bright colors. Some forget the faces they used to dream of. And some simply sleep without dreaming at all.»



«Why did it break?» Yao asked.

«Because the Moon Flour has vanished – the kind that is born only when people carry quiet joy in their hearts.»

«Quiet joy?» Yao was surprised. «Can joy really be quiet?»

«The truest joy,» Ziyun answered, «is like a gentle smile inside the heart. It does not shout. It does not demand. It does not argue. It is like a small flame that keeps you warm in any winter. That is the joy the Moon Mill needs.»

Yao lowered her head. «So people stopped feeling joy?»

«They began to hurry,» Ziyun said softly. «When people rush, quiet joy does not have time to be born.»

They walked closer. Beside the wheels stood a figure – a celestial doll dressed in long white robes, her face hidden behind a veil. She moved so slowly that she seemed part of the ancient mechanism itself.

«This is the Moon Weaver,» Ziyun explained. «She watches over the mill and gathers the light to create dreams.»

Yao stepped nearer. «My lady... the mill is almost stopped. Is there anything we can do?»

The Moon Weaver lifted her head. Her voice was as soft as the rustle of pearly paper.

«There is. But we are missing a lost thread – one that people once had. A small yet precious thread: quiet joy.»

«Can't it be found somewhere else?» Yao asked.

«Quiet joy is born only in the human heart,» the Weaver

replied. «No one can create it by force.»

Yao thought deeply. Her gaze fell on her lantern. It glowed gently, as if listening.

«Ziyun... can joy be given as a gift?»

«It can,» he answered. «If it is real.»

«Then we will find it!» Yao said firmly.

«And where shall we look for joy?» Ziyun asked as they stood on the misty path.

Yao did not answer at once. She listened – not to sounds, but to herself. She thought of the sweet fruit her grandmother shared with her. Then of how her brother taught her to hold a kite. Then of the warm touch of her mother's hand.

Suddenly, a soft glow appeared in her chest.

«Quiet joy is when the heart remembers warmth,» Yao said.

«Even if it is night. Even if no one sees.»

«You are wiser than many adults, Yao,» Ziyun said gently.

Yao closed her eyes, and it felt as though rays of light touched the deepest part of her soul. They were warm and light, like morning mist. Her heart filled with calm.

Ziyun's lantern flared with golden light. The spirit took Yao's hand.

«You have found what we need. Now – let us return.»

When they reached the Moon Mill again, the golden dust had almost vanished. The Weaver stood motionless. The wheels creaked so softly, as if afraid to stop.

Yao raised her lantern.

A gentle wave of light flowed from it – warm, like a smile in a dream. The light touched the wheels, the walls, the Weaver’s hands – and at that very moment, everything came alive. The mill wheels began to spin faster. Streams of light filled the space, turning once more into golden flour.

The Weaver bowed deeply.

«You have given people what they took away from themselves. You have saved their dreams.»

Yao smiled – shy, but happy. «So... people will be able to dream again?»

«Yes,» the Weaver replied. «As long as quiet joy lives, dreams will live too.»

When Yao returned to her room, the lantern stood in its usual place. Ziyun slowly rose from the light and sat beside her, as if he too was tired and wished to rest.

«You did very well,» he said. «Even the Moon Weaver was surprised by your heart.»

«Ziyun...» Yao looked at the lantern. «What if one day people stop feeling joy again?»

«Then,» Ziyun answered, «someone will remember this night. Perhaps you. Or perhaps another girl, with the same light.»

Yao held the lantern close. Outside the window, the moon drifted quietly across the sky. And it seemed that the whole night was breathing evenly once more – like a mill that had been brought back to life.

## TALE THREE. The Underwater Crown of Dreams

That evening, when the sky had grown deep and dark like ink, Yao sat beside her round lantern and listened to the rain tapping softly against the window. Drops slid down the glass in thin streams, each one like a tiny silver snake. The night was calm, and the air was filled with fresh dampness – the breath of rain mixed with the scent of grass and rising earth, as if the night itself had opened a hidden door into a distant, unseen world.

The lantern came alive, and Ziyun stepped out of the light, as if he had always been there. Tonight, his glow carried a faint bluish shade, like the shimmer of sea water at dawn.

«Do you hear it?» he asked.

«The rain?» Yao guessed.

«Not only the rain,» Ziyun replied. «Tonight, the dreams of water are calling us. And if you wish, Yao, I will show you a land where the deepest human dreams are born.»

Yao's eyes widened. «A land of water? Do water and dreams really exist together?»

«Everyone has dreams,» Ziyun smiled. «Even water, even wind, even stone. But the gentlest dreams belong to water. They give people dreams that feel like journeys, like flight, like mystery.»

The lantern's light began to flow like liquid gold, spreading across the floor. The room vanished. The air around Yao turned cool and moist, and a quiet sound filled her ears – as if the sea itself were breathing in the dark.

Before them lay an underwater kingdom. But it was not a real sea – it was a sea of dreams. Its waters glowed from within, tinted with turquoise and moonlight. There were no fish, but glowing threads drifted through the water, like forgotten thoughts. They slowly rose upward, as if longing to become clouds.

«This is the Ocean of Dreams,» Ziyun said. «Here, people's quietest wishes are born.»

«And who guards it?» Yao asked.

«The Mistress of Water,» Ziyun replied. «But no one has seen her for a very long time.»

As they walked along a shining path made of moonlit bubbles, Yao noticed that the light around them was growing dimmer. The ocean floor, once gleaming like emerald, shimmered more and more faintly.

«Ziyun... something feels wrong,» she whispered.

The spirit nodded. «Yes. The flow of dreams has weakened. And the reason is that the Underwater Crown of Dreams has disappeared.»

«A crown?» Yao asked in surprise.

«Yes. It is an ancient jade circlet, created by the old water spirits. It holds the entire Ocean together, gathering human dreams into one gentle breath. But someone has stolen it, and

now the dreams of water are fading, like mist under the sun.»



Yao felt her heart tremble. «Can we find it?»

«Do you see that path?» Ziyun pointed to a winding stream of glowing light. «It will lead us to the one who holds the crown.»

They moved through an underwater tunnel made of transparent light. Tiny, slow-moving sparks drifted around them – firefly-dreams. They gathered close to Yao, as if they recognized her.

«Why are they drawn to me?» she asked.

«You have a kind heart,» Ziyun said. «And a pure soul. Dreams are always drawn to such people.»

Soon they entered a vast dome – a hall where the water stood still, like glass. At its center floated a figure: a beautiful woman with long hair like seaweed, spreading through the water like dark ribbons. Her eyes were closed.

«Is that the Mistress of Water?» Yao whispered.

«Yes,» Ziyun answered. «She fell into a deep sleep when the crown vanished. Her strength held the Ocean together, but now everything is weakening.»

They came closer, and Yao saw that there truly was no crown upon the woman's head – only a pale glow, like the memory of it.

Suddenly, a large dark shape rose from the depths. It was a shadow spirit, shaped like a dragon made of ink. Tall and flowing, with eyes glowing green, it held the jade circlet in its claws. The crown shone with a quiet, ancient light.

«That is the one who stole the crown,» Ziyun said softly. «This

is Meiyin, the Spirit of Eclipses. He is not evil, but deeply lonely. He believes that if he gathers all dreams for himself, people will stop suffering. He wants to give them silence... eternal silence.»

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