

The Drawing That Wouldn’t Fit in the Planner

Jana was seventeen years old and the kind of girl everyone admired for her responsibility. She was always punctual, her notebooks were so well-organized they practically shone, and she prepared for every exam as if it were the last one of her life.

But for weeks—maybe months—something hadn’t been right.

Her eyes trembled whenever she thought about the university entrance exams, and her heart raced whenever someone asked her, “So, what are you going to study?”

Jana wanted to study medicine. She wanted it with all her heart. But behind that huge dream, there was an even greater fear: the fear of not being good enough.

And so, amidst outlines, practice exams, and calendars filled with colorful highlighters, Jana began to disappear. Not completely, not physically. But she was disappearing from the good things: playing with her sister Arlet, leisurely chats with her grandparents, long afternoons with her parents, the songs she used to sing in the shower.

One day, Arlet entered Jana’s room without knocking. She carried a sheet of paper with a colorful drawing. There were two girls, one older and one younger, under a giant tree, holding hands.

“I’m with you,” Arlet said. “But you’re never there. You always look tired and you say mean things to yourself. I want the Jana who laughs.”

Jana didn’t know what to say. She stared at the drawing. There were no notebooks, no notes, no reminders, just a moment she was missing out on.

That night, after a long time, Jana didn’t study. She went downstairs with Arlet to make popcorn and they watched a movie with their parents. The next day, she spoke with her mother and told her she felt too much pressure, that she was afraid of failing. Her mother listened, patiently, without judgment.

“Doing well is important, Jana,” she told her, “but doing it at your own expense won’t get you far. The world doesn’t end with a grade. And you are more than just your academic record.”

They sought help, and Jana began seeing a psychologist. Slowly, she learned to breathe before studying, to pause without guilt, to set limits on the demands she placed on herself.

She didn’t stop studying, but she did begin to truly live while she did.

In the afternoons, she went for walks with Arlet. On Sundays, she had lunch with her grandparents. She started listening to music again, laughing, remembering that she was much more than just a responsible student.

On the day of the university entrance exams, she entered the classroom with a peaceful heart. She knew she had given it her all, but above all, she knew that whatever happened, she would be okay.

Because she had learned that nurturing dreams is all well and good... but taking care of yourself is essential to achieving them.