

NIGHTMIA



EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - FOREST CLEARING - DAY

A monstrous ROAR. Bright fiery flames.

The head of a ferocious DRAGON stares down BLASTING FIRE at--

A medieval KNIGHT dressed in full shining armor emerges from behind his smoldering shield.

He brandishes his sword at the giant foe and

-- CLANG --

a shower of sparks rain down as his blow deflects against the beasts scaly hide.

We HEAR the sound of a HORSE whinnying in fright.

The panicked animal is being held by a dishevelled young SQUIRE boy. He fearfully watches his master in the midst of mortal combat.

At every opportunity the Dragon breathes fire in the Knight's direction, which he deflects with his shield.

The flames singe and burn setting the surrounding woodland alight.

-- WHOOSH --

The Dragon swings its mace-like tail at the Knight who jumps it like a child's skipping/jump rope.

-- WHOOSH --

Another closer swing, this time connecting with the Knight's sword, shattering it into a thousand glistening pieces.

The Knight raises the visor of his helmet to:

REVEAL: That the Knight is not a 'he' but a young girl, MIA (11 years old). [Mia has an elaborate tribal tattoo beneath her left eye]

She grits her teeth with steely determination and enters the fray once more armed with the now broken sword.

Mia stabs the sword into the Dragon. The Dragon's roar of pain is quickly replaced by one of rage.

-- WHOMP! --

Using its front leg, the Dragon back-hands Mia, tossing her bodily through the air until

-- FLOOMPH --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She collides with the trunk of a tree where

-- CLATTER --

She lands in a crumpled unconscious heap.

The Dragon leers menacingly down at her, drawing a deep intake of breath about to torch her.

Mia is finished

Suddenly, the young Squire LEAPS between the two foes.

He picks up a tree branch from the floor and brandishes it at the Dragon.

The Dragon grins an amused smirk and belches a small plume of flame.

It ignites the branch, burning it to a fragile cinder in an instant.

The young Squire stands firm and reaches down to an object hanging from his belt. His hand raises holding a leather water bottle.

He launches it at the Dragon.

The Dragon inhales the bottle, swallowing it with a choke.

The Dragon bears down on him. The Squire flinches. Paralyzed.

CLOSE ON: The Squire clenches his eyes and lowers his head, resigned to his fate. Beat. When nothing happens, the Squire opens an eye to...

REVEAL: The Dragon is lying prone on the ground, damp steam escaping from its mouth and nostrils. It appears dead.

The forest clearing is suddenly eerily silent, except for--

A small voice can be heard, rising in volume.

The young Squire (helping the now conscious Mia to her feet) becomes aware of it and looks to its source.

COPERNICUS (O.S.)

...and so the dragon was defeated
by the quick thinking young boy and
peace returned throughout the land,
because a dragon without fire in
its belly is no dragon at all. The
End.

The voice is that of COPERNICUS, a wizened old man, dressed in a shroud-like cloak decorated with a cornucopia of artefacts and curiosities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Seated on a thick tree trunk by the edge of the clearing he writes in a school exercise book.

On his shoulder sits THORNTON (a barn owl) and beside him is an ornately decorated SHOEBOX.

COPERNICUS (CONT'D)

Well done young man, well done indeed, that was a fine tale of derring-do.

He closes the book and gets to his feet. Making his way to the Squire and Mia's side (who is in the process of brushing herself down and removing the armor).

MIA

Yes, you saved me. Thank you.

The young Squire looks away bashfully.

COPERNICUS

You showed some remarkable courage...

He proudly ruffles the young Squire's hair.

Mia opens the Shoebox and removes a football (which miraculously fits inside the narrow box).

COPERNICUS (CONT'D)

...perhaps now you'll stand up to those bullies at school?

The young Squire nods his head positively.

Mia throws him the ball, he catches it and smiles.

His dishevelled Squire's clothing transforms into striped blue pyjamas and he slowly fades out of existence.

Once the Squire has disappeared completely:

The Horse goes over to the prostrate Dragon and gives it a gentle nudge with his nose.

The Dragon opens an eye and smiles - it has all been a performance.

Thornton takes flight from her perch on Copernicus' shoulder and circles the clearing.

The scene comes alive in a swirl of colorful smoke and sparkling dust as the Dragon and Horse transform into two new characters.

The Dragon becomes CHESTER, an old English sheep-dog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The Horse turns into SIBLEY, a frog that flutters in the air on enlarged butterfly wings.

Sibley removes a dead fly from his shoulder bag and throws it up into the air.

His tongue shoots out to catch it a number of times without success before it drops to the floor.

He picks it up, offers it to Chester (who looks away in disgust) before dusting it off and eating it with a CRUNCH.

Copernicus thumbs through the book he was writing in.

COPERNICUS (CONT'D)

Another heroic tale thought up by one of our sleeping visitors. The wonderful diversity of children's imaginations never ceases to amaze me. So many amazing stories all contained within this book!

MIA

If you like them that much you should keep it, I can always say I lost it and get another.

COPERNICUS

Thank you, a lovely thought, but as you know, objects from your world cannot survive here for very long. Just as objects from here cannot survive in yours.



Copernicus reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small stone statue of a teddy bear and hands it to Mia.

MIA

Oh Ted, look at you.

Thornton lands on Copernicus' shoulder and appears to nibble on his ear, Copernicus briefly nods his head.

There is a sudden loud CLAP OF THUNDER and large dark storm clouds quickly descend over the clearing.

A chill hits the air and Mia pulls her clothes around her to keep warm, she jumps to her feet.

MIA (CONT'D)

Is it time to go already?

COPERNICUS

I'm afraid so. Quickly, you must gather your things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MIA

Can't I stay, just this once?

COPERNICUS

No, you must go before 'he' comes.

MIA

Who?

COPERNICUS

The Dark Magian, quickly there is no time to explain, here take your book

Mia takes the book and places it with the stone teddy bear into the ornate Shoebox before closing the lid.

There is another loud CLAP OF THUNDER, which almost sounds like it is calling out her name.

MIA

Keep the box safe...

Copernicus graciously bows in acknowledgement.

Mia steps away from the clearing, when she looks back the four are standing there together watching her depart.

DARKNESS begins encroaching all about them.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

With a DESPERATE GASP, Mia opens her eyes and sits bolt upright in bed.

NIGHT IS GONE. Her eyes strain at the bright brilliant sunshine that streams through the window.

[For this entire scene we do not see the left hand side of Mia's face]

An old tabby CAT, curled up at the foot of the bed, lazily opens an eye and momentarily raises its head, before yawning and promptly falling back to sleep again.

Mia hears her Father calling from downstairs, growing increasingly impatient.

FATHER (O.S.)

Mia? Mia? Are you up yet? We're running late, hurry up and get ready, you've got school today!

Mia quickly jumps up out of bed in a panic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She grabs some dishevelled clothes from the floor and disappears into the adjoining bathroom.

She reappears moments later, struggling to pull a sweater over her head whilst simultaneously brushing her teeth.

Her Father pokes his head around the bedroom door, growing more than a little frustrated.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Mia, get a move o...

He pauses momentarily to survey the untidy bedroom.

FATHER (CONT'D)

... oh, I see that the mess fairies have paid us another visit. Tell me Mia, why is it that your clothes always end up on the floor?

MIA

(from beneath her sweater)
I think it has something to do with gravity.

FATHER

Ha, ha, very funny. I want it tidied when you get home.

He disappears from view.

FATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And make sure you've packed all your books, we haven't got time to come back for anything today.

MIA

My books...right.

Mia approaches a cardboard SHOEBOX that is sitting on her bedside table.

It is decorated with a cornucopia of bric-a-brac: various colors of tissue paper, bottle tops and feathers. In its own crude way it is beautifully ornate.

She removes the lid and reaches inside to remove a notebook (the same notebook Copernicus was writing in, in her dream).

As she takes it another object falls to the floor - her teddy bear, no longer solid stone but now its original plush/furry material.

She throws the notebook into her satchel and pulls it over her shoulder.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

FATHER (O.S)

Mia, this is the last time, if you're not ready I'm going to go without you.

MIA

Okay, okay, I'm here.

We watch her run out of the room and disappear from view.

The teddy bear lies on the floor, its glass eyes staring up at the ceiling.

(O.S) We HEAR the sound of footsteps descending down stairs followed by the sound of the front door closing and a car starting up.

INT. MOTOR CAR - EARLY MORNING

INSERT: A horizon of upside-down puffy white clouds drift lazily across a crystal blue sky.

Every so often we see the tops of upside-down trees cross the horizon at speed.

The clouds transform into distinct and recognizable shapes of animals ...a rabbit ...a horse ...an elephant.

CUT TO:

Mia is lying on the back seat of the car, staring up at the clouds through the half opened window.

[We see that where in her dream she had a tribal tattoo, Mia has a disfiguring birthmark-like scar below her left eye].

Her Father is driving and looks into the rear-view mirror to speak to her.

FATHER

Look, if I get home early tonight maybe we could sit down together and I'll help you with your story assignment.

MIA

I've written it already.

FATHER

Nonsense, you only got it yesterday

Mia shrugs her shoulders nonchalantly.

FATHER (CONT'D)

You didn't stay up all night writing again did you?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER (CONT'D)

You know your teachers aren't going to be impressed if you fall asleep in class.

MIA

No, I didn't.

FATHER

You know mum used to love writing stories too, she'd never let me read them though. I got caught sneaking a peek once, it was a strange tale about a beautiful princess battling against some dark evil magician. Not really my kinda thing.

MIA

I don't remember her.

FATHER

What? Who?

MIA

Mum...I don't remember her, I've forgotten what she looked like.

FATHER

Not at all? Really? Not even from a dream or something?

MIA

No.

FATHER

Those are my favorite ones, when you wake up and it still feels like she's here with us. I guess it has been a few years since she... you know... and you were only young at the time. Perhaps it's time I got the old home movies down from the attic. What do you say to a night in laughing at the old man in his old fashioned clothes?

MIA

No different to any other night then?

FATHER

What was that? Was that a yes dad I'd love to?

MIA

Yes dad, I'd love to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mia lets out a large sigh, smiles to herself and returns to staring up at the sky.

INSERT: A large white monkey shaped cloud floats across the sky whilst in the foreground a small BIRD swoops and soars chasing a fly.

As it swoops to catch the evading fly,

--SMACK!--

It collides into an unseen glass window and comically slides down the glass with its wings out-stretched.

We PUSH BACK back through the window and...

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mia sits at a school desk, surrounded by her CLASSMATES.

The TEACHER drones a lesson at the front of the class.

Mia is self conscious of her facial scarring and tries to hide it with her hair.

She doodles in her notebook.

We see four distinct sketches on the page of Copernicus, Chester, Flitwit and Sibley.

From time to time she looks up to the front of the class, in a veiled attempt to convince her Teacher that she is both interested in the lesson and taking copious notes.

Each time she looks up, we see that her eyelids are growing heavier and heavier as she struggles to stay awake.

INSERT (POV): We see the Teacher through Mia's eyes, her eyelids descending like a large black curtain on the scene, before quickly reopening, then slowly descending again.

This is repeated a few times before the blackness descends completely for a few seconds.

When the black curtain raises once more, we are no longer looking at the front of the class, but...

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Mia stands amongst a forest of giant trees.

We HEAR the sounds of a distant battle, Mia cocks her ear in that direction.

MIA

That's strange, sounds like they've started without me.

Mia heads in the direction of the commotion.

Chester and Thornton are surrounded and being attacked by a horde of nightmare CREATURES (gargoyles, mud-monsters, spectres and goblins).

They are vastly outnumbered but defend themselves valiantly.

Chester growls, barks and bites at the attackers.

Thornton flaps her wings about their heads and scratches at them with her talons.

It is clear that they are fighting a losing battle.

As one Creature launches into a frenzied attack, it is hit by a large rock and falls unconscious.

The fight abruptly stops, as though time has been frozen, all involved turn to see the source of the projectile.

The Creatures look with surprise at Mia who stands scowling at them with both fists clenched around more rocks.

MIA (CONT'D)

Step away from my friends or there will be trouble.

Mia's threat is answered by LAUGHTER and the mismatched fight quickly recommences.

Mia closes her eyes tightly. Concentrating. When she reopens them there is a look of surprised confusion on her face.

MIA (CONT'D)

Chester, why can't I change them?
Turn them into cute, cuddly kittens
or something.

Chester releases his mouth from around the leg of one of the Creatures he is biting to answer.

CHESTER

It's because they are creatures of
his creation and under his control.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHESTER (CONT'D)

The Dark Magian is a dream-weaver
like you.

MIA

Like me? I can still change you
though right?

Chester just smiles in reply.

There is a swirl of colored smoke and he metamorphosis's into
a giant TROLL.

The Troll uproots a tree and uses it to swat the CREATURES
out of the clearing.

Half the horde of Creatures are swept away with a swipe.

Mia and the Troll stand back to back fighting.

MIA (CONT'D)

This is what you get up to when I'm
not here?...cool! Why are they
after you?

Reinforcements of Creatures begin spilling out of the
surrounding trees in their hundreds.

Despite their best efforts our heroes quickly run the risk of
being over-run.

In the brief moment that the Troll turns to speak to Mia,
Creatures begin climbing all over him.

TROLL

They're not after us, they want you!

MIA

Me? But what do they want with m...
wait, where's Copernicus and Sibley?

TROLL

They've been taken, but there's no
time to discuss it now, Mia,
quickly you must wake up!!

MIA

Taken? But I can help you find them

TROLL

Mia wak...

The dream world suddenly bursts like a bubble.

Mia is physically pulled backwards by an unseen force, her
arms and legs flailing behind her--

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

TEACHER

...ke up!

Mia wakes up in class with such a jolt that she falls off of her chair.

Still in the confusion of half-dreams and other worlds she dizzily gets to her feet and firmly sits back on the seat.

Her Classmates laugh and taunt her.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Mia Wallace, if you can't find it within yourself to stay awake, you could at least do us the courtesy of not snoring! I shall be having words with your father to see what he has to say about this.

Mia sits on her chair with her hands placed firmly in her lap looking appropriately chastened.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Mia sits in the front passenger seat of the car, in the same chastened posture (albeit wearing a seat belt).

The engine isn't running and the car is stationary.

FATHER (O.S)

So? Have you got anything to say for yourself?

MIA

I don't snore.

FATHER

That's not what I meant. The school called me at work to come and get you, God knows what my boss is going to say when he finds out I had to leave early. I asked you this morning if you stayed up all night writing and you didn't tell me the truth.

MIA

I did tell the truth, I'm not a liar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER

I just want to understand why you fell asleep in class. If you didn't stay up are you feeling unwell? Are you sick?

He lifts the fringe of hair covering her forehead to test her temperature.

Mia quickly pushes his hand away.

MIA

I'm okay, leave me alone, the lesson was boring that's all.

FATHER

I don't know, you feel a bit warm to me.

MIA

That's because you've got the heating on full blast. Look can I get out now or are we going to sit on the driveway all night?

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - AFTERNOON

LONG SHOT: The car is parked on the driveway of an ordinary looking suburban house.

We HEAR the click of a seat-belt being unfastened and the passenger side door of the car opens.

FATHER (V.O)

Okay, but if you're not getting enough sleep perhaps you should go straight to bed without any dinner.

Mia exits the car. In a tantrum she slams the door.

MIA

Fine! I didn't want another one of your crummy meals anyway

Mia walks up the garden path pulling at a cord that is tied around her neck.

After a brief struggle her hand emerges from the front of her shirt clutching a front door key, she unlocks the door and enters.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON DOOR: We HEAR the sound of feet pounding exaggeratedly up a flight of stairs.

Mia opens the door. Something she sees off screen immediately draws her attention, stopping her in her tracks.

She stands in the doorway looking into the room her mouth agape.

She checks briefly that no-one is standing behind her, then rushes into the room closing the door abruptly behind her.

She leans against the closed door to prevent anyone from entering.

As the camera pulls away from Mia we SEE that the room is even more untidy than how it was left that morning.

Items have been knocked from shelves and a strange mucus like residue coats the walls and drips from her belongings.

Despite this, it is not the untidiness that has Mia so entranced. Without looking she reaches behind her and turns the key in the door, locking it.

Her look is still incredulous as she takes her first tentative step away from the door towards the bed.

Discarded on the floor by the bed is Mia's box, she picks it up and curiously inspects it.

She then picks up the lid and carefully places it on the box, despite this brief distraction it is clear that there is still something else that has Mia captivated.

It is only when she speaks that we are given an indication of what it is she is looking at.

MIA

Sibley?

Sat on Mia's bedside table is a small stone statue of a frog with very delicate butterfly wings.

Mia reaches out her hand to touch it but then sharply recoils, fearful at damaging him.

MIA (CONT'D)

What's happened to you?

Mia sees a small rectangular shaped sliver of stone no thicker than a piece of paper placed beneath Sibley.

She carefully pulls at it, doing her utmost not to disturb Sibley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Once free, she holds it delicately in her hands. It is a note addressed to her.

Mia begins to read the note aloud.

MIA (CONT'D)

Dearest Mia, it is so nice to finally make your acquaintance after coming close to meeting you so many times. I assume that your fly-eating friend's presence in your world has provided me with your full undivided attention.

Mia glances momentarily to Sibley.

MIA (CONT'D)

...his current stony silence is an affliction I have tried to overcome for many hundreds of years...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE DARK MAGIAN'S LAIR

We SEE a hand bearing viciously long finger-nails write on a page using a feather quill and thick blood red ink.

It is the DARK MAGIAN.

From behind, his head resembles that of a dragon. It is unclear whether we are looking at a human or a monster.

[The Dark Magian continues reading from the letter, his sly voice dripping with menace and cruelty]

DARK MAGIAN

The first of my creations to be unleashed upon your world did not return and now adorn the parapets and terraces of some of your grandest buildings.

We SEE the Dark Magian move his head towards one the dark recesses of his lair, where the statue of a beautiful yet solemn young woman stands.

DARK MAGIAN (CONT'D)

Of course, there have been occasions when things from your world wander into mine, but I digress, you are probably wondering why I am writing and, perhaps even, what has become of your wizened old friend. Well, I want you to bring me new visitor's, Mia.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARK MAGIAN (CONT'D)

Young, old, boys, girls, it doesn't matter. You see I haven't been receiving many guests as of late. I don't know why, maybe it's your doing, maybe things in your primitive little world are improving.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

We return to Mia reading the letter aloud in her bedroom.

MIA

I want you to use your box to bring me fresh souls and then, when I am content, I will release the old man. Who knows? I may even return this handy old box I found on him. I trust that for the sake of your friend, you will oblige. If, however, you are having any doubts, I have left you something in the box by way of a warning. But I implore you young Mia, do not to defy me for I will haunt your nightmares forever.

Mia puts the letter to one side and walks over to the box, which rests on the bedside table.

MIA (CONT'D)

(defiantly)

Hah, nightmares? I don't have nightmares.

Mia cautiously lifts the lid to take a look inside.

Before she can remove it completely, the Dark Magian BURSTS out of the box like a giant jack-in-the-box,

DARK MAGIAN

You do now!!!

Mia lets out a short scream of fright and faints; dropping the box to the floor and knocking into the bedside table.

The statue of Sibley teeters momentarily on the edge of the bedside table before falling into the open box.

FADE TO BLACK



EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DUSK/NIGHT

ALL IS BLACK: We HEAR the pitter-patter of rain falling on woodland undergrowth.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: The rain falls on Mia's face, slowly reviving her to consciousness.

A storm is brewing.

Dark grey storm clouds surround the clearing creating an eerie twilight.

As Mia climbs to her feet, we see that she is already soaked through to the skin. Her wet hair clings to her face. Her clothes to her body.

She begins walking towards the clearing. Her progress is impeded as she becomes bogged down in a quagmire of mud.

The wind-swept clearing is littered with the discarded bodies of nightmare Creatures. The aftermath of the earlier battle.

A howling wind blows across the scene and Mia hugs herself in an attempt to gain some warmth.

MIA

Chester? Thornton?

There is a silent WHIMPER (O.S) in response to her call.

MIA (CONT'D)

Chester? Where are you? I can't see you.

There is another slightly louder WHIMPER.

Mia approaches the body of one of the nightmare Creatures, which appears to be the source of the sound.

Pinned beneath it lays Chester.

Mia attempts to free Chester by exerting all of her weight to move the Creature.

After a brief struggle she manages to move it clear and free him.

Mia falls to her knees in front of the injured Chester.

You can see from her face and quivering lip that she is trying desperately not to cry.

As she runs her hand through his wet matted fur, Chester's tail tries vainly to wag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA (CONT'D)

What have they done to you?

Chester looks up at her and still manages a smile.

CHESTER

M...Mia? What are you doing here?
You should not have come back, it's
not safe. You must wake up.

MIA

I can't help it, I didn't fall
asleep, I fainted. He came for me
Chester, he came to my world, to my
home!

CHESTER

I'm sorry.

MIA

For what?

CHESTER

For not protecting you, for
allowing you to have bad dreams.

Mia manages a genuine smile.

A single ray of sunshine breaks through the storm clouds and
illuminates them.

MIA

Hey, eleven years without a single
bad dream isn't such bad going.

Chester slowly struggles to get to his feet, the pain of each
movement clear on his face.

CHESTER

There were bad dreams once, just of
a different kind.

He takes a moment to stretch his bruised and aching bones.

MIA

Yeah, I think I remember.

CHESTER

It was when she left you, that's
what he preys upon. When peoples
waking life is so bad that it
enters into their dreams. It's how
he gets his power, when life itself
becomes a waking nightmare.

(MORE)



(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHESTER (CONT'D)

But time is a great healer, soon hope prevails and he is forced to return to his lair, where he watches, waiting for the opportunity to return and grow powerful again.

Thornton swoops down and joins them, a few feathers out of place but otherwise unharmed.

Thornton drops a piece of cloth at their feet. It has an artefact stitched to it.

Mia picks up the cloth, recognizing its origin immediately.

MIA

This is from Copernicus' cloak, do you know where he is?

Thornton is completely silent and doesn't make a sound.

She stares at them both, blinking her eyes a few times, then nods and extends a wing to preen a few dislodged feathers.

The extended wing gradually begins to grow, along with the rest of Thornton.

When she stops growing she is nearly three times the size of Mia.

Thornton turns her back to Mia and stoops to lower herself.

Mia hoists herself onto Thornton's back. She looks for something secure to hold onto. Everything in front of her covered in feathers.

Thornton unfolds her giant twelve foot wing-span. Mia barely manages to seize Thornton around the neck before they are heaving skyward. Wings beating.

As she leaves the ground, Thornton lifts Chester into her talons, cradling him below them.

The first few wing beats struggle to get them airborne, but they are soon soaring into the night sky.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Thornton, Mia and Chester soar through the night sky.

Mia swallows her fear and loosens her hold on Thornton's neck. Losing herself in the joy of flying.

Smiling at the sight of their shadow racing across the ground far below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They quickly leave the clearing in the woods behind them.

Skimming above rolling hills. SWOOPING with heart-stopping speed, they enter through the different dream realms.

The dream realms comprise of every imaginable environment and scenario, each populated by a menagerie of creatures both real and imaginary.

The new perspective is breathtaking.

Our heroes SOAR closely to the occupants of each dream realm, narrowly avoiding pirate ships doing battle on the high seas, giants terrorizing small villages and jungles filled with rampaging dinosaurs.

Thornton climbs... high into the air. They pierce the clouds.

Mia looks up to the starry heavens above where a colorful spectral like aura of light dances in shimmering ribbons across the vast sky.

The stream separates into numerous strands, each branching out and connecting to the various realms. Mia calls out to Chester, over the noise of the rushing wind.

MIA

What are those?

CHESTER

Those are the pathways taken by other visitors like you, each asleep and travelling to their different dream realms.

Mia points up to an even thinner stream which, rather than connecting to one of the dream realms, branches in the opposite direction and disappears behind an ethereal silver lined cloud.

MIA

Where does that one go?

CHESTER

They are the ones that won't be waking up, but you won't be taking that path for quite some time.

He signals towards a dark bank of black clouds, which appear to be in the midst of an electrical storm.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

That is where we are heading.

Below them, lights flicker in the inky darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A small town sits atop a gigantic shard of rock that juts out of the clouds at the centre of the storm. A splinter penetrating into the world beneath.

Mia braces herself determinedly and beneath her we glimpse Chester, his tongue flapping in the wind where it hangs from the side of his mouth.

Thornton glides in a descending arc towards the dimly lit town and soon disappears, still carrying the others, from view.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTMARE CITY - NIGHT

Our three heroes look tiny amongst the twisted towers and cornices that comprise the Dark Magian's citadel.

A loud wailing SCREECH is heard echoing all around them and they head towards its source.

A warm inviting glow is seen emanating from a church-like structure ahead of them.

INT. NIGHTMARE CHURCH - NIGHT

As they enter they see that the church is an empty shell.

The light is emanating from a spiral glass staircase, which descends for what looks like an eternity below.

More screeching WALLS alert them that they must descend the staircase if they are to find its source.

As the three take their first descending steps the CAMERA passes them following the staircase down at ever increasing speed.

Step after step into the very depths of the earth.

The bottom of the staircase opens into a cavern.

INT. CAVERN - NIGHT

The cavern has a warm orange and red glow.

Stalagmites and stalactites appear to hold the floor and ceiling apart, whilst a river of white hot lava meanders across the floor.

The Dark Magian stands at an altar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The altar is covered with objects that are familiar to our world (lamps, soft toys, books, etc.) and a library of magic spell books.

He chants to himself, waving his hands in the air as if conducting an orchestra, incanting numerous spells.

His evil scowl shows nothing but intense concentration to one of the objects on the altar in front of him.

An object whose identity remains hidden from us, but is obviously the source of the screaming wails heard earlier.

As the Dark Magian completes his current incantation, there is an unusual crackle of electricity in the air and the Dark Magian's frown lifts. He begins to smile.

His smile develops into a chuckle, the chuckle into laughter, until he is bellowing an evil malicious laughter.

[Amid this laughter we HEAR the slightest sound...a tiny cats meow]

CUT TO:

On the opposite side of the cavern the entire scene is being witnessed by our heroes.

They scurry in the shadows from stalagmite to stalagmite approaching the Dark Magian, being careful to remain hidden.

From her new vantage point Mia can see the Dark Magian's altar and makes a sudden revelatory outburst,

MIA

That's my stuff!!

The others, distraught that her sudden outburst could reveal their position, desperately try to quiet her with a 'shush'.

MIA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

That's my stuff, what's he doing with the stuff from my bedroom? Look at it, he's ruined it all, turned it all to stone. Wait a minute...

CLOSE ON: Mia hesitates, squinting her eyes to see what has captivated the Dark Magian's attention.

Then, without hesitation or thought to either her or the others safety, she stands up from her hiding place and shouts to the Dark Magian.

MIA (CONT'D)

That's my cat!!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

For the first time we see what can only be described as an expression of fear on the Dark Magian's face.

In front of him is the cold unmoving statue of what was once Mia's living and breathing Cat.

CLOSE ON: The stone Cat sits in front of the Dark Magian. At the sound of Mia's call a strange thing happens. Small fissures and cracks appear around the stone Cat's joints, slowly and quite creepily the Cat's head turns to face her.

The rest of Cat's body also begins to become animated, it stretches its limbs and then rather clumsily stands to its feet and tentatively attempts a few unbalanced steps.

DARK MAGIAN

Well it still is, I've just made a few special modifications of my own

MIA

You...you, monster! He was perfectly okay as he was.

DARK MAGIAN

Well now, you can take him in and out of your dreams without worrying about him turning to stone. Well, not again anyway.

Mia approaches the Dark Magian's position, but as she does so she stumbles across a bundle of cloth on the floor.

She looks down at it and then picks it up.

MIA

This is Copernicus' cloak, what have you done with him?

DARK MAGIAN

Mia, Mia, you still haven't worked it out have you? I didn't take that old fool of a friend of yours.

MIA

No, your mud monsters did, earlier today in the clearing, I saw them.

DARK MAGIAN

Really? You were there?

MIA

Yeah, I was. I also got your note, remember?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DARK MAGIAN

Ah, yes, the ransom note. Tell me Mia, do you believe everything that you read? Books about little people that borrow things? Other worlds in the back of wardrobes? Gold rings with the power to rule nations?

MIA

No, of course not.

DARK MAGIAN

No, well what about everything you see? Would you believe that a dog could turn into a dragon, a frog that can fly?

MIA

In this world anything is possible, are you saying? That...

DARK MAGIAN

Come on, you're almost there.

MIA

You?

DARK MAGIAN

Bingo!!

The Dark Magian's last word is said with such impetus that Mia starts with fright.

The Dark Magian sees this and smiles slyly.

DARK MAGIAN (CONT'D)

Have you ever wondered why all your teachers and classmates appear to hate you so much? It's because in their dreams I make you the villain

As he speaks his face changes shape, first to a dark evil looking version of Mia, then to her Father, then her Teacher and finally Copernicus.

COPERNICUS

Here, is this better? Are you happy now that your boring old friend is back?

MIA

No, you're lying, that's not true.

Tears begin to well in Mia's eyes and she bites her bottom lip to stop it from quivering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

COPERNICUS

Oh, I forget you can't change yourself can you? Just the dog and frog you call your friends.

MIA

B... but you're my friend?

COPERNICUS

And to think that when you wake up in the morning you'll not remember any of this, everything will be forgotten like whispers in the wind and tomorrow night we'll start all over again... with more stories to tell and more pathetic souls to help.

MIA

I won't forget, not this... you've betrayed me.

Copernicus changes back into the Dark Magian.

DARK MAGIAN

What can I say? I'm evil, that's what I do. But you will forget, all visitors to my nightmare realm do and tomorrow when we meet I'll be your old friend again.

Mia's tears of angst suddenly become those of anger.

She marches over to the altar beneath the incredulous gaze of the Dark Magian.

She takes a piece of parchment and the quill and dips it in the pot of red ink and writes:

INSERT: "Copernicus is the evil magician, WE HATE HIM!"

DARK MAGIAN (CONT'D)

And what are you going to do with that?

The Dark Magian does nothing as Mia next reaches for the magic box.

As she pulls it towards her she is stopped by a thick gold chain that connects the box to the Dark Magian's wrist.

Undeterred, Mia opens the box's lid to place the note inside.

A small webbed hand reaches out from the box and quickly takes it from her, unseen by the Dark Magian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MIA

You may have taken my friends, my cat and the belongings from my bedroom but don't think for one second that you're going to take my mothers box.

DARK MAGIAN

How very sentimental, the box is far too important to be left in the trust of one so young.

MIA

Hand it over or else!

The Dark Magian laughs at the threat and holds the box up in front of him, tormenting Mia with his prize.

DARK MAGIAN

Or else what? Just what is it you think you're going to do? Take it from me little girl?

MIA

Take back what is rightfully mine, with a little help from my friends.

On cue, Chester attacks from his hiding place, the Dark Magian tries to fend him off using the box and chain as a weapon.

Mia tries to catch the box as it swings violently above her head but her arms flail wildly and she catches nothing but air.

When her attempts at catching the box fail, we see Mia's brow furrow with concentration and she closes her eyes.

She holds out her right hand in front of her face and every so often opens an eye to look at it.

The first few times she sees nothing but her own hand, but then it begins to swell and contort into different shapes.

When she next opens her eyes, her hand has transformed into an octopus' tentacle.

She shakes her head and closes her eyes once more, when she reopens them she sees a furry bear/lions paw.

She repeats the process each time transforming her hand into something different, a birds talon, a flipper...then finally a crabs pincer-like claw.

She smiles and nods approvingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

When the box next swings her way, Mia reaches out with the claw and in one swift movement cuts the chain.

CLOSE ON: Everybody stops to watch as the box sails through the air, turning end over end in SLOW MOTION, until it is eventually caught by Thornton in mid-flight.

MIA (CONT'D)

Thornton, quick fly it over here

Thornton momentarily pauses, before turning her back and flying to her master, the Dark Magian's, shoulder.

The Dark Magian looks down at the box now firmly in his grasp, then smiles and looks to the others.

Mia watches incredulously, her mouth agape, at yet another betrayal.

DARK MAGIAN

Did you really think that you could come here, to my kingdom and beat me? Fool!

Bursting out from the box flies Sibley, splashing his slimy self in the Dark Magian's face, causing him to drop the box.

SIBLEY

Did somebody call for me?

Before the Dark Magian can recover from his shock, Chester races over and grabs the box between his teeth and runs back with it to Mia's side.

She pats him on the head approvingly.

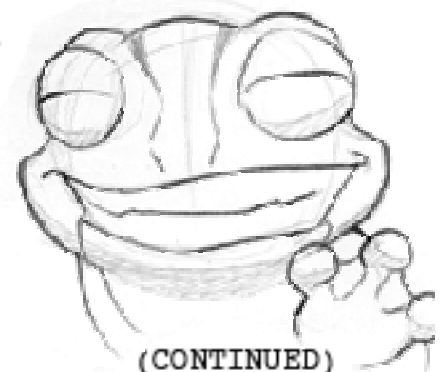
DARK MAGIAN

And what are you going to do with that? What are your friends going to do when you leave? You entrust it to me remember?

Mia kneels in front of Chester and, taking the box from his mouth, attaches it to his collar.

MIA

Well not any more, now you're just a lonely old man who craves too much attention and when we leave you're going to be even lonelier.



CONTINUED: (7)

DARK MAGIAN

How wrong could you be? Every day that passes your world deteriorates a little bit more and as it does so the more visitors I have to my kingdom and the worse the nightmares that I give them, the worse your world becomes. It's a never-ending cycle.

MIA

Well, I'll do what I can to stop you.

DARK MAGIAN

And me you.

MIA

Goodbye.

Mia snatches back her stone Cat and turns to walk away.

Chester follows her without hesitation.

They walk away in silence, approaching the glass staircase, without turning back.

The Dark Magian appears to panic slightly at their departure and calls after them.

DARK MAGIAN

You don't know what you're doing, you're not going to be able to do this alone.

Mia whispers to her friends, unheard by the Dark Magian.

MIA

(Whispers)
I'm not alone, twerp.

DARK MAGIAN

You know there's nothing special about your box, now I've compared it to the one in your world I can make another of my own...it's not unique you know?

MIA

(Whispers)
My one is, my mum made it with me.

The Dark Magian continues to rant.

Mia and her two companions approach the glass stairway passing the statue of the beautiful young woman (seen earlier).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Mia stops to take a closer look. The others continue ahead oblivious that she has stopped.

CHESTER

Don't worry, I'll take good care of the box until you return.

SIBLEY

And I'll take good care of him, keep him fed.

He pats the shoulder bag containing his diet of dead flies, Chester rolls his eyes.

MIA

Hey guy's, I recognise this statue...

The others stop and turn in her direction. Mia turns to quizzically look at the Dark Magian (who has stopped ranting).

They make eye contact. He smiles a sly smile.

MIA (CONT'D)

Recognise her I mean...that's my m...

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Mia's eyes quickly focus into consciousness.

MIA

...um

Mia's Father stands over her with a dinner tray of food.

FATHER

Hello sleepyhead, I've brought you some dinner, you must be hungry after all this tidying up.

Mia sits up in bed and looks all around her (with most of her belongings transported into the dream world, her bedroom is bare).

MIA

(to herself)

There was something I had to remember?...Something I've seen... in my dream...

Mia's Father places the tray on the bed and then approaches the window to draw the curtains.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

FATHER
What was that?

MIA
Oh, nothing, just a dream I guess.

She starts tucking into the plate of food.

We TILT DOWN to beneath the bed where we see Mia's feet dangling a few inches above the box.

A very slight movement of the box is visible, followed by another slightly larger movement of the lid.

As the box lid opens a fraction, a tiny rock Creature's hand emerges.

From beneath the bed, we can see Mia's Father's feet as he approaches the door to leave, he momentarily stops and turns back to her.

FATHER (O.S)
It's getting late, we'll save the home movies for another night. I'll pick up your dirty dishes in the morning, make sure you clean your teeth...

The box lid is now raised high enough to see a pair of bulbous otherworldly eyes staring out.

FATHER (O.S)(CONT'D)
'night, Mia.

CUT TO:

END TITLE: "NIGHT MIA"

