(1) Dream Studio

Deep within our minds exists a magical place called “The Dream Studio”. Inside the studio, numerous dreams are processed in full swing by directors, scriptwriters, and so on. It’s not only a factory of fantasy, but also where emotions and memories are turned into dreams. That’s also where Mia’s mind helps her process life’s ups and downs. She had reached the age of puberty, and was growing more and more sentimental.

A director named Leo proudly announced to everyone, “No one can know Mia better than I do. I will make the best dream.” His dream was packed with dancing horses, flying cupcakes, and jellybean rain. They were all laughing, except Mia. Instead of making her happy, the dream startled Mia awake in the midnight. Her heart was pounding fast, and Mia was anxious and confused. It was a scary nightmare to Mia, and a giant disaster for Leo.

“If you knew Mia’s pain, you would know this is not her dream,” senior director Vera said firmly and angrily.

“I just want to make her smile.” Leo mumbled.

Vera shook her head and sighed, “A respectable dream isn’t just about happiness. It’s one that helps her. Look deeper into her memory, I believe you can create a better dream.”

Leo went through Mia’s memory files. He saw Mia’s hands trembling during class presentations, her tears when things went wrong. Everyone was mocking her tiny mistakes. Leo also noticed her dad, who was always patient to help her. “You don’t have to be flawless. Just be yourself.”

That night, Mia dressed like a knight, stood in a forest. She needed to reach the tower, where her voice had vanished and fear held it imprisoned. Along the way, she crossed a River of Doubts and faced the whispering winds.

“You’re not good enough.” They whispered. “You can’t even talk.”

“I can’t do this.” she cried.

Unexpectedly, a silver compass that glowed appeared in her hands.

“This compass will guide you, it shines brightest when you choose to be brave.” A warm voice echoed from somewhere.

“Dad? Is that you? ” Mia replied.

“Yes, Mia. I know that you have doubts about yourself, but I’ve always known you can do it.”

Each time whenever Mia wanted to give up, the compass glowed, reminding her of times she’d tried and succeeded. When she finally reached the tower, she found her voice locked inside a glass sphere with a dragon circling. Instead of fighting, Mia stepped forward and said, “You’re part of me, you can’t control me.” The dragon vanished. She took the sphere, held it tight. Suddenly, she was onstage in the spotlight. “I can do this.” she said aloud.

In Dream Studio, Vera turned to Leo, “Well done! You really gave her more than a dream.”

“I did what you said, I looked deeper and I saw her anxiety. She just needed a little push to summon the courage to face it.” Leo smiled. “In dreams we will stay with her, and help her rise.”

Mia woke up knowing her fear hadn’t disappeared, but she had her own compass, shining quietly inside her. Mia looked herself in the mirror not with doubt, but with courage. She stood in front of her class again.

“I can do this.” she said, and began to speak.