

## The Dream Catcher

It's not every day an eleven-year-old can say they have soared through the sky with candy cane birds, or ice skated on an ice lolly rink, but I can. My name is Bailey Quinn and I guess you could say my dreams came to life. Well...it is a little more complicated than that, let me take you to the start of this. Or should I tell you more about myself first? Decisions, decisions, I've never really been good at those. Okay, so, the frizzy-haired woman who drops me off at the school gate, that's my mum, Carol Quinn. She always gives me the sloppiest kiss on the cheek before I get out of the car. I pretend to hate it by screwing up my face, but secretly I love it, even though the kids at school think I'm a big mummy's girl. Then as I walk through the school gates I meet up with my best friend, Rosie. She always eagerly waits for me, while fiddling with the ends of her syrupy, strawberry blonde hair. When we notice one another, she usually throws her freckled arm left and right and left and right and left and right until I eventually wiggle my hand back at her. She usually grins at me with joy tugging at the corners of her mouth. Grabbing my slightly moist hand, we plod our heavy feet into school.

School isn't my favourite place in the world, I'd much rather be at home watching Daisy Power or playing with my Josie Doll. As much as I enjoy skipping ropes at lunch or trying to balance on the space hopper, I feel shy at school. I don't know why, I guess everybody just feels this way, maybe it's a school thing. I have this feeling that people are talking about me or laughing at me. I especially hate when we go back in from break time and walk down the hallways. I'm sometimes alone as Rosie goes to another class and that's when Nasty Natalie and her pack strikes. There are always so many people standing in their groups along the

edges, waiting to go into their classrooms. I've never belonged to a group. It's always just Rosie and I. In my mind everyone lingering is six foot tall, crooked and dark and it feels like walking into the Big Bad Wolves forest. I'm always touching the back edges of my pleated skirt to check its not tucked into my spotty pants, every passing whisper or glance I would think is about me. I worry I have something on my face or a rumour is going around about me, although Rosie would tell me if there was.

I remember once Georgia Fielder had a rumour going around that she had hairy legs, and people would tease her about it, telling her to pull her knitted long socks down so they could see. Every time someone said this, Georgia would go red and scuttle off to the toilets. I sometimes heard her crying in the stall next to me, I would think about saying something but I don't like talking to people I don't know. But no one says anything when Nastie Natalie points and laughs at my Daisy Power vest poking out from under my jumper. Except for Rosie and that's why I hate when she leaves me because when I am with her, no one says anything. They know she doesn't care.

Anyway, today at school, we were finishing up our D.T (design technology) projects. We had to make a ride for a theme park, so Rosie and I decided to make a Ballet Shoe swing ride. Like the big pirate ship swings, but this time a pink ballet shoe. We both did ballet on Wednesdays after school, they are a lot of fun, so we were really excited to show everybody. Mrs Williams was particularly impressed with ours.

“Wow, girls, very unique.” She said excitedly.

Rosie and I both grinned. I think ours was the best in the class because most were okay but some didn't even work at all. Alex Peters and Jordan Abbott's ride actually collapsed, I think they used too much glue and it just sort of turned into this goopy lump of wood, paper and pipe cleaners. Part of me felt sorry for them but the other part was holding in laughter at Rosie rocking back and forth trying to catch her breath. Rosie got sent out of the classroom to calm down and a finger wag for being 'rude'. I have always admired Rosie for having that carefree attitude, she doesn't care about embarrassing herself, let alone what people think of her. If it was me that got sent out of the class, I would have gone wide-eyed with a trembling lip.

As the day came to a tedious end, Rosie and I were skipping out of school when Nasty Natalie and her pack of minions tripped me up and my Josie Doll rolled out of my bag. Everybody was watching as I tumbled to the floor and mocked me for having a 'babies toy'. *I am not a baby*. Even though Nastie Natalie tells everybody at school I am. I didn't know whether to cry from the shock or of all the attention on me. I did not like attention at all and it was now all on me. My eyes began to fill up, my throat ached as I tried to hold it back. Rosie offered her reassuring hand and pulled me up, I was so embarrassed. I ran out of the gates and leapt into mum's waiting car where I let the flood out. My breathing became rapid and short, the inside of my mouth felt sticky, my legs uncontrollably shook, it was like I could feel my blood rushing around the veins in my body.

"Calm down Bailey! What on earth happened?!" Mum said concerned.

I tried to muster the words but they wouldn't come out, it was like I was choking.

"Breathe Bailey. In and out". She said soothingly.

I followed mum's orders and eventually calmed down. I told her what happened and she gripped the door handle. I grabbed her arm.

“MUM! Please don't!” I begged.

“You'll just make it worse”. I pleaded.

Mum looked at my ballooning eyes, released her tight grip and gently stroked my auburn hair. She knitted her brow, curled her lip and stared at me sympathetically for a few seconds. We then drove off and in the wing mirror, I briefly saw Nasty Natalie at the end of a finger shake from Headmaster Adams. That cheered me up.

That evening mum and I watched Daisy Power and had my favourite dinner. Fish fingers, potato smileys and beans; Mum asked if I wanted to talk about what happened more with her and Dad, but I didn't feel like it, I was exhausted and just wanted to forget the whole thing. I had my usual bath and got into bed. Mum and Dad came to tuck me in and say goodnight; after Dad left, I asked mum to stay and cuddle with me for a little bit, it was nice to fall asleep in caring arms after that day. I could hear her gentle heartbeat as I laid on her chest and the smell of her floral perfume, falling asleep was no task at all.

I woke up to a breeze, which was unusual as I never left my window open at night. It was still dark out and my room was washed with purple from my lava lamp. I thought I must be sick with something because I felt weightless; as if I was floating away. My body was vibrating like it was oozing electricity and I thought to myself, ‘this is definitely not a dream’. I felt overwhelmed with the feeling of my heart racing, ready to jump out of my chest. I sat up and turned to see my sleeping body behind me. My mouth dropped, I could not believe what was happening. I began to flutter my eyes rapidly. I leapt from my cosy bed and attached to me

was a glowing worm. It radiated silver and flared a blinding white light. I tried to hit it away, I don't like worms, they are so gross, so having a giant one attached to me was almost worth being sick. However, when I slashed my hand at it, it fell through, it wasn't a worm, it definitely didn't feel like one, there was no sliminess and it wasn't slippery, squirmy or wet. It was just nothing, other than cold.

My surroundings were shimmering and dancing, I thought being aware of dreaming was impossible. I could not believe that I was doing the impossible. Me, Bailey Quinn. I ran to go tell my mum, but bumped into something, or someone? I stepped back and saw a lady whose hair looked like noodles, stood in front of me. She was wearing coin shaped glasses and a golden backpack the size of me.

“OH! You scared me!” she gasped.

She stuck out her flaccid tongue to catch her quick breath.

“I must have really scared her” I snickered to myself.

“We haven't had a newbie around here in a *while*”. She explained.

Newbie? What did she mean? I thought to myself.

“Ah, confusion, perfectly normal”, she said observantly as she shuffled her owl glasses down the bridge of her thin nose to inspect me. She arched her back and lowered herself to my level, so her nose was almost touching the tip of mine. Her green eyes popped out at me as she looked me up and down, pursing her lips.

“My, you don't look very old” she questioned.

“I'm eleven,” I said proudly.

“My goodness, they certainly are getting younger” she muttered to herself.

She whipped out of her striped pocket a leather notebook. She flickered through some pages and scribbled down something. She then jolted her neck to look at me.

“Not to fear, now, if you would take my hand”. She instructed.

I gingerly grabbed her icy hand and she clenched mine tight. She looked down at me with a raised brow and wide eyes.

“Come on dear, look up now”. She demanded.

I cracked my neck back and so did she and we launched through my ceiling and into the clouds in a blur of speed, each spongy one hugging me along the way.

We landed in the warmest and thickest bath I had ever felt in my life. However, the mouth-watering smell of roasted cocoa beans meant only one thing. It was a pool of chocolate.

“I bet Nasty Natalie would like to be in a pool of chocolate”. I thought smugly.

I looked down to be proven right by my nose. I *love* chocolate, it was like I had landed in my very own heaven. I wasn't allowed much chocolate usually because mum said it would make my teeth rot. However, mum wasn't here so I peeled my hand out of the goopy pool and watched as the chestnut liquid dripped from my fingertips. I opened my watery mouth as far as it could go and held my covered hand above it, guzzling each drop.

Then, I felt the temperature drop. The once warm chocolate was squeezing my waist until I popped out. I flew straight up into the pink sky and the curly haired lady followed, with her snakey strands wiggling in the wind. A flock of birds made out of candy canes bunched together underneath us, making a blanket to help smoothly land back on our feet. Rocking us down like a baby in the arms of their mother. I could have actually fallen asleep. We were

both placed on the chilly floor, we scrambled to our feet, legs flailing left and right; being on an ice rink made the journey up hard. I looked down at my balancing feet, slipping and sliding, to find a sea of colours under them. My shaky hand was whisked away and I started skating with the weird lady. Shades of blackcurrant, cherry, orange, raspberry and lime bolted under my feet as I sped around the rink. We made it to the edge and stepped off, I could see stars and hear the chirps of birds before I found my feet again.

“Ah, the ice lolly rink has always been my favourite. So much fun!” the lady chortled.

She swung her backpack off and it hit the floor in a plop. She rummaged through the over packed bag, sputtering under her breath every now and then.

“There it is!”. She exclaimed.

Her bony hands handed me a pamphlet that read: *The Beginners Guide to Dream Travel and Control*.

“Dream Travel and Control?”. I asked.

“Yes dear, Dream Travel and Control”. She agreed.

I raised one brow at her and she raised both hers back at me.

“Yes. When the soul leaves the body and goes on an adventure and you can decide what happens”. She explained.

I felt a sickness in my tummy, this couldn't be real; how do I get home? My mouth felt dry again. But then I remembered, if I wanted to, I could eat as many sweets as I wanted to and best of all, no Nasty Natalie. She took my hands and looked straight into my eyes.

“It's a very special talent, have fun with it”. She encouraged.

She went to bend her neck but paused.

“Oh, I must mention. Do not, under any circumstances go into Creepers Void”, she warned.

“The names Nina by the way”.

Nina fully tilted her neck and hurtled into the sky and now I was alone.

I looked down at the floppy pamphlet in my hands. I opened up the first page and read: Step one. Then step two and then the final step.

“Close your eyes, think hard about what you want, say it out loud”. I whispered as I ran my finger across the glossy page. I slid the pamphlet into my striped dressing gown pocket and looked down at my Daisy Power slippers; I closed my eyes. I thought of her; Daisy Power, she’s a superhero, mermaid who fights off the toothy sharks and slimy eels who are up to no good. Nothing scares her and I want to meet her so, so bad. So if there is a chance I can now, I’m going to take it and then rub it in Nasty Natalie's stupid face.

“Daisy Power”. I said.

I could smell salt and feel the spray of water on my skin. I opened one eye, my skin tingled and I let out a yelp. There she was; leaping out of the water, pink hair dancing as she dived back into the sea. I sped to the edge and looked for her and a trailing ripple came rocketing towards me. A lilac hand sprouted out of the water and grabbed mine; my mouth flew open and quickly filled with tangy water as she dragged me in. I squeezed Daisy's hand so tightly I thought her fingers would pop off. I tried to breathe but realised I didn’t need to try at all. I could breathe. Underwater. We twirled through the swishy water, seaweed tangled in my hair and beams of sun warmed my back. I looked at Daisy who had tiny sea shells dotted on her eyelashes and sparkly purple lips. I pressed mine tightly to stop from smiling too much. This



was the best thing ever. We shot down to the gritty seabed and as the tips of our fingers scraped the bottom, we soared into the sky and I did my first ever backflip. I've never been able to do those.

However, when I landed, I was met with a big thump and rolled until I came to a stop. Everything was darker, the air felt cold and my heart felt sluggish. I sat up and Daisy was gone and the sea was gone. My bottom was wet from the snow beneath me. My shaky breath fogged and then I gazed up. There were these, *creatures*, six foot tall, crooked and dark and it felt like I was in the Big Bad Wolves forest for real this time. I held my breath, gulping down each one to stay quiet and to stop myself from screaming. I stood up on my trembling legs, the snow crunched under my feet and I put my stiff hands in my pockets. I felt the pamphlet and remembered I had control, so I closed my eyes, thought of my mum and my house and Rosie.

“Home”. I whispered.

It was still freezing but I opened my eyes quickly, only to see the same thing. I tried three more times but nothing happened. Tears began to drip and my chest ached. I was stuck. I pulled the pamphlet from my pocket and fumbled my fingers through the pages, I saw the words, ‘Cold and Dark’. I paused and realised where I was; I was in Creepers Void.

I read more and it said I had twenty-four hours to escape or I would be stuck forever! The only way to was facing my biggest fear so I could unlock the gate.

“How did I get here?! What did I do?!”. I sobbed to myself.

I knew what I had to do but I was too scared to do it, I couldn't. If I can't do it in school with Rosie, how am I supposed to all alone? I glanced down at my Daisy Power slippers and my

shoulders dropped. I've done the impossible tonight; I reminded myself that I swam in a pool of chocolate and met Daisy Power. I squeezed my eyes and thought as hard as I could.

“Nasty Natalie”. I said.

I released my eyes and saw gigantic, shadowy beings with Nasty Natalie and her minions faces on; pointing and laughing at me. A burst of wind lifted my dressing gown and showed my spotty pants. My head felt light and my cheeks flushed pink; my eyes became gunky as I felt tears in them. I took a deep breath.

“I DON'T CARE! I LIKE MY SPOTTY PANTS”. I shouted.

The figures melted to the floor and revealed a glowing gate. I leapt over the goopy puddle and jumped through it.

I felt the fluffiness of my pillows on my cheek and my feather blanket on top of me. There was a light tap on my door and my door handle creaked.

“Bailey? Are you awake yet?”. My mum called.

She stretched her neck around the corner of my door and smiled.

“Morning sleepy, how are you feeling?”.

I wriggled myself up and gave her a smile back. I sighed.

“I'm great, thanks mum”.

She walked over and plonked herself next to me. She put her cosy arms around my shoulders and her frizzy hair tickled my face. My mouth turned up, it was good to be home and I have never been more excited to go to school; Rosie is going to be sooo jealous.

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