

# ***CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS***

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**HAL AMES**



There once was a princess named Teragwa. She lived in the Castle in the Clouds. It was called the Castle in the Clouds because it was built upon a tall mountain, and the clouds surrounded the mountain all year long. So, it was always hidden. There were stories about a castle in the clouds among the people who lived below, but no one had ever been there, nor seen it.

Living in the castle was lonely. The only people she saw every day were the servants and her family. The only other child in the castle was her little brother Jonas who was always bothering her.

She wanted to leave the castle to meet different people, but her parents always said no. According to them, she should only live in the castle and nowhere else. They said it was the only place safe for a princess.

Teragwa studied with a tutor every day. She learned about her kingdom and of how to be a proper princess. She wanted to learn more about the world outside of the castle because she was very curious.

One day, she made a plan to leave the castle to see all the things she had never seen before. Her plan was to jump out of her window into the clouds and let them take her away.

She stood in her window and reached out to the clouds. They were so soft. She knew if she jumped, she would land in the clouds and it would be like falling onto her bed. She

closed her eyes and jumped.

No one knew that she had left the castle, except for her handmaiden.

She floated into the cloud. It felt wonderful. Then she tried to stop her fall, but she could not. She began to fall faster and faster and soon she became frightened. She waved her arms and legs in the air as she fell through the clouds. This was not what she had expected. She thought the clouds would be like cotton and hold her. Then she would be able to float slowly down to the ground.

She screamed as loud as she could. What was she to do?

Just when she thought she was going to die, she fell into the arms of a handsome young man. When he caught her, he set her gently onto the ground.

The princess looked up at the young man, and asked, “Where did you come from? How did you know I was falling?”

“I was sitting here looking at the clouds and then suddenly I saw you in the sky above me. If I had not caught you, you would have certainly landed on my head,” the young man answered smiling and laughing.

“Thank you so very much. I didn’t expect you to be here. In fact, I didn’t expect to fall so far. I thought the clouds would hold me,” she explained to him.

The young man laughed, “You thought the clouds would keep you from falling? Why did you think the clouds would do that?”

“I’m not so sure now. It does seem a little silly, doesn’t it?” she replied, as she held her head down in embarrassment.

“Where did you come from?” the young man asked.

“I don’t remember,” she answered, wrinkling her nose in confusion.

The princess had forgotten who she was and where she had come from.

The young man looked up into the sky, and said, “Maybe you fell from the top of the mountain. I’ve heard stories about a Castle in the Clouds on that mountain, but I never thought they were true. When I looked up, I saw you falling. Perhaps you came from there.”

“I don’t remember,” Teragwa replied.

“If you did come from there, then I guess you are proof that such a place exists,” he said, as he reached down to lift Teragwa up from the grass.

Teragwa asked the young man, as she stood up and brushed the grass from her dress, “What’s your name?”

“My name is Gerard. I’m pleased to make your acquaintance,” the young man replied as he bowed, showing his fine manners. “And may I ask who *you* are?”

She suddenly had a confused look on her face.

“I don’t remember my name,” she replied, surprised that she did not know who she was. “Why don’t I know my name?” she questioned herself.

“That’s odd. Recently I found myself in the town nearby and I wasn’t able to remember how I got there. I couldn’t remember my name as well,” Gerard responded to Teragwa’s story. “This is really strange. Since you don’t know your name I think I will call you Gwendolyn.”

“I hate that name. Do NOT call me that or I will hit you!” Teragwa made sure he would not call her Gwendolyn.

“OK, OK, don’t get so upset. So, what should I call you?” Gerard asked.

“Just call me June. I like that name,” she answered.

Then she looked around, and continued, “So, how did you get here?”

“I met some people who were walking along the road, and when I asked them where I was, they laughed at me. When I asked them my name, they told me Gerard. I believed them, so since then I’ve been Gerard, but I don’t know for sure,” he said rather confused. “I was walking down the road toward the next town to see if that was where I am from. I stopped to rest and then I saw you falling.”

“Well, thank you for catching me. It is also my pleasure to meet you. I want to thank you for saving my life,” the princess said, blushing a little.

She looked around the place where she had landed. The grass was green and there were yellow flowers everywhere. There were a few tall trees and in the distance, was a wide river. In the sky above, she saw birds floating in the air. Beyond that, she saw the great mountain as it rose from the flat prairie below. Clouds surrounded the mountain like

a ring of smoke.

Looking up at the mountain, she asked, “Is that where I fell from?”

“I would have to say yes, based on what you just told me,” Gerard answered her question.

She was quite surprised at how far away the mountain seemed to be.

“If that is where I came from, how can I get home?” Teragwa asked, with tears in her eyes, realizing that she was going to have a very difficult time figuring out who she was and how she got there, but even more of a problem was how to get home.

“If you would like, I’ll help you climb the mountain and then we’ll know if the story about the Castle in the Clouds is true,” Gerard offered. “Perhaps that’s where you came from. We’ll never know unless we try.”

Since she had no other ideas on what to do, she agreed to go with Gerard.

On the way to the mountain, they met two men who were leaning against two large rocks, which were on each side of the road. When Teragwa and Gerard walked between the rocks, the men jumped at them and one of them grabbed Gerard while the other held Teragwa.

“Let go of him! He hasn’t done anything wrong!” the princess yelled out loudly.

The shorter one, with light hair, asked Teragwa. “Tell us young lady, what are you doing with this stranger?”

“I just met him. He is taking me to the mountain. Who are you that you need to protect me?” Teragwa answered.

“Well let’s just say that we are willing to take you to the mountain. We can help you find your way,” the taller man, who had dark hair, offered.

“Why should I go with you?” she asked.

Just then, Gerard was able to undo the ropes around him. He jumped onto the back of the shorter man and wrestled him to the ground.

The taller man yelled, “Let go of him or I’ll hurt the young lady!”

Gerard replied, “Oh no you won’t.” Gerard rubbed his hands together and suddenly the man disappeared.

Then the smaller man ran away.

Teragwa went to Gerard and hugged him.

“Thank you once again for saving my life!” the princess said almost crying.

Teragwa asked, “Where did the other man go? What did you do with him?”.

“Don’t worry. I sent him to the village. He’ll be fine,” he replied. “Let’s get out of here before we meet any more people like that!”

As they walked toward the mountain, the weather began to change. The bright blue sky was turning gray. Thick dark clouds were coming from beyond the river and they were coming quickly.

Teragwa and Gerard began to run. They found a cave in the side of the mountain and just as they entered the cave, the rain began to fall. Large pieces of hail pummeled the ground. Teragwa covered her ears because of the noise.

Gerard found some dry sticks and built a small fire. The warmth of the fire filled the cave and lit up the walls. The shadows of the flames from the fire danced on the walls.

“How did you start that fire?” Teragwa asked.

“I really don’t know. I just rub my hands together and whatever I need appears,” he replied.

It was soon dark and they fell asleep.

In the morning, when they awoke, they were surprised by a sound. They looked deep into the cave and saw two red dots shining back at them.

They heard the noise again and realized it was a bear. They ran out of the cave and into the woods as fast as they could. The bear chased them into the forest, and in order to get away, they climbed a tree. Soon the bear gave up and returned to its cave.

They waited for a while to make sure the bear would not come back before climbing down from the tree.

The sun was bright in the sky, but the ground was still muddy from the rain, so walking was more difficult, especially for Teragwa. Her slippers were not made for walking in the mud. In fact, they were not intended for anything more than being used in the castle.

Gerard took something out of his bag. He rubbed his hands together again, and then he presented Teragwa with a new pair of shoes, perfect for walking and climbing.

“How did you do that?” she asked.

“I’m not sure. I found out that if I think very hard and rub my hands together, I’m able to make the things I need, just like when I built the fire last night and why I was able to send that man away,” he replied. “I’m not really sure why I’m able to do it, but it has really come in handy when I need something.”

After a few hours, they found a trail. The trail went to the right and to the left. They decided to go to the right.

It was easier walking on the trail. The ground was hard and the path was easy to follow. They walked and they walked until they got so tired they had to stop.

While they sat, the ground began to shake. Then rocks began to fall from above and blocked the trail in front of them.

“What just happened?” the princess asked.

“I think there may have been an earthquake. I’m glad we stopped or we would have been caught in that rockslide and we would have certainly died,” Gerard stated.

“Do you think we should climb the rocks to get to the other side?” Teragwa asked while looking at the pile of rocks in front of them.

Gerard responded in a stronger voice than he had intended, “No, I think the rocks are too loose and more may continue to fall. It’s too dangerous. We should just turn around and go the other way.”

“You don’t need to yell at me, you know!” the princess said upset that he had yelled at her. She wasn’t used to being yelled at. Even though she did not remember she was a princess and everyone treated her with respect. It had never happened before.

“It’s not my fault you keep asking dumb questions!” he retorted.

“**DUMB QUESTIONS?** I didn’t ask any dumb questions. What are you talking about?” she yelled at him.

Ignoring the question, he answered, “Yelling at each other isn’t going to get us anywhere. We need to continue our journey to get you home. Let’s go.”

Gerard tried to calm the princess down, but he was not having a lot of luck.

“This isn’t over yet, you know,” the princess stated.

“Fine, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to yell. I just didn’t want you to get hurt,” Gerard decided to end the argument.

Since the trail was blocked in front of them, they turned around and went the other direction.

They walked in silence, since Teragwa was still angry at being yelled at.

Teragwa was the first to break the silence.

A little rudely, Teragwa asked, “Do you think you could make us a lunch? If you can make a pair of shoes you should be able to make us a lunch, right?”

Not sure if he could do it or not, he replied, “I’m not a cook, but I can try.”

Gerard took some leaves from a tree and rubbed his hands together. After a few seconds, he had a sausage in his hands.

He took it, broke off a piece for Teragwa, and then he handed it to her to eat.

“Why do you want me to try it? You try it first, then if it’s OK, I’ll eat some,” Teragwa didn’t take the food. (Probably the same way she treated the servants as a princess in the castle.)

“OK, I’ll try it. I was just trying to be a gentleman and I offered it to you first,” Gerard said, as he took a bite.

“This is really good. Do you want some now?” he asked.

Teragwa took a piece of the sausage and then sat down on a large rock along the side of the path.

“This *is* good,” she said with a mouthful of sausage. “I wish we had something to drink?”

Just then, she noticed a small waterfall behind Gerard.

She went and took a drink. The water was cool, fresh, and clean.

Gerard joined her.

“Did you see the waterfall before?” Teragwa asked.

“I don’t remember seeing it before. I was thinking about the food, not the water,” he

replied. "But perhaps I made it as well. I'm not sure."

"Thank you for the lunch," she said to Gerard.

"You're welcome," Gerard responded.

They were now refreshed and continued up the trail to the top of the mountain. They climbed higher and higher until they entered the clouds. Now it was becoming difficult to see the trail through the fog. They had to go very slowly.

Bam!

"Ouch! That hurt," Gerard exclaimed.

In the fog, he had run into something very hard. There was a wall in front of them. The wall was too steep to climb.

They walked along the bottom of the wall looking for a way to enter. It was not easy to see because the fog was so thick.

They came upon an opening in the wall, and when they entered, they found a large door. They looked at the door and found out it was locked.

Teragwa knocked on the door. Then again. No one came to open the door.

They looked at each other wondering what to do.

Gerard pushed Teragwa aside and rubbed his hands on the lock, but it did not open.

The princess looked over at Gerard.

"Why did you push me? You could have been nicer, you know," Teragwa said to Gerard.

"Sorry, I was just in a hurry to get the door open," he replied. "I thought if I used my magic, it would open. Obviously, that did not work."

They sat down to think. Should they continue around the wall, or try to open the door?

Just then, Teragwa thought of something. She took off her necklace and on it was a key. She took the key, inserted it into the lock and it opened.

"This *must* be where you are from! You have the key to the lock!" Gerard said excitedly.

The large doors were heavy and difficult to open. It must have been many years



since the door had been used. The hinges were rusty and they made a loud creaking noise as the doors opened.

Inside was a long corridor. There wasn't a lot of light but for some reason there was just enough to go inside.

Gerard took a stick from his bag and rubbed it. In a flash, it turned into a torch. Now they would be able to see as they walked down the long hallway.

Where they were going, they did not know, but they continued to move forward.

Soon they came to a staircase that circled upward in a spiral that went higher than they could see.

The steps were steep and the climb was very difficult. After just a few steps, it was hard to breathe and as they climbed, their legs began to grow weak. Slowly they climbed higher and higher, often taking a break to rest.

They reached a place where one of the stairs had become larger. It was a landing where they could sit down and take a longer break from the climbing. They were so tired they had to stop and rest for a long time.

They looked down to see how far they had come, but they could not see the bottom. Gerard took a stone and dropped it. Several seconds later the sound of the rock hitting the ground rose in an echo.

"Wow, we've come a long way!" Gerard exclaimed.

Looking up, they still could not see the top.

"How much farther do we have to go?" Teragwa asked, worn out from the long climb.

"I'm not sure, but it looks like a long way," Gerard commented.

"Do you think we'll ever reach the top?" Teragwa asked, almost too exhausted to speak.

"Perhaps we should rest here for a while longer. After that, we need to continue. I'm sure we can do this," Gerard answered, less than confidently.

Gerard made some water and food for them as they rested.

As they looked around, they noticed the platform on which they were sitting had a

tunnel going to the right. Gerard decided to look to see what might be in there. Teragwa, not wanting to be left alone, followed closely behind him.

The tunnel was not very deep. Once inside, they found a dimly lit room and inside there were two statues, one woman and one man. They had their arms around each other and on their backs, were beautiful wings. They looked like angels.

“I wonder why these are here?” Teragwa asked aloud, as she walked closer to see them.

“These are amazing. If we had wings like these statues, we would be able to fly to the top much faster than walking up these stairs. I wish I had wings like that,” the princess said, dreaming of what it would be like to have wings.

Suddenly Teragwa felt funny. Her back hurt and then she fell backward onto the hard floor.

“**Ouch!** That hurt! What’s going on?” she yelled.

She looked up at Gerard and he looked different. When he turned around, she noticed something on his back. He had wings!

She felt her back and she felt something there.

“Look at me! Do you see anything different?” she asked Gerard.

“You have wings!” he stated in surprise.

“So do you!” Teragwa said, also surprised.

He turned his head around and saw the wings on his back.

“How did this happen?” he asked.

“I don’t know. I just wished we had wings and then they appeared,” she said as she admired her white wings.

“Should we try them?” she asked.

Gerard began to move the wings on his back and he slowly rose off the floor. His feet were moving, but he didn’t go anywhere.

“This is cool. You should try it!” Gerard said, while still trying out the new wings on his back.

Teragwa began to spread her wings. It took a couple of tries for her to get off the

floor, and when she finally did, she had a huge smile on her face.

Gerard was the first to fly out of the tunnel and up toward the top of the staircase. Teragwa followed closely behind.

Up and up they flew. They flew in circles, to the left and to the right. It was so much fun and much easier than walking up all the steps.

When they finally got to the top, they landed in front of a pair of large doors.

Gerard looked over at Teragwa and said, “Your wings. Where did they go?”

Teragwa looked at Gerard.

“Yours are gone too. Maybe we just needed them to get here,” Teragwa said, a bit confused, looking to see if the wings were still on her back, but they were gone.

The door was locked, like the door below, so Teragwa took the key from her necklace and tried to open the door. Once again the key worked.

They opened the doors slowly and when they entered, the lights from within were very bright. They had to cover their eyes.

When their eyes had adjusted to the bright light, they noticed they were in a big room surrounded by windows with the sun shining through.

“Welcome my children,” a big voice came from the far side of the room. “We’ve been expecting you.”

Gerard looked over at Teragwa, and said, “Who could that be?”

Teragwa shrugged her shoulders. She had no idea who it was that was talking to them.

“Come here, I want to talk to you,” the big voice said with authority.

In front of them, hanging from the ceiling, was a large banner made of dark red, black and gold fabric. In the chair was a big man wearing expensive clothes and he had a crown on his head. Next to him was a beautiful woman.

“We see that you have met,” the man in the chair spoke up. “We knew our plan would work.”

The man in the chair had a big smile on his face, as did the lady.

The two travelers looked at each other in confusion.

Gerard spoke up, “What do you mean? We have no idea what you are talking about.”

The big man in the chair motioned for them to come closer, and then said, “Come here. I have something for you.”

They obeyed and walked across the room toward him.

The big man stood up, took out his sword from his belt, and pointed it toward them. He said something in a strange language, “Tonga do fla apatto.”

Suddenly, Teragwa blurted out, “Father! What has happened to me?”

“You’ve been on a great adventure, and you’ve passed your test!” the king said to his daughter.

“An adventure? What do you mean?” Teragwa questioned him.

“You have been on a journey and now you have returned to us,” the king responded.

“I thought I was running away when I jumped into the clouds,” Teragwa said with a confused look on her face.

“You just followed our plan. We knew what you were planning and we decided to help,” the queen responded in a gentle voice. “By the way, who is this with you?”

“This is Gerard, he saved me when I fell from the sky,” Teragwa answered.

“Ah hem, my name isn’t Gerard, it’s Prince Pelland of the Castle of the Valley.”

“Prince Pelland? You are the one who saved me?” Teragwa blurted out in a very confused voice.

“I was on a quest to find my true love, but somehow I lost my memory. It has now just returned,” he gave his explanation.

Looking around the room, he asked the king, “What are we doing here?”

“Well, it’s a long story, but I’ll make it short for you.

“Both of our castles needed an heir. Your parents came to us and asked us if we would approve of your marriage, but we told them we needed to have a test to see if you would love each other. We didn’t want you to know who you really were, so we made a plan for you to meet.

“We sent the two men who met you on the road to the castle to make sure you were

on the right path to come home. You surprised us when you sent them away using the special powers we gave you.

“We wanted to see if you would use those powers wisely, and you both proved your courage when things were difficult. Now we need to know if you are in love,” the king explained.

Prince Pelland and Princess Teragwa looked at each other. They had not thought about anything like that, but when Teragwa smiled, Pelland knew in his heart they were meant for each other.

Teragwa was not so sure.

“You mean, you were testing me? How did you know that I wanted to leave the castle?” Teragwa question her parents.

“Your handmaiden found out your plan and told us,” her mother explained.

“That makes me angry. Why would she do that to me?” Teragwa asked, quite upset at finding out that her best friend had given her parents her secrets.

“Without her help, we would not have been able to make it so you and Prince Pelland would meet,” her mother continued to explain.

Teragwa became upset. She stormed out of the room and went to her bedroom, slamming the door shut.

Prince Pelland stood in front of the king and queen confused at what was happening. He decided to ask some questions.

“So, you and my parents made this plan, correct?” he queried.

“That is correct,” was the simple answer from the king.

“Did you even think about asking us if this was something we wanted?” he asked further.

“That would have ruined our idea. We wanted to see if you would fall in love without knowing that you were royalty.

“I think you made a big mistake. I think I’ll return to my castle. This has been a most unfortunate adventure. I must speak to my parents,” Prince Pelland said, showing his disappointment.

“It is a long way back to the Castle in the Valley. Stay here tonight. We’ll give you dinner and then in the morning you can be on your way. We are sorry we disappointed you,” the king said saddened by the turn of events.

One of the servants showed Prince Pelland to his room where he was able to clean himself before the evening meal

After cleaning up and changing his clothes, there was a knock on his door. When he opened the door, a servant informed him it was time to eat.

Prince Pelland followed him to the dining hall.

Sitting at the table were the king, the queen and Teragwa. She had her eyes down at the table and didn’t acknowledge that Prince Pelland had entered the room.

The king pointed to a seat across from Teragwa for him to sit.

He sat down and waited for his food.

The dinner was silent for most of the time except for the occasional, “Please pass me the salt.”

After dinner, Teragwa asked to be excused.

“I think we need to talk,” the queen responded. “Stay here.”

Reluctantly, Teragwa sat back in her chair, not at all happy with her mother.

“First of all, we are sorry we put you in this situation. We did not intend for you to become angry with us,” the queen expressed her sympathy for her daughter. “You can make the choices for yourself. We are sorry we meddled in your life.”

The rest of the evening was quiet. Teragwa and Prince Pelland returned to their rooms for the night.

In the morning, Teragwa went for walk in the garden. As she was looking at the flowers and listening to the birds as they chirped in the trees, she heard a voice behind her.

“Good morning, June. How are you today?” the voice asked.

Teragwa spun around to see Prince Pelland behind her smiling.

“What are you doing here?” she asked surprised that he was there.

“I came for a walk, how about you?” Prince Pelland asked a question of his own.

“I needed some time to think,” she answered.

“Me too. Everything has happened so quickly,” Prince Pelland said while moving in front of her. “Your parents sure made things complicated. I’m sorry we got into this.”

“I’m not sorry. I just wish they had let us meet in a different way,” Teragwa said softly. “I really do appreciate all that you did for me. I would never have gotten home otherwise.”

“It was my pleasure to be of service to you,” Pelland said, as he bowed in respect.

Then he left for his room to prepare for the long journey back to his castle.

As Pelland walked out of the garden, he heard a voice behind him.

He turned around and following him was Teragwa.

Teragwa spoke, “I don’t really know what to say. Do you think you could stay for a few more days? I mean, it would be nice if you would not leave so soon.”

“One moment. Are you really saying you want me to stay? I thought you hated me.” Prince Pelland said, a little frustrated at her.

Teragwa answered, very surprised herself, “I don’t hate you. I don’t know what my feelings for you are. It will take time for me to figure this out.”

Prince Pelland stopped walking and responded, “I didn’t really mean you hated me. I just thought you wanted me to leave. Why did you act this way?”

“No, I was just very surprised when my parents told me what they had done. My secret was told to them by my handmaiden. I was mad at her, not you,” Teragwa tried to explain the best she could.

Teragwa asked him about his opinion of her parents, and if he would stay awhile longer.

“Well, I think your parents meant well, but the way they went about their plan was not too cool,” Prince Pelland gave his opinion. As for staying longer, let me think about that,” he said with a wink.

They sat down on a bench in the garden and talked for the rest of the morning.

At lunch, they kept laughing. The king and the queen did not know what to think. At the evening meal, nothing had been said. Now they wouldn’t keep quiet.

Over the next few days they spoke to each other about their lives. They were

surprised to find out that their childhoods had been very similar. Their parents were very protective and they had not gotten much experience in the world outside of the castles.

They talked about what they had learned in school, books they had read, games that they had played and toys they had received for gifts and again they were surprised at how much they had in common.

Soon the two of them realized that they did in fact love each other and that maybe their parents had been right all along.

Teragwa went on another journey to meet Pelland's family. They loved her as soon as they met her.

The two Castles had a great celebration when Teragwa and Pelland were married and when the time came, they ruled both Castles wisely.

The End