

I was flying through a tunnel full of looping and spinning golden stars. The tunnel had a see-through golden roof, bottom, and walls. Suddenly, I started falling. Falling through the bottom of the tunnel. Thump. I opened my eyes. I was propped up by a red pillow, and my long legs stretched out in front of me. I was wearing a ruffly purple skirt, with lighter purple leggings. A blue, long sleeve shirt with silver swirls on it covered my light, slightly freckly skin. I started combing through my hair with my fingers as I was trying to figure out where I was. I decided that I was dreaming. I suddenly noticed that my hair was white instead of its normal light brown! It was a shimmery, silky white!

“I see you have woken from DreamWorld.” I turned my head and untangled my fingers from my hair. A man with white, short hair similar to mine was speaking. He had on a dark brown sweater, and wore a lighter shade of brown pants with black shoes. The man was medium height and slim. He had green eyes and seemed very serious. He looked as if he was about thirty. “No time to waste. You must go to Orientation now,” the man said as he pulled up his sleeve and checked his silver watch. He gave me the sense of a person who would never be late in their life. Unlike me. I am usually late to everything.

“What?” I got to my feet, noticing the light purple ballet flats on them.

“You need to go to Orientation,” he repeated. “You don’t want to be late. Follow me.” The man turned, and started walking toward a doorway on the other side of the room. I decided that my best bet was to go to Orientation, whatever that was. This was only a dream, so going to Orientation couldn’t hurt me. I walked over to the doorway where he was waiting for me. We walked down a hallway that had speckled white tiles, and white walls. There were many doorways along the hallway, and there was ‘DreamWorld/RealWorld Orientation’ painted in black on every door I could see. I was wondering what that meant when the man stopped and I almost ran into him. He opened a door on the left, and held it open for me.

The room we had just walked in had many kids in it who looked to be from ages twelve to seventeen.

“Attention,” a voice called out. The brisk and clear voice belonged to a woman around the age of fifty standing at a podium. She was wearing a professional looking suit and also had bright

white hair. “Welcome to RealWorld!” she announced. “All of you were previously in DreamWorld, the World of dreams. You all dreamed up a World and a life that none of you will remember clearly now. At some point in your DreamWorld life when you were sleeping, you slipped back into RealWorld.” She paused, I guess to let this sink in, and then said “I do not remember any of my own life, and do not need to. Everything you could possibly want and need is here in RealWorld. After you are accustomed to how things work here, you will go through our FamilyFinders program to find you the perfect family, and then you will meet friends and explore this city and eventually, this world. We are currently in the city of Cloranium, in the dome of Dralgos.” What does she mean by ‘dome’? This seemed puzzling, but I figured that it was probably just like our states. I wasn’t sure of anything now. It was like the ground had just been pulled out from under my feet. Even though I wanted to ignore it, I couldn’t push away the tiny wriggling feeling inside me that this wasn’t a dream. My dreams have never been so vivid. The dreams I can remember have just been blurry shapes and colors, sometimes vaguely resembling places and people. I felt as if I could barely breath, the room was spinning around me. I think I would have fainted then and there (that seems shocking enough, and probably would have been embarrassing, though I ‘ve had my share of clumsy embarrassing moments) except a sudden though occurred to me. I remembered everything from my DreamWorld life. I remembered my family, my friends, and my school. The lady at the podium said that I should have forgotten. Were there other people like me, who remembered?

The woman on the stage was still talking, but I wasn’t listening anymore. I had to ask the man who brought me to Orientation why I remembered. I squeezed through everyone (the room hadn’t been crowded when I entered, but I guess more people had been coming in), looking over heads and eventually finding the person who brought me here. “He can give me some answers”, I thought. I explained to him how I remembered my DreamWorld life. I asked him why I remembered, because according to the woman on the stage, I wasn’t supposed to have remembered. For a millisecond, I thought that he looked shocked and surprised, but he quickly recovered.

“Come with me,” he ordered, not answering my question. He was definitely a man of few words. Sometimes I could barely stop talking, which was a problem at school. I followed him out a door opposite the wall of the door I came in. This door, however, was painted a navy blue

and had a silver circle painted around the handle. The door was in a corner, and was very unnoticeable. The man who brought me to Orientation seems like the kind of person who would use a sneaky, out of the way door. Maybe trying to avoid people so he wouldn't have to talk to them. Right now, he seemed kind of annoyed with me. This door connected to a hallway with speckled blue tile and into a small room. The walls of the room were the same color as the door, and there was a white side table with a lamp on it. There was another larger table in the center of the small room with two padded chairs at it. Half of the floor was brown wood paneling, and the other half was smooth lavender tile. It was like someone had changed their mind halfway through putting in the floor and didn't bother to start over. The whole room seemed slightly mismatched, like different puzzle pieces that didn't quite fit together. This room is probably his private office, I thought.

The man sat down in one of the chairs and I sat down in the chair across from him. He stared at me, which was very unnerving because he hadn't really met my eyes throughout this whole time.

“ I should have known... that eye color...memory...” The man glanced away, muttering to himself. I could only hear bits and pieces, so I asked him what he was talking about. He straightened his sweater, then leaned forward slightly as if he was going to tell me a secret. Finally, some answers.

“ What color are your eyes, may I ask?”

What? No, he wasn't supposed to ask a question! I have all of the questions! I deserve to have them answered! I wanted to almost burst out laughing at his strange question, but instead replied, for then he might give me a reasonable explanation.

“Brown”

The man nodded to himself, like he expected the answer. Of course he did, he could clearly see what color my eyes were. Why did he ask?

“They were brown in DreamWorld, and eye color stays the same between DreamWorld and RealWorld. But yours didn't. Your eyes are violet, with flecks of orange”, the man said. I didn't have any reason to not believe him, because everything else today had been strange. Why

couldn't my eyes change color?

"Why does that matter?," I asked, hoping not to sound too blunt.

"I suppose that there is nowhere to start than from the beginning. You see, here in Realworld, words have colors, as do numbers. When someone speaks, you see color. You did not see any of this because you still remember living in DreamWorld, where this does not occur. The color violet represents the word 'idea', and the color orange represents the word 'past'. Loosely combined, those mean 'memory'. Your eyes show that you remember your life in DreamWorld", he finished.

That was certainly a lot to take in. This had definitely been the day where I had learned the most, far more than any school day, falling asleep at my desk. I wondered if there was a maximum learning capacity for one day, because if there were, I would be there. I must have looked like I was about to ask a question, because the man started talking again.

"I know you must have questions, and I will try to answer them to the best of my ability. First though, I need to explain more about RealWorld and DreamWorld. I would also like to inquire about your name and age," the man said as he folded his hands on the table in a 'get down to business' kind of way. I told him that my name was Alexandra Lraine and that I was twelve.

"Alright then. Now I will explain", he said. "In DreamWorld, everybody's dreams fit together much like a jigsaw puzzle. You may be wondering how this works." I nodded my head. He continued, "Everyone believes that DreamWorld is the 'Real world' in their dream, and think that the events they go through are not within their control. This is not completely true. Unknowingly, they sense other peoples' dreams, and react to them in their own dream." He paused, and I seized this opportunity to ask a question.

"What happens when someone in DreamWorld dies?" I asked. He seemed annoyed for a second, but then sighed and muttered a few things, but did not seem all that grumpy. I just could not figure him out. Usually I know exactly what a person is like after knowing them for twenty minutes. But with this man, I wasn't so sure what he was like.

"I was getting to that. As you know, everyone at some point in their life slips back to

RealWorld. Everyone else dreams that that person is still there, same as always, until one person dreams that they die. Then everyone else's dreams just go along with it. Dreams are very lazy, and don't like to do any more work than they have to." He sat back, probably waiting for me to ask a question. I could have asked him a million questions, like how can dreams be lazy (is that even possible) and how did he know all this stuff ? But I only asked one question. One question that was about to explode in my head if I didn't ask it.

"Why do I remember everything?" I asked

"Because you came to RealWorld while you were awake instead of asleep. When you come to DreamWorld in your sleep, your dreams shatter into pieces, because, unlike the belief of those in DreamWorld, dreams are active during the day, not the night. When you think you are dreaming at night, you are really sensing your dream's memories." That almost gave me a headache thinking about.

"So you dream about your dreams' dreams", I confirmed.

"Yes", he said, trying to look solemn, but I was sure that I could see a slight upturn of his mouth, as if what I said had been humorous.

"Dreams are very fragile at night, so they break apart when you are suddenly yanked back to RealWorld, and you do not remember any of them. However, during the day, dreams are strong. When you were brought back into RealWorld, your dreams did not break apart, so you still remember them." he answered.

My head was spinning from all of this information. After this explanation, I didn't know how I could have believed that this was a dream. If I had not been fully convinced that all of this was real, I was now. This mysterious man seemed to be lost in thought, just as I was. Suddenly, I realized something.

"You did too", I said.

"What?" He had an expression showing that he was completely confused, but I had a feeling that he knew where I was going and was just pretending not too.

“You remembered everything, like me.” Something in his eyes, when I first told him how I remembered everything, something in the shock I thought I saw told me that he could remember the way everything used to be.

“So you guessed it”, he said, and almost with a smile he said “I thought that you would. I know what it was like to live in DreamWorld, like you. At first, when I got here, I was just as puzzled as you, but with research, I collected information, piece by piece.” He shook his head, amazed, and said “I never thought that anyone else would remember, too”

“But why don’t your eyes look like mine?”, I asked. He smiled, for the first full time, and replied,

“It is a bit shocking for people who don’t know me here in RealWorld to see my eye color, which is like reading the word ‘memory’. Most peoples’ eyes read the words ‘listen’, for brown eyes or ‘understand’ for blue eyes, or ‘discover’, for green eyes, and so on. To see the word memory would be strange for those who remember nothing, so I put in color-contacts when I’m not around my friends who know what I remember”. He pulled back his eyelid slightly and swiped his finger lightly across his eye, removing the contact. The man did the same for the other eye, so I could see the violet with orange flecks. I was thoroughly amazed that he found out all of that information he just told me. It must have taken years. Even though he explained everything, answering my questions, I still felt like something from me was missing. I wanted to return to DreamWorld. I missed my family, my friends, even my school. Suddenly, I had a horrible feeling. What if...what if he had wanted to go back to DreamWorld, but couldn’t? I pushed back tears starting to form, but couldn’t stop my voice from cracking.

“Is it...is it possible to go back. I mean, back to DreamWorld?”

I could see the sadness in his eyes.

“Yes. Yes it is”. He sighed. “When I found this out, it was too late. I had been in RealWorld for almost two months. It is only possible to return to DreamWorld within a week of leaving, and a strong connection is needed.” He stopped, and looked down at his feet, then back up at me, his violet and orange eyes meeting mine. “It was too late for me, but not for you. You have a strong connection. Your memory. You can return to DreamWorld if you sleep in our dream

monitoring room, which will focus on your latest dreams. You also must concentrate on what you want, to go home.” I could see how hard this was for the man to say, knowing that he could never return to his own DreamWorld life. So I waited, until he got up from his chair, swallowed, and motioned for me to follow him. The man and I went out of the room and continued walking down the hallway. We stepped into a room with a bed in the center, and a wall of computer screens, each showing many shades of color. Probably the whole ‘word-color-number thing’.

The man told me to lie down in the bed and concentrate on returning to DreamWorld. I nodded, and slowly got into the bed. I could only think about him saying ‘I was to late’. I felt so sorry for him, beyond words. I know that I should have said thank you, but I just couldn’t, and I think he wanted to be left in though as he left the room. I closed my eyes, and thought about returning, but also about the man, and how he was too late.

I was flying backwards through the golden tunnel, and next to me was...

The man who had given me the best Orientation ever! He looked shocked, but then started laughing with pure joy.

“You actually did it! I didn’t know this was possible, but you pulled me back to DreamWorld with you unknowingly”, he said with a huge smile. I was so happy for him, I could burst. We flew up through the tunnel roof.

“Thank you”, he said sincerely. I could only smile, and say,

“I never did catch your name”

“My name is Jeff”, he replied. “Maybe you’ll see me in DreamWorld”