



Cloudlanders

Christopher Mackie

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A charismatic band of wood nymphs, shapeshifters, and a gigantic humanoid mushroom protect their home from an ancient force in Christopher Mackie's charming fantasy novel *Cloudlanders*.

The story begins "years from now, in a strange place where strange things tend to happen." Bastion, a bucolic island floating in the clouds, is home to magical beings, including those whose bark-colored skin is a source of camouflage in its woods. It's the only remnant of Earth after the Wavewrecker, a fearsome monster, flooded the world. Bastion's source of flight and survival is a deposit of uncanny minerals; now it, too, is imperiled by the Wavewrecker's dark forces. Soon, forgotten legends become perilous realities.

Twelve-year-old Aliana is caught up in the quest to keep her home from plunging into the endless sea when a missing child leads her to a witch who warns of the Wavewrecker's rising power. Aliana's twin brother, Garrett, uncovers artifacts from humanity's earthbound past. Meanwhile, a treasure-hunting fairy catches sight of an outsider flying a plane into Bastion, and an invisible boy afflicted with an unknown illness seems to be at the center of it all. With pieces of the verdant island falling into the sea, these unassuming beings find one another and unite to preserve their home.

The novel's riffs on classic fairy tales result in satisfying frisson between the familiar and the unexpected. For example, an ominous exchange between red-coated Aliana and a wolf develops into an expectations-defying friendship. Such relationships are at the heart of Aliana's group's thrilling adventure to uncover the Wavewrecker's source of power and keep it from destroying Bastion.

In the potent, environmentally attuned fantasy novel *Cloudlanders*, magical beings work together to save their home.

WILLEM MARX (March / April 2024)

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