

Yawn. Another day down here and I was going to die. Crawling out of the bed of wilting pine needles and stretching, I glanced up at the melting, orange sun. I trudged through the damp woods until my bare feet crumpled a bit of growing, golden wheat. I had reached my destination. As the glow of fire slowly rose from the line of trees, I lay myself down on the flowing crop to view the gently bluing sky. Clouds drifted overhead, and birds flew by, chirping with joy as their tiny wings fluttered. *Wings...* I thought, cracking a melancholy smile. That reminded me of something....

“Come over here!”

“No, come to my team!”

Shrill laughs exploded through the air like snowflakes dotting the skies. My snow-colored wings pumped up and down as we giggled.

“Children, it is Worship Time!”

We zipped toward the gold-bricked building toward our left. The stubby structure had a small cloud mat embracing the ivory door, while the spotless windows and warm, rose-colored shingles laughed in the gale. A pure, white lamb with seven magnificent horns peeked through the mist from the peak of the worship building to watch the incoming flow of choir-singers as we neared our worship place. Under the lamb, on the gold bricks, were engraved two words: *VITAM AETERNAM* or *EVERLASTING LIFE*. The silver lettering shone in the brilliant gaze of the sun.

Flying in through the door, we settled into our birch-wood seats. The interior shone with polished wood. In no time, all the angels had entered, and peace descended into the building. The lead archangel fluttered to the podium, signifying the beginning of the worship.

After our final prayer, I flew out the door and into the Cloud Fields, where billows of white cotton substance were scattered across the sky. Each white puff rolled through the mist like ribbons of ice twirling as far as the eye could see. I flew over the monotonous landscape until I found a place where the ground was thin with cloud curls, and landed. Noticing the dent, I kneeled down and dug through the cloud coverage. Expecting nothing, I pawed through the mixture only to discover an abundance of clouds below. Eventually, I dug a hole large enough for me to fit through; leaping in, I pumped my wings, struggled, and forced my fingers through the progressively thicker clouds below. After spells of toil, the

clouds thinned out, revealing a faraway splotch of green that made my stomach twist with anxious curiosity. As I squeezed through the clouds to get a better view, I felt a tug on my ankle.

“What are you doing? You know the Cloud Fields are delicate.”

I looked up, startled, to the face of one of my friends.

“Oh! I was exploring the fields. Look what’s down there! Life’s so boring up here; I want to discover a new life!”

Squishing past me, he bent down, stuck his head through the hole, and feasted his eyes on the green-blue expanse below. Pushing back, I tucked in my wings to see.

After a little more digging, kicking, and pawing, we had dug a cloud funnel large enough for both of us to view the scenery. Our wings fluttered and baby feathers drifted slowly through the air while we panned the surroundings. Green splotches and blue stains swelled, revealing some sort of solid valley.

“So this is the center of the world...” I thought with a sigh of amazement. I was sure no one had seen this place before, so full of wonders yet perfect and untouched. My friend’s voice sliced through the tranquil of the green land.

“Should we fly down and investigate?”

Looking up toward the fields, I began to grow weary.

“We should head back now. I don’t know about you, but I’m getting scared; there aren’t any Archangels down here.”

We headed back and flapped our wings vigorously. Once we reached the sunny coolness of the fields again, I struggled to catch my breath, folded my wings, and collapsed onto the fluffily-spun clouds. The gilded hem of my robe billowed in the breeze as the winds brushed across my body, recovering the dent that had been dug with oncoming clouds. My hair blew over my face and I felt peace, yet curiosity riddled every loose thread of my infinite lifespan.

My infinite lifespan stopped short. The next day, I took a sheathed blade and uncovered the remains of the hole, slashing to rid of the excess clouds. My heart pulsing crazily, I plunged in and snapped open my wings, catching me mid-fall and pulling me down to the under-land. As soon as my sandals touched the sparkling grass, I gazed around, spotting no sign of life.

Even from this far-below land, I seemed to hear the *bong* of the bell tower. Strange. This world was so far down, yet the church bell could still be heard. Stalking through the field, I explored the little signs of life forms.

After six rattling clashes of the bell, the white clouds above turned a sickly grey, encircling above my head. As drops of clear-blue liquid splattered around me, I unsheathed my sword and raised it so the gold point faced the clouds, fearful of demons. Frightened for the first time, I spread my wings. Just as the seventh bell rang, a clash of crackling blue lightening slammed down at me from the skies. The world turned black.

Upon opening my eyes, pain tore through my shoulder blade. Grunting, I heaved myself onto my feet. The world swirled around me and I urged my wings open. My back screamed in storms of fire and I stumbled, clasping my shoulders, and hit the dirt. Saltwater sprang out of my eyes and I forced myself to limp toward a nearby spring. I hadn't noticed it at the time, but as I had limped away, the sky had cleared and beams of sunlight smiled at me: the Archangels still had a plan for me.