

The Secret of the Cloud Ship

Alexa



Every day in our blocky, colorful town, the bells chime as 1 PM approaches. My best friend Clair and I join the crowd of citizens walking toward the central park, our footsteps echoing in unison.



We stand in the middle of the lush green park, looking up at a perfectly round, fluffy white cloud that never moves. Every child knows the rule: once you turn five, you must participate, or the ground will open up and take you away.



A booming, ethereal voice echoes from the sky, saying the familiar words, I'm in the clouds. The townspeople bow their heads slightly, preparing for the ritual that keeps them safe from the darkness below.



Usually, Clair is the most excited one, her eyes bright and her voice loud. But today, she stands perfectly still, her hands trembling as she stares up at the sky with a look of sudden realization.



The crowd responds with a synchronized chant, Yes, dear Nenya, but I notice Clair's lips aren't moving. I nudge her arm, terrified that the ground will split open beneath her feet right then and there.



This is wrong, Clair whispers so quietly I can barely hear her over the chanting of the adults. I ask her what she is talking about, but she just shakes her head, her gaze fixed on the white shape drifting above us.



It is time for the final response, the most important words of the day. As the town shouts Thank you dear Nenya, Clair steps forward and screams at the top of her lungs, No, Mom!



A heavy silence falls over the park, and I grab Clair's hand, waiting for the floor to vanish into the lightless underground. To my surprise, the ground remains solid, and instead, a mechanical whirring sound comes from the sky.



A hidden door slides open on the side of the cloud, revealing that it isn't a cloud at all, but a massive, disguised floating ship. A woman who looks exactly like Clair steps out onto a platform, looking down at us with a sigh.



Clair's mother explains that she has been the one behind the voice and the lever all along, controlling the town from her ship. The mystery of Nenya is finally over, and for the first time, we don't have to say thank you to the sky.