Crashing the Ceiling – An Adventure with Nora and Nana

When Mr. Twinkle appeared before them at a baseball game, Nora and Nana stood and headed toward him knowing they couldn't ignore him. The game was tied at 9 in the last inning. They knew by now that no one else could see him, and no one would miss them in the brief time they would be gone. As soon as they were buckled in, Mr. Twinkle shot off quickly.

In the two years since the forty-foot-tall penguin named Mr. Twinkle first appeared before them, he had never spoken. He would appear and wouldn't leave until Nana and Nora were safely secured in the seats attached to his back. His path never varied. He shot straight up through the clouds until he reached one of the worlds that lay hidden there. They had visited cities in the lower-level clouds, mountains in the high clouds, and farmlands in the middle areas.

Everyone in these cloud worlds seemed to have heard of the amazing detective skills possessed by Nora and Nana. They were summoned regularly now to help with both major and minor difficulties. Of course, not being allowed to leave until the case was solved was always enough of an incentive for them to solve it. So now, here he was again, taking them on another adventure through the clouds.

This time, Mr. Twinkle landed on the lowest cloud they had ever been to. It was so low and thin that Nana and Nora were worried, but Mr. Twinkle twitched

impatiently, so they hurried down his back and tentatively stepped onto the cloud surface.

They were relieved to find the cloud to be firmer than it looked. Mr. Twinkle quickly vanished as they looked around and discovered that they had landed at a party or a carnival. There were stands around them serving ice cream and hot dogs, while others offered games and activities. In the distance stood two large hot-air balloons. There was a large crowd of people milling around. However, the people didn't seem to be having fun; they all looked upset.

Nora and Nana hurried toward the crowd to see what was going on. A very tall man approached them. *"Are you Nana and Nora?"* When they nodded, he continued. *"Oh, good!"* He exclaimed. *"I've been waiting for you. I am the mayor of this beautiful community, and we've had a devastating disaster."*

He continued to tell them about the celebration they were having. The games and activities had begun. Three hot-air balloons were scheduled to give rides. *"All was going well,"* he said. *"Until one of the balloons got too close to the ceiling and disappeared."*

"The ceiling?" Nana asked. *"What do you mean they got too close to the ceiling? What ceiling?"*

The people around looked at them in surprise and began whispering to each other.

Finally, the mayor spoke. *"Have you not been to school? Not had education in geography and history?"*

"Maybe not your local information," Nora responded.

The people continued whispering and looked suspiciously at Nora. One woman began to speak. *"No matter what part of the community you are from, you must know the dangers of reaching the ceiling!"*

Nana spoke. *"We just aren't clear. We've traveled a long way. Would you please explain the ceiling to us?"*

Another man responded. *"Everyone knows that if you touch the ceiling, you will crash or disappear, and everyone knows not to get too close to it. That is why you must have training and a special license to fly a balloon. The pilots are trained not to get too close."*

Nora and Nana finally understood. These people believed that the cloud above them was a ceiling, and it was dangerous to touch it. Nora said, *"Maybe the hot air balloon went through the ceiling to the next community."*

Everyone gasped. *"That's ridiculous!"* stammered the mayor. *"You can't go through the ceiling, and there are certainly no other communities above ours. What a ridiculous thing to say."*

Nora and Nana had learned through their trips to the clouds that most communities thought they were the only people in the world and didn't realize there were others so close to them. They weren't sure how to proceed.

"I have an idea," said Nana. *"Would it be okay if we asked one of the other balloon pilots to take us up?"*

"You may ask," replied the mayor. *"But they might be too scared. They are both understandably upset."*

They approached the first pilot, who was sitting on a chair next to his balloon. Nora asked if he would take them up. He shook his head vigorously. *"No way!"* He replied. *"My good friend has disappeared, most likely dead, and you want me to fly again? He just disappeared into the sky. I'm sure his balloon blew up immediately when he touched the ceiling. I knew he was going too high."*

They found the second pilot. She was sitting in the basket of her balloon, crying. Nora asked her if she would take them up. She looked up at them with her eyes full of tears. *"How can I? My boyfriend has touched the ceiling and is now gone. Gone forever!"* She burst into tears. *"I will never see him again."* Tears streamed down her face.

Nora climbed into the basket and sat next to the young woman. *"That might not be true,"* Nora said. *"There might be another explanation. If you take us up, we might even be able to show you where your boyfriend is."*

The woman looked at them curiously. Nora continued speaking calmly. *"I'm Nora, and this is Nana. We were asked to come here to help because we are pretty well known for solving mysteries and helping people. I think we can. Please give us a chance."*

"I'm Anabelle," The woman responded. *"I've heard of you, and I'm going to trust you. So yes, I'll take you up."*

Nana climbed into the basket to join them. Anabelle climbed out of the basket to do some work with the ropes and fired up the balloon. She got back in and told them to hold on as the balloon slowly lifted off the ground. They heard the crowd gasp as the balloon floated higher.

When they got close to the ceiling, Anabelle began to pull the cord to lower the balloon a bit.

"No!" Said Nora. *"Please keep going higher. I promise you nothing bad will happen."*

"But we will crash like Jacob did if we get closer." Anabelle cried.

"I know it's hard to believe since you have grown up learning about the ceiling and the danger. But I promise you that the ceiling won't hurt you, and we can even go through it. I promise!" Nana repeated. *"If you want to see Jacob, this is the only way to do it."*

Anabelle hesitated, then let the balloon rise slowly. They could hear distant shouts from the people on the ground warning them to stop. Anabelle continued to let the balloon rise. She closed her eyes tightly as they touched the ceiling. A moment later, she opened them and looked around in amazement as they flew through the ceiling and continued to go higher. A huge smile spread across her face as she navigated them even higher.

It wasn't long until they had risen to the level of the next cloud and the community there. It only took Nana and Nora a few minutes to realize they had been there before. *"Look where we are,"* Nora said excitedly, remembering a previous adventure where they had helped a mermaid. Nana nodded and smiled.

"What is this?" Anabelle asked as she flew them above the new world. *"What is this strange land and that huge water?"*

"The water is called an ocean," Nora explained. *"The sandy part is called a beach."* She pointed down the beach at the hot air balloon sitting along the water's edge. *"Look!"* She exclaimed. *"There's the balloon."*

"Jacob!" Anabelle exclaimed with a wide smile. *"That's Jacob's balloon."* She navigated her balloon to land next to his. However, Jacob was nowhere in sight.

Jacob's basket was sitting at the edge of the ocean completely empty. The basket was turned on its side and the deflated balloon lay floating in the ocean waves.

"Jason?" Annabelle shouted *"Jason, where are you?"*

Nora and Annabelle joined in calling for Jason. Nora dove into the water near the balloon, making sure Jason wasn't trapped underwater. She didn't find him.

"Nana," Nora said. *"Why don't you and Annabelle walk down the beach looking for him while I search over by the rocks?"* Nana nodded realizing what Nora had in mind. She took Annabelle by the arm and they hurried away.

"I wonder what Angelica and the mermaids will think when they see us with other people. She might think we brought them here and be mad at us." Nora worried to herself as she made her way to the familiar rocky ledge.

She removed the shell shaped hair clip that she always wore and dipped it into the ocean. Moments later, the beautiful mermaid Angelica appeared. *"I'm so glad to see you!"* she said, smiling at Nora with delight. *"Would you like to become a mermaid and swim with me again?"*

Nora remembered how amazing it had been to become a mermaid on that previous adventure. *"I wish I could,"* answered Nora. *"I don't have time. I wanted to let you know what is going on."* Nora explained to Angelica about the hot air balloons and how others had discovered her world. Nora began to apologize for bringing strange people. But Angelica shook her head as she interrupted Nora. *"It's really okay."* She said cheerfully. *"We don't use the land, and there is plenty of ocean for us to live in. We seldom come to this area. Besides, if there is ever a problem, I know I can send Mr. Twinkle to find you, and you will come save the day!"*

Nora smiled at her friend. *"You bet we will be here anytime you need us!"* Then Nora nodded toward the two balloons. *"Did you happen to see the man that landed in that balloon? We can't find him."*

Angelica shook her head. *"No, I didn't. I only came here because you summoned me with the magic hair shell."*

Nora nodded. She waved goodbye to her friend and began walking down the beach when she spotted Nana, Annabelle, and a tall young man walking toward them. He had a huge smile on his face. Anabelle introduced them.

"Can you believe it?" He asked. *"There is another whole world here. Who knows, there may even be more out there."* He looked at Anabelle and continued. *"I'm*

sorry I didn't come back down. I'm out of fuel and crashed into the water. I was hoping you'd come find me." They smiled at each other.

"It's thanks to Nora and Nana. I would never have known to go through the ceiling to find you if they hadn't encouraged me." She replied and smiled at them.

"I've had a wonderful idea since I've been here," Jacob interrupted excitedly. *"I want to claim this property as my own since I discovered it. I want us to build a hotel and offer rides so others can visit here on their vacations. Don't you think that's a marvelous idea?"* Anabelle shared his excitement, and they began to discuss plans to develop a new community there.

While Jacob and Annabelle talked about their plans, Nora smiled and nodded to let Nana know everything was okay with Angelica.

"Let's head back down," Jacob said. *"I'm excited to share the news and let everyone know that we've discovered a new world. We need to decide what to name this beautiful place."*

They all climbed into Anabelle's basket as she guided the balloon to the edge of the cloud and back down the way they had come up.

When they appeared, coming down through the ceiling, people below began to point and shout. As they got lower and everyone saw that Jacob was with them,

and there were cheers and shouts of joy. When they had landed, the mayor rushed to them, full of questions.

"You'll never believe it, but we've discovered a new world. A beautiful place above us, and you will be the first to fly with us to see it." Jacob said to the mayor. *"I hope you will agree that we should make it part of our community and help us name it."*

The mayor nodded in amazement. Then he turned his attention to Nana and Nora. *"I don't know how to thank you. None of us would have ever been brave enough to go through the ceiling without your help. Please come join the celebration."*

At that moment, Mr. Twinkle appeared. Nora quickly ran to the ice cream stand for a large chocolate cone before Mr. Twinkle stood in front of her. She carefully climbed up his back, making sure not to drop her cone, and took her seat next to Nana. *"I hope we get to return someday to find out what they named their city,"* Nora said as Mr. Twinkle lowered them back to Earth. Nana nodded in agreement.

The score was still tied at 9 in the last inning when Mr. Twinkle dropped them off at the ballgame. They walked back to their seats in the bleachers. Papaw looked at Nora and said, *"Hey, why didn't you bring me a cone?"* Nora laughed. *"It's a long story!"* She replied as she and Nana smiled at each other.