Dedicated to the loving memory of Felicia Ore. For Mummy who always believed in me, supported me and inspired me. Thank you for everything.

– D. T.

To Katy, my wife, my best friend, my everything.

– A. D-B.

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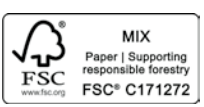

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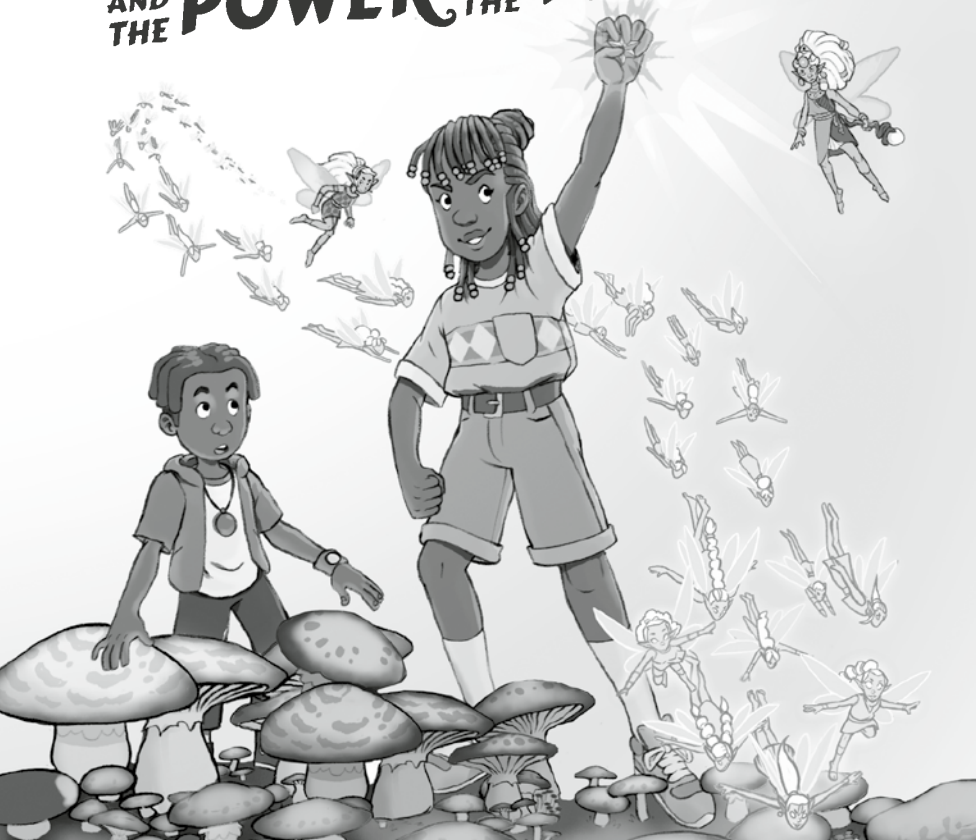
YOMI AND THE POWER OF THE YUMBOES





CHAPTER 1

THE ALL-SEEING EYE

The luminous green eye of the Beast never took its gaze off Yomi. Its deep intensity captured her and refused to let her go. She stared it down in some sort of competition. Did she dare risk it? She'd gotten away with it before, so why not once more...

Yomi gave in, unable to deny its allure, and picked up the Beast Atlas, the ultimate guide to Nkara, the powerful Beasts that roamed the African continent. She swung its metal cover open, ready to dive into its secrets. Trying to keep watch on the door too, she soon got lost in the book. Every time she read its pages, she felt the world expand a little more around her.

On the plane to Senegal, before landing in the

city of Thiès, she had started reading through the Beast Atlas. Now, once again braving the book's knowing, all-seeing green eye, Yomi could almost hear its warning to tread carefully if she went any further. She couldn't help but wonder if the Beast Atlas was alive. She could have sworn the eye's pupil moved back and forth as if watching her.

"Whoaaaaa!" Kayode clapped his hands, flipping through the most recent volume of Arabella Carter.

"You're supposed to be working, not reading!" Yomi pointed at him as he tried to hide behind the comic but then he realized what she was doing.

"Well, you're reading the atlas!" Kayode argued.

"Fine, I'll stop. But we need to get back to the job Uncle Olu told us to do. We need to be more serious, Kay. We are members of the Sacred Beast League now."

Their uncle was a key member of the S.B.L., and worked as a Nkara researcher at the Mikosi Institute. Since joining the League they had learned about its other departments, including the Investigation Division, Beast Consultancy and

Management, Science Division, and Artifact and Relic Operations, but there were more that Yomi was keen to find out about.

"We're on this trip to help Uncle with his research, which means organizing his notes before he gets back." Yomi held up the files. They had been in Senegal for two weeks now and the notes kept getting longer.

"But I've just got to the good bit. Arabella is about to enter a dormant volcano in Costa Rica," Kayode groaned, using a bookmark to save his place.



He picked up an enormous pile of papers, which had a mixture of vivid-coloured rocks on the front. “There are so many!” Kayode shuffled through the jumbled pages, putting them into order. “I don’t know how Uncle is going to put all of this into one presentation.”

“Uncle is the smartest guy we know, he’ll figure it out,” Yomi answered before sighing. “I thought now we’re members, we would get to go to cool places and see loads of amazing things. All we’ve done is sort through paperwork! We haven’t done anything. No adventures. No new Nkara,” she complained.

“At least we haven’t been eaten,” Kayode chimed in. “I’m happy to be a S.B.L. member but I do *not* want to get swallowed whole.”

Yomi crossed her arms. “If we get eaten, you have permission to be angry.”

“It will be your fault if we do get eaten so I’ll remember you said that!”

“At least nothing can eat us in here.” Yomi waved around them. “This safe room is uncrackable.” She repeated Uncle Olu’s words from earlier, looking

at the four walls which contained several locked boxes built into them. “Maybe if we finish the work quickly, we’ll be able to explore!”

“Moonstones and instruments come up a *million* times,” Kayode read from the pages, ignoring her.

“Uncle wants to find out more about them both and so do I! All it says in the atlas is that some Nkara know how to use these instruments for *special purposes*.” It was possible that Yomi hadn’t gotten to the section on Yinza – moon magic – yet. It was like the atlas expanded every time she read it.

Yomi looked at the pages spread out in front of her. She categorized the notes by country: Lesotho, Zambia, Senegal, Chad, South Africa. Reading the notes was giving her a headache – their uncle’s handwriting looked like he was trying to outrun a speeding roller coaster!

The next pile of notes she had to organize were stamped with the word “instrument” in dark purple print. Yomi sorted through page after page of different instruments such as weapons, gemstones, books, clothing and other equipment.

“What does all of this mean?” she questioned. She turned back to the notes for Senegal and flicked through them until she stumbled on a page covered with illustrations.

“Ils sont si beaux!” Yomi’s eyes widened, almost dropping the page.

“What are beautiful?” Kayode poked his head up from what he was reading.

“The Yumboes.” Yomi held out the sketch to Kayode who came closer to inspect. “Look at them, Kay.” A small group of fairies were flying down from the trees. Each one shone with the brightness of diamonds. Their skin was the colour of pearls, their hair a radiant silver colour that reached down past their waists.



“What does the Beast Atlas say about Yumboes?” Kay asked.

“I don’t think I’ve got that far. Let me find the page.” Yomi opened up the metallic book once again, dashing through the pages until she found them.

YUMBOES



Type of Nkara: Sacred
Category of Nkara: Spirit

The most powerful of African fairies, they have a deep connection with Yinza (moon magic) and therefore a bond with the moon itself. They like to live in paps, a special type of hill, which provide protection. Yumboes love food and throw enormous feasts for all different types of occasions. They tend to make appearances only at night. Skilful dancers and musicians, they are to be treated with caution despite their small size. All Yumboes live together in one single large colony ruled over by a powerful queen. Their current queen is Queen Aida who is reported to possess a sacred moonstone whose true power is unknown. The current whereabouts of the Yumboes is also unknown, however, the last location of the Yumboes was reported to be Goree Island in Senegal.







“Goree Island... Isn’t that where Uncle went yesterday?” Kayode remembered.

“Where we weren’t allowed to go,” Yomi huffed, annoyed with their uncle’s insistence they stay in Thiès.

“It’s probably for the best – you would have only gotten us into some kind of trouble,” Kayode replied.

“No, I wouldn’t—” Yomi stopped herself, remembering what had happened in The Gambia when they rescued Ninki Nanka, the Dragon King. “I just want to see a Yumboe.”

“Well, that’s not happening, no one knows where they are! And they’re powerful – check out the Yumboe queen lifting up that tree in one of those pictures.” Kayode pointed back to the atlas.

“Fairies must be stronger than they look,” Yomi theorized. She was intrigued by these creatures. “I am going to find one, Kay. I’m going to make it happen, one way or another.”