

## **CHAPTER 4 - THE ISLAND IN THE SKY**

They clung tightly to the ropes, but the breeze was with them, so after a few moments, when they became accustomed to the motion, they began to enjoy the ride immensely.

Larger and larger grew the island, and although they were headed directly toward it, the umbrella seemed to rise higher and higher into the air the farther it traveled. They had not journeyed ten minutes before they came directly over the island, and looking down they could see the forests and meadows far below them. But the umbrella kept up its rapid flight.

"Hold on, there!" cried Cap'n Bill. "If it ain't keerful, the ol' thing will pass by the island."

"I--I'm sure it has passed it already," exclaimed Trot. "What's wrong, Button-Bright? Why don't we stop?"

Button-Bright seemed astonished, too.

"Perhaps I didn't say it right," he replied after a moment's thought. Then, looking up at the umbrella, he repeated distinctly, "I said I wanted to go to Sky Island! Sky Island, don't you understand?"

The umbrella swept steadily along, getting farther and farther out to sea and rising higher and higher toward the clouds.

"Mack'rel an' herrings!" roared Cap'n Bill, now really frightened. "Ain't there any blamed way at all to stop her?"

"None that I know of," said Button-Bright anxiously.

"P'raps," said Trot after a pause during which she tried hard to think. "P'raps 'Sky Island' isn't the name of that island at all."

"Why, we know very well it ain't the name of it," yelled Cap'n Bill from below. "We jus' called it that 'cause its right name is too hard to say."

"That's the whole trouble, then," returned Button-Bright. "Somewhere in the world there's a real Sky Island, and having told the Magic Umbrella to take us there, it's going to do so."

"Well, I declare!" gasped the sailorman. "Can't we land anywhere else?"

"Not unless you care to tumble off," said the boy. "I've told the umbrella to take us to Sky Island, so that's the exact place we're bound for. I'm sorry. It was your fault for giving me the wrong name."

They glided along in silence for a while. The island was now far behind them, growing small in the distance. "Where do you s'pose the real Sky Island can be?" asked Trot presently.

"We can't tell anything about it until we get there," Button-Bright answered. "Seems to me I've heard of the Isle of Skye, but that's over in Great Britain, somewhere the other side of the world, and it isn't Sky Island, anyhow."

"This miser'ble ol' umbrel is too pertic'ler," growled Cap'n Bill. "It won't let you change your mind an' it goes ezzac'ly where you say."

"If it didn't," said Trot, "we'd never know where we were going."

"We don't know now," said the sailor. "One thing's certain, folks: we're gett'n' a long way from home."

"And see how the clouds are rolling just above us," remarked the boy, who was almost as uneasy as Cap'n Bill.

"We're in the sky, all right," said the girl. "If there could be an island up here among the clouds, I'd think it was there we're going."

"Couldn't there be one?" asked Button-Bright. "Why couldn't there be an island in the sky that would be named Sky Island?"

"Of course not!" declared Cap'n Bill. "There wouldn't be anything to hold it up, you know."

"What's holding US up?" asked Trot.

"Magic, I guess."

"Then magic might hold an island in the sky. Whee-e-e! What a black cloud!"

It grew suddenly dark, for they were rushing through a thick cloud that rolled around them in billows. Trot felt little drops of moisture striking her face and knew her clothing was getting damp and soggy. "It's a rain cloud," she said to Button-Bright, "and it seems like an awful big one, 'cause it takes so long for us to pass through it."

The umbrella never hesitated a moment. It made a path through the length of the heavy, black cloud at last and carried its passengers into a misty, billowy bank of white, which seemed as soft and fleecy as a lady's veil. When this broke away, they caught sight of a majestic rainbow spanning the heavens, its gorgeous colors glinting brightly in the sun, its arch perfect and unbroken from end to end. But it was only a glimpse they had, for quickly they dove into another bank of clouds and the rainbow disappeared.

Here the clouds were not black, nor heavy, but they assumed queer shapes. Some were like huge ships, some like forest trees, and others piled themselves into semblances of turreted castles and wonderful palaces. The shapes shifted here and there continually, and the voyagers began to be bewildered by the phantoms.

"Seems to me we're goin' down," called Trot.

"Down where?" asked Cap'n Bill.

"Who knows?" said Button-Bright. "But we're dropping, all right."

It was a gradual descent. The Magic Umbrella maintained a uniform speed, swift and unfaltering, but its path through the heavens was now in the shape of an arch, as a flying arrow falls. The queer shapes of the clouds continued for some time, and once or twice Trot was a little frightened when a monstrous airy dragon passed beside them or a huge giant stood upon a peak of cloud and stared savagely at the intruders into his domain. But none of these fanciful, vapory creatures seemed inclined to molest them or to interfere with their flight, and after a while the umbrella dipped below this queer cloudland and entered a clear space where the sky was of an exquisite blue color.

"Oh, look!" called Cap'n Bill. "There's land below us." The boy and girl leaned over and tried to see this land, but Cap'n Bill was also leaning over, and his big body hid all that was just underneath them.

"Is it an island?" asked Trot solemnly.

"Seems so," the old sailor replied. "The blue is around all one side of it an' a pink sunshine around the other side. There's a big cloud just over the middle, but I guess it's surely an island, Trot, an' bein' as it's in the sky, it's likely to be Sky Island."

"Then we shall land there," said the boy confidently. "I knew the umbrella wouldn't make a mistake."

Presently Cap'n Bill spoke again. "We're goin' down on the blue part o' the island," he said. "I can see trees an' ponds an' houses. Hold tight, Trot! Hold tight, Butt'n-Bright! I'm afeared we're a'goin' to bump somethin'!"

They were certainly dropping very quickly now, and the rush of air made their eyes fill with water so that they could not see much below them. Suddenly, the basket that was dangling below Cap'n Bill struck something with a loud thud, and this was followed by a yell of anger. Cap'n Bill sat flat upon the ground, landing with such a force that jarred the sailorman and made his teeth click together, while down upon him came the seat that Trot and Button-Bright occupied, so that for a moment they were all tangled up.

"Get off from me! Get off from my feet, I say!" cried an excited voice. "What in the Sky do you mean by sitting on my feet? Get off! Get off at once!"