

The Path To Mortalia

She ran through the bush, the wind biting her cheeks like a bear biting into a meaty fish. A map was tightly clutched in her right hand and her knees were grazed badly from days of traveling. Harper looked down at her map.

"5 minutes", she muttered to herself. Finally she was there. There was a small path with trees caving in on it so that it was almost impossible to pass through but just the right size for an undersized 10 year old girl. This should be it.
The path to Mortalia.

She walked slowly forward, the fog hanging over the path consuming her body. The fog spread sideways as she walked through, clearing a path but closing up behind her trapping her like a caged tiger. After what felt like hours she came to a dead end. In this place there was a large brass gong and in front of it was a small envelope. She picked up the envelope and it was just the right size for her tiny hands. She carefully opened the tiny flap and pulled the note out and read aloud "Who wishes to find the place their hearts desire must hit the gong with the mallet of fire." She looked up and saw a large pure gold mallet lying on the dusty, dirt ground. She picked it up and swung it at the gong with all the strength she could muster. It let out a terribly loud banging sound. Harper clenched her ears protecting them from the deafening sound but it was too late the hypnotic sound had already run into her system encaging itself in the small girl. Her eyes went heavy and closed, her knees buckled and she fell to the floor, falling into a deep sleep.

She woke up with her head throbbing terribly. She was in a vast field filled with an ocean of bright yellow pansies. "Where am I?" she said to herself "Mortality" replied a voice behind her "She jumped back and saw a creature beside her. It was a foggy white and had enormous dragon-like wings that sparkled in the rays of sunshine. Its body was shaped like a quokka with the tail of a tiger. "What, what are you?" stuttered Harper. "My names Cloudy and I'm a squibble"
"Ah what"



"a squibble." Cloudy said. Suddenly a large horn sound blared, ringing endlessly in Harper's ears like echoes. Cloudy perked up his eyes searching their perimeter. He reached for the snakeskin pouch in his pocket and withdrew a large metal device. It was smooth and silver with wirey cogs on the side and a small tube at the top of it. "Take it" he said "You'll need it" and with that he darted off until he was nothing but a speck of dust in the distance. Harper decided to study the strange instrument and she noticed a large red button on the side.

Harper pressed the button and the machine started rattling and making big popping noises like a popcorn machine. She let go of it and dropped it on the floor and suddenly there was a large CHUFF and the machine started producing clouds. Harper stooped over the machine and suddenly a big pink cloud bound itself around her and sent her flying into the sky, from here she could see everything. In A nearby stream there were fawns dancing beside it and a herd Of elegant moon white unicorn galloping gracefully

in a field of poppies. It was so beautiful it was as if she were dreaming. Suddenly one of the clouds shifted into a proud lime green dragon magnificently stalking the sky.

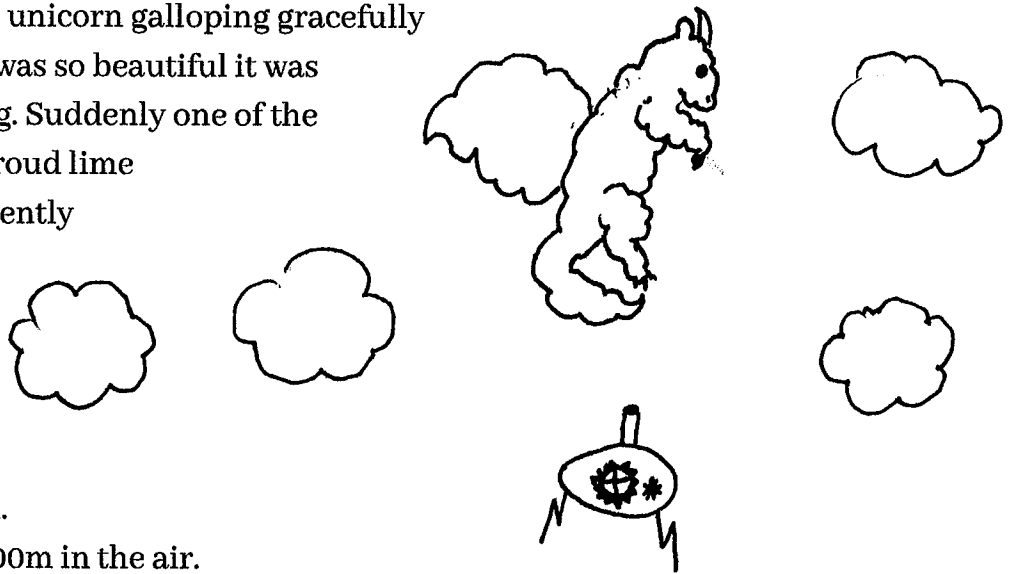
Suddenly it beckoned towards her to jump on it's back. She looked down.

She was no less than 100m in the air.

She couldn't do it. As though it couldn't

bare another second of waiting the cloud she sat on threw her into the air

And aboard the dragons back. The dragon was soft and fluffy like a warm blanket that had been in front of an open fire for a while. Below them she saw a field of big blobby domes. The dragon that she'd named Clover turned over and she fell off plummeting to the ground and found the domes to be soft and squishy. The dome she landed on sent her flying into the air and she then landed on a yellow one then



a bright pink than fuschia, green, purple, magenta and blue. The last sent her flying and onto the dragons back and then she spotted something. A rainbow "onwards till the rainbow" she said. And not after long she nestled into the dragon's back and fell asleep

She woke up. She was no longer in Mortalia. She was in the dusty passageway leading to the gong. But the gong was gone. She would never see her favourite place again. But she felt something cool and metallic in her hands with lumpy, wiry bits on the side. It was the cloud machine. The last piece she had of the place where her dreams came true.

