

Maya stood at the edge of the old railway bridge, the wind playing with her hair as she stared down at the rushing river below. It wasn't a real crossroads, but it felt like one. In her hands were two things: a crumpled letter and her phone. One meant going far away, chasing her dream. The other meant staying, where everything was safe and known.

The letter was from an art school in Paris. Ever since Maya was little, she'd dreamed of becoming an artist. She would draw dragons on her walls, sketch during boring lessons, and even sell tiny paintings at the school fair. Now, that dream could really happen. The school had accepted her. It was everything she'd ever wanted. But Paris was far. Far from her mum, her little brother Leo, and her best friend Josh.

She thought about all the things she'd miss: movie nights with her family, helping Leo with his spelling, and racing Josh to the corner shop. Her mum had said gently, "You don't have to go. You can study art here too. We'll support you no matter what." That made the decision even harder. If they were angry, maybe it would be easier to leave. But they weren't. They loved her.

Maya looked out across the trees and the sky, thinking about the two futures. In one, she stayed. Life would be calm, familiar. She'd still draw, still dream. In the other, she'd be walking through Paris streets, learning from artists, seeing the world differently. But she'd also be alone. No one would be there to remind her to eat breakfast or laugh at her terrible puns.

She took a deep breath. A bird flew overhead, wings wide in the sky. It made her smile. Maybe she was scared, but being scared didn't mean she shouldn't go. Maybe it meant this choice really mattered. She looked down at the letter again, then at her phone. Her thumb hovered before she typed: Mum, I'm going to Paris. I'll miss you so much. But I need to do this.

As she walked away from the bridge, Maya felt her heart beating fast. The choice was made. It hurt a little, but it also felt like flying. The future was waiting, and she was ready to meet it, one bold step at a time.