

How to Read the Clouds

On the end of a bustling street is a large secondary school where a library sits on the third floor. Only the sound of rustling paper can be heard and the smell of age old books. Rivers of light cascade through the rectangular windows, flooding the room with the light of day. In the corner, a dull grey water dispenser freshly full of water awaits its next customer. The water was a swishing whirlpool. On the many shelves are the thousands of books that has ever been written except one book is missing. Five hundred and three years ago today, somebody hid its record card behind a heater and the book quietly faded away. The book was called 'How to Read the Clouds.'

At night, when the school caretaker has fallen asleep in the office, the rows of books come to life. Human shaped shadows appear in the wooden framed windows; the scent of freshly baked apple crumble flies between the pages; the rustle of dead leaves crackle from behind a shelf of nature books. In a nearby house, a girl named Evie lived. Evie was the only one who knew about the book. One night, Evie's puppy, escaped through a hole in their fence and leapt through an open window and into her school library, chasing a large, yellow butterfly. Climbing through the window, Evie immediately shrank. Finding her dog under the heater, Evie pulled out an aged record card, but when she looked for the book there was nothing there. Evie decided there and then that no matter what, she would find that book. She turned to her puppy. "If I find this book, I will know everything, past, present and future."

For one and half years, Evie and her puppy searched for the book. They searched cities largest café pulling out drawers and opening cupboards; Evie passed hundreds of people dressed in leotards and queuing to get a place in the best gyms; they climbed mountains as tall as Everest. But it was always the same, everyone they met weren't interested in the clouds, they were all looking down. They didn't know about the book. One night, Evie found four young women dancing around a fire, as calm as a swaying tree. When Evie came close, they stopped and turned to talk to her. "Sit?" said the first women.

"Want a cuppa?" asked the second.

"You've came for this." The third held out a leather bound book.

If you read this book," Started the forth

"Shush." The third warned.

"What." Evie was confused.

"Follow me." And Evie followed the woman into a grey door.

Through the grey door, Evie saw a sunlit garden full of buzzing bees, blooming sunflowers and autumn trees. The woman carefully walked down the path, Evie rushing to catch up with her. When, she finally caught up, she asked the women "where are you taking me?"

"To meet the Grey Swirl" the women replied. Eventually, they arrived at a grand room, stuffed with clouds.

The Grey Swirl floated in the centre of the room, two feet above the ground. Her hair was as free as the river Severn; her gown curled like sheep fur; her face bore a sad, lonely expression. "Please, you can't read the book. It's dangerous. "I am the only person who has read the book and not turned into a full cloud. I thought, if I could read the clouds, I would be the smartest person in the world. I could avoid my coming mistakes and cure those unwell because I knew how, but all that happened was my family abandoned me, my friends were afraid of me and I became what I am today. If you read this book, the same will happen to you."

Evie sighed as she watched the birds fly to tree to tree. "I won't read the book," she said bluntly.

"You are wiser than I" The Grey Swirl smiled faintly. "Come let me take you home."