Thalia Fox attracted laughter and fascination wherever she went. The reason for that was hidden, nestled in the folds of the soft, worn pouch that was kept suspended on a string around her neck. Concealed within the sagging folds of the fabric pouch lay a rose gold coin, its engravings eroded with decades of fingers. One side had a blurred image of a fox, while the other had faded carvings of a pine tree. This is what Thalia regarded as her lucky charm, and it helped her decide to take a risk like her wild family of Foxes are known to do, or to retreat calmly, like a pine. Each morning, Thalia would fish it out to polish, so it was extremely unexpected when, two months ago, Thalia’s slender, expecting fingers brushed nothing but air. Anxious, the teenager upended her pouch, half believing that the coin would fall out with her sapphire necklace, which was carved with the same symbols. It didn’t. The treasured coin was gone.

She shook the sateen pouch even more vigorously, her amber eyes dilating to a panicked brown so dark that it was almost black when she realised something worse. Her necklace, her replacement choice-maker, was gone too. By then, her amber eyes had morphed into round holes of horror; she had lost her lucky charm and her family heirloom all in one day! She tore through her dorm room, notes and books creating a fine carpet of paper. Thalia sighed as her auburn hair slipped back out of her ponytail. Her dorm buddy, Charlotte, popped in and surveyed the mess warily. “Hey, Foxy!” she beckoned to her friend, “How about we go to the fair first? The fair is going to end in one hour, and you look like you need some air.” Reluctantly, Thalia followed her BFF and headed out of her now trashed room, leaving the failing mission behind with it.

The fresh air came as a shock to Thalia, who hurriedly drank it in, while the pair headed downtown and toward the fair. The carnival was filled with entertainment of all sorts, and the pair of girls were overwhelmed by the abundant assortment of activities. “Which way, Foxy?” queried Charlotte, glancing expectantly at the vacant pouch. Thalia resisted the temptation to reach into it and pointed straight forward; an electrical thrill raced along her spine. She had never done this decision-making without her coin before, and the only way she could describe this floating feeling was… free! Thalia strutted down the land, skipping after Charlotte with a spring in her step, listening contentedly as her friend chattered about this pair ride that they just had to go on. But her confidence melted when she saw the amusement ride plate; Double Plummet of Devastating Doom. Instinctively, Thalia’s knees locked and she froze. “C’mon, Foxy, this will be fun,” Charlotte coaxed. Thalia reached for the pouch again but forced her arm back to her side. She nodded and was led onto the Ride of Doom.

The ride took her breath away as Thalia plummeted, the wind blasted her face and she whooshed down the spaghetti tube at the speed of light. Finally, she arrived at the bottom of the ride with a big splash that drenched the lifeguard next to her. Thalia froze in time. “Were you scared?” Charlotte asked her BFF, urging her to think back.

FLASHBACK

Thalia plummeted alright, but no fear arose to take her throughout her whole ride. Instead, there was a warm feeling that blossomed in her chest, making her feel like she could take on the world.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Thalia understood, the feeling was pride. She used to use the coin to decide for her because she was too scared to say no. It was like saying that it was not her fault that the coin showed the pine. But now it was different. Thalia could say that she was brave for choosing the harder choice by herself. Thalia smiled the biggest smile ever. “Let’s do it again!”