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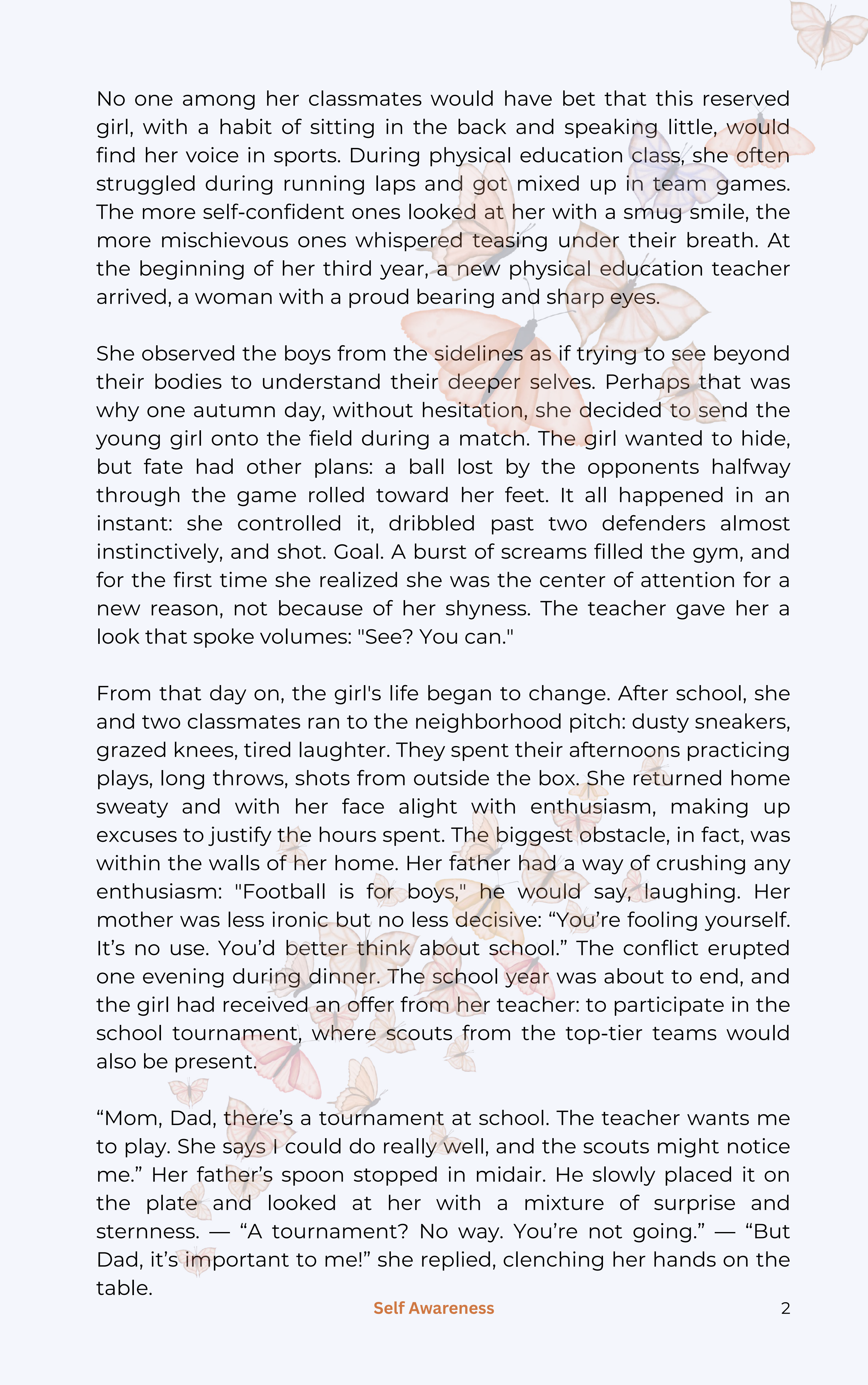
Stories 4 Wings

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Self Awareness

Running Towards Own Dreams





No one among her classmates would have bet that this reserved girl, with a habit of sitting in the back and speaking little, would find her voice in sports. During physical education class, she often struggled during running laps and got mixed up in team games. The more self-confident ones looked at her with a smug smile, the more mischievous ones whispered teasing under their breath. At the beginning of her third year, a new physical education teacher arrived, a woman with a proud bearing and sharp eyes.

She observed the boys from the sidelines as if trying to see beyond their bodies to understand their deeper selves. Perhaps that was why one autumn day, without hesitation, she decided to send the young girl onto the field during a match. The girl wanted to hide, but fate had other plans: a ball lost by the opponents halfway through the game rolled toward her feet. It all happened in an instant: she controlled it, dribbled past two defenders almost instinctively, and shot. Goal. A burst of screams filled the gym, and for the first time she realized she was the center of attention for a new reason, not because of her shyness. The teacher gave her a look that spoke volumes: "See? You can."

From that day on, the girl's life began to change. After school, she and two classmates ran to the neighborhood pitch: dusty sneakers, grazed knees, tired laughter. They spent their afternoons practicing plays, long throws, shots from outside the box. She returned home sweaty and with her face alight with enthusiasm, making up excuses to justify the hours spent. The biggest obstacle, in fact, was within the walls of her home. Her father had a way of crushing any enthusiasm: "Football is for boys," he would say, laughing. Her mother was less ironic but no less decisive: "You're fooling yourself. It's no use. You'd better think about school." The conflict erupted one evening during dinner. The school year was about to end, and the girl had received an offer from her teacher: to participate in the school tournament, where scouts from the top-tier teams would also be present.

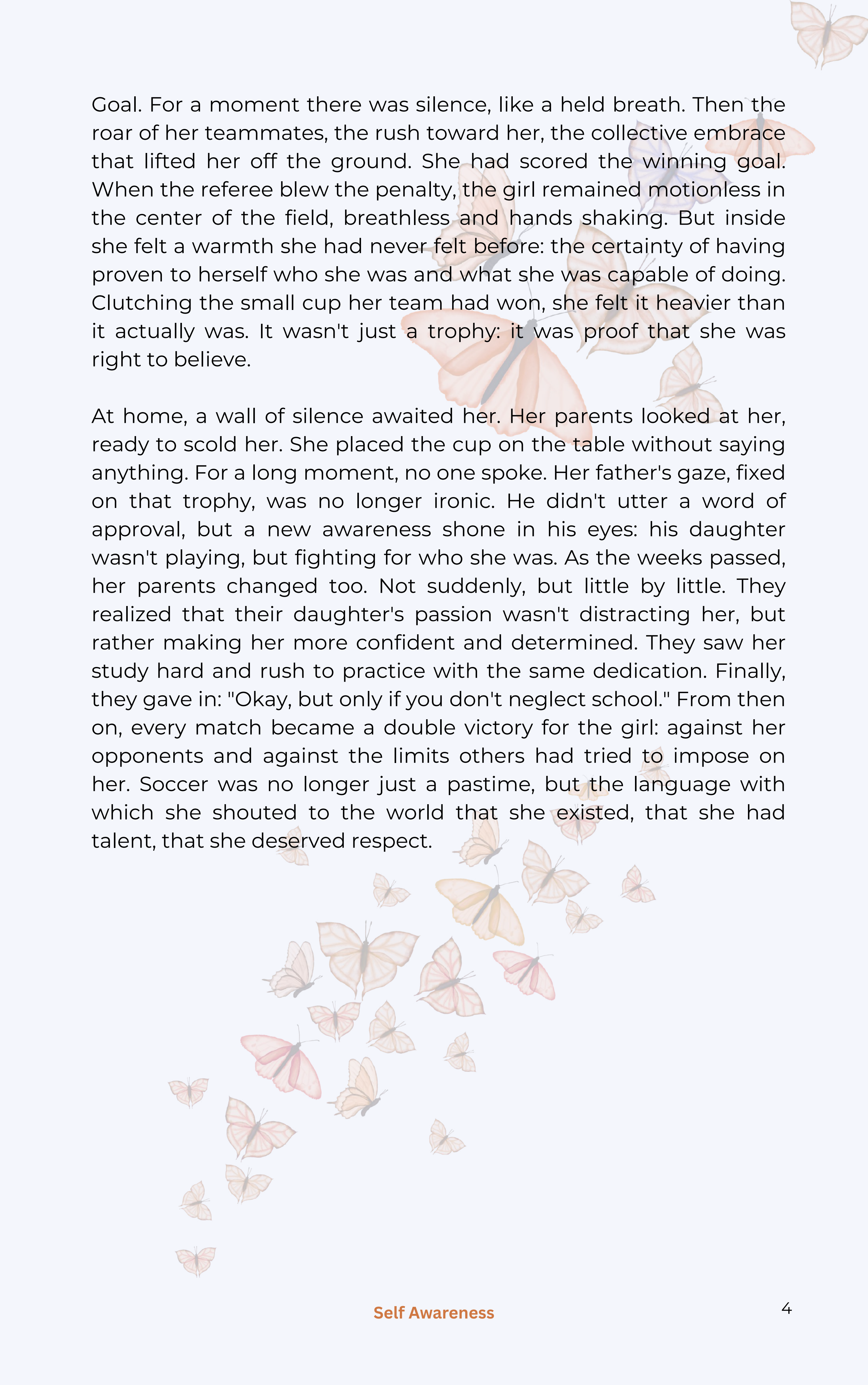
"Mom, Dad, there's a tournament at school. The teacher wants me to play. She says I could do really well, and the scouts might notice me." Her father's spoon stopped in midair. He slowly placed it on the plate and looked at her with a mixture of surprise and sternness. — "A tournament? No way. You're not going." — "But Dad, it's important to me!" she replied, clenching her hands on the table.



“Important? You want me to believe that chasing a ball is important?” Her mother intervened, trying to soften her tone: — “You already have so much to study for. This soccer is just a distraction. It’s not suitable for a girl.” You could get hurt.” The girl's eyes filled with tears, but her voice was firm:

“It's not just a game! When I run, when I score, I feel like I can do something that belongs to me. I don't want to give it up.” Her father stood up—“Enough! I don't want to hear another word. You're not going to that tournament.” The room fell silent. The young woman lowered her gaze, but inside she made a decision. She wouldn't give up. The day of the tournament arrived early. The girl arrived in the gym with trembling legs, her heart pounding in her chest. She was wearing her school jersey, still a little loose on her shoulders, but at that moment it felt like armor. The teacher greeted her with an encouraging smile: “Play as you know how. The rest will come naturally.” The referee's whistle signaled the start of the match. The first few minutes were a blur: sloppy runs, misplaced passes, the tension taking her breath away.

The girl stood aside, watching, waiting for the right moment. Then, in the tenth minute, the ball bounced at midfield. “Go!” a teammate shouted. She sprinted forward. She stopped the ball with her foot, almost instinctively. An opponent rushed her, but with a quick touch, she dribbled past her. Another defender stepped in front of her: she looked up, made a fake pass to the right, and cut back to the left. The goal was there, a few meters away. The goalkeeper leaned toward her to block it, but she kicked with all her strength. The ball whistled through the air and hit the net. Goal. The gym erupted in a roar. Her teammates surrounded her, hugged her, and for the first time she truly felt part of a team. The teacher applauded on the sidelines, proud. But the match wasn't over. In the second half, the score remained tied at 1-1. Her anxiety was growing, her legs were starting to give out. With three minutes left, a teammate managed to recover the ball and threw it forward, right at her. The ball rolled fast, almost out of control. The girl ran as fast as she could, feeling her muscles burning, the cheers of the crowd pushing her on. She found herself alone in front of the goalkeeper. Time seemed to slow down. Her heart was pounding, every sound was muffled, as if only she and the goal remained. Coolly, she kicked with a devastated inside-foot shot. The ball found a clean trajectory and nestled into the bottom corner.

The page is decorated with numerous butterflies of various sizes and colors, including orange, pink, and purple, scattered across the background.

Goal. For a moment there was silence, like a held breath. Then the roar of her teammates, the rush toward her, the collective embrace that lifted her off the ground. She had scored the winning goal. When the referee blew the penalty, the girl remained motionless in the center of the field, breathless and hands shaking. But inside she felt a warmth she had never felt before: the certainty of having proven to herself who she was and what she was capable of doing. Clutching the small cup her team had won, she felt it heavier than it actually was. It wasn't just a trophy: it was proof that she was right to believe.

At home, a wall of silence awaited her. Her parents looked at her, ready to scold her. She placed the cup on the table without saying anything. For a long moment, no one spoke. Her father's gaze, fixed on that trophy, was no longer ironic. He didn't utter a word of approval, but a new awareness shone in his eyes: his daughter wasn't playing, but fighting for who she was. As the weeks passed, her parents changed too. Not suddenly, but little by little. They realized that their daughter's passion wasn't distracting her, but rather making her more confident and determined. They saw her study hard and rush to practice with the same dedication. Finally, they gave in: "Okay, but only if you don't neglect school." From then on, every match became a double victory for the girl: against her opponents and against the limits others had tried to impose on her. Soccer was no longer just a pastime, but the language with which she shouted to the world that she existed, that she had talent, that she deserved respect.



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