

THE DREAM FARM

By: Olivia Feinstein

The Dream Farm

Mina was sitting with her blanket in the early morning light of her kitchen sleepily swirling a honey dipper. This was the third morning in a row that she had been woken up by nightmares. Her grandmother walked in quietly, smiling and smelling like baking bread as she always did. She looked at her tired granddaughter and asked, "Mina, was it the nightmares again?" Mina nodded. "Let me tell you a story," said her grandmother.



Mina followed her grandmother out into the vegetable garden. Her grandmother had been working in that garden for as long as Mina could remember. It always seemed more special than other gardens. Every time she went into the garden, Mina found something new.

Sometimes she found little things; shiny stones or colorful feathers, but once or twice she found something *really* special that made her think there was more to her grandmother's garden than met the eye.

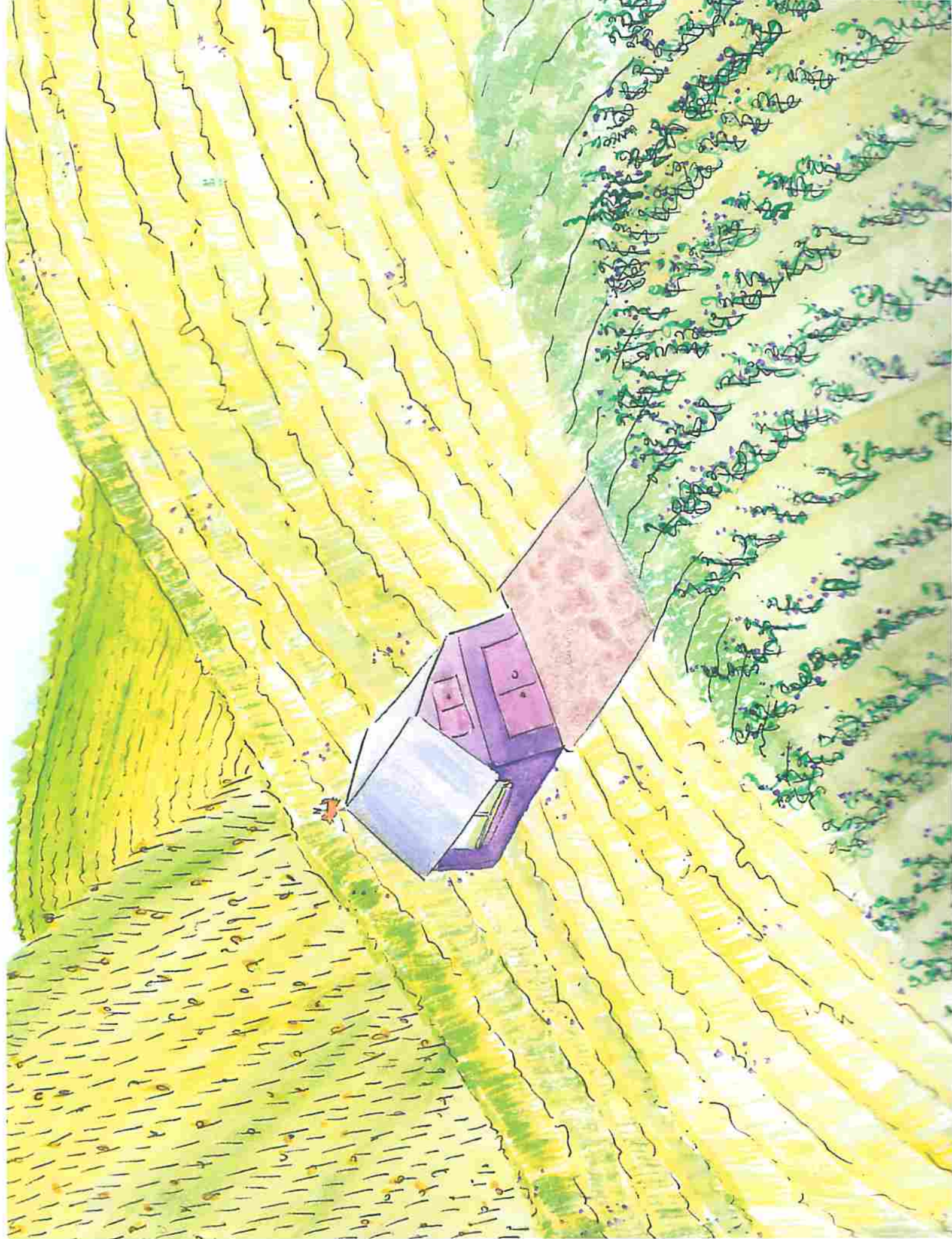
They sat together on the bench, Minas grandmother tilted her face into the sunlight, and began.



“Once, long ago, before I was a grandmother, before I was even a mother, way way back when I was just about your age, I lived in a small town surrounded by farms.

The huge farms stretched for miles and miles over the land, all of them run by angry men in suits and fancy hats who came to our town from time to time to check up on them and make sure that the corn and the beans and the carrots were all growing properly. But, hidden in the middle of all these big farms was one very small farm.

During the day it looked like nothing was growing there at all. It was only every once and a while if you were there at the right time on a lazy afternoon you could see something peculiar sprout out of the ground, but with the faintest of *pops* it would be gone before you could tell what it was. That was because this was no ordinary farm...



This was a dream farm.

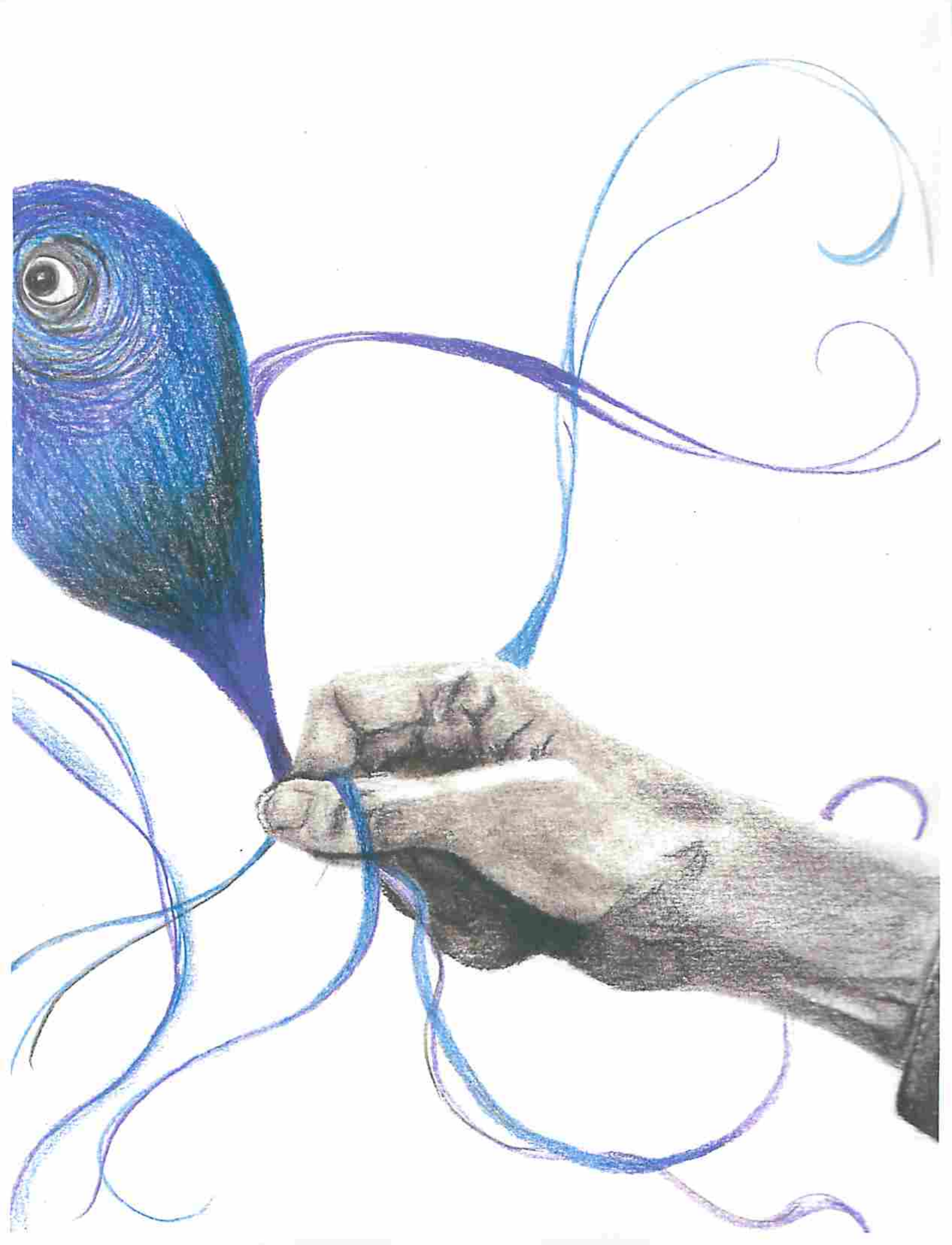
People don't dream much in the day, maybe a day dream or two if they fall asleep in the afternoon sun with a cat on their lap and a good book. Most dreaming happens at night, and that's when the work started at the Dream Farm.

The Dream Farm was run by Mrs. Wilke and her two sons. Every evening they would go out, right around sunset, and wait for the dreams to grow. Slowly, the dreams would bubble up from underneath the loose earth and unfurl in the moonlight. Mrs. Wilke and her sons would go around to every last dream, sometimes sprinkle them with water, and other times covering them with blankets if they needed warming (especially in the winter months). The real job though, was to weed out the nightmares.



Each nightmare was plucked by hand and tossed into the air, where it disappeared with a *pop* that all dreams make when they aren't being dreamt anymore. Every night Mrs. Wilke and her boys would be out there, searching through the dreams to find the nightmares. It's said that no one in that old farm town ever had a nightmare, and I believe it. I know I never did.

Mina's grandmother looked down at her and smiled.



“Now, it was on one particular hot summer afternoon that a shiny black car pulled into town. Hard-faced men in suits stepped out of the car, and picked their way through the corn fields and carrot fields and came to the doorstep of the Dream Farm. My mama (your great-grandmother) and I watched them from out of our window. Mrs. Wilke and her sons came out of the farm and started talking to the men in suits. You could tell even from a distance that Mrs. Wilke was unhappy; she flailed her arms and pointed to the farm. Eventually one of her sons had to bring her back into the farmhouse and her other son just stood there, glaring the as men in suits left their property and drove away.



The men had told Mrs. Wilke that she and her sons could no longer keep their farm, and that the land would be used to grow crops. News traveled fast in that old town and it wasn't long before everyone heard what had happened.

'None of this dream nonsense!' the men had said. 'People do not grow dreams! You are just watching the dirt dry.' With that (after flashing some very fancy badges) they seized the farm and a couple of days later tractors came to Mrs. Wilke's farm to till her land into rows and plant corn."

Mina watched as her grandmother's eyebrows furrowed together like angry caterpillars.



“Now, strange things began to happen in that old farm town. Some people began saying that all they could dream about was corn. Others were frightened to go to sleep because they had begun having nightmares. Others still, and possibly the most peculiar cases, had nightmares *about* corn; getting chased by giant ears of corn and being swallowed by their husks.

Everyone was very scared, until Mrs. Wilke gathered us all together for a town meeting.



‘We will not get the dream farm back,’ she began, ‘but we can get our *dreams* back.’ A hush fell over the audience. Could our dreams be ours again? No more nightmares?

‘We will make new places for the dreams to grow. They might not come at first, but they will soon learn.’

‘But,’ Mrs. Wilke paused. ‘I am old and tired, and my sons cannot do this alone.’ She looked at the faces around her. ‘So I will teach you to make dream gardens of your own, how to tend to them, and keep nightmares away.’”



A breeze whistled through the garden and Mina's grandmother turned to her. "Today, Mina, I will teach you what Mrs. Wilke taught me. The first thing you must do is find where your dreams will grow best."

Mina did not know how to find such a place in her grandmother's garden, but she set off looking. She pushed through the flowering sweet-peas and tip toed over the carrots, and eventually came to a small unused patch of earth. It was hilly and soft, just perfect for some of Mina's favorite dreams, the ones with adventure. For the rest of that early morning Mina and her grandmother worked on her dream garden. They lined the hilly parts with bouncy moss that they found underneath the bench, and planted a sweet-pea so that Mina's dreams could climb high into the sky (if they were the flying kind of dream). Mina's grandmother showed her how to pluck weeds from her garden so that the nightmares wouldn't come in, and how to water it just the right amount so that the dreams could grow, but would not be washed away.



They worked well into the day, stopping only for lunch and dinner, and when it came time for Mina to go to sleep, she did not have nightmares. Mina dreamt that she was rolling down green hills, dancing, and spinning, and when she woke up late the next morning, she thought heard the faintest of *pops* disappear into the wind.

