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### Dream Director

The blurred scene in my mind begins to focus, and a video starts to play. A San Franciscan alleyway comes into view. Heavy rain cascades upon a man dressed in all black. Pools of water shimmer with reflections of neon restaurant signs and traffic lights. Suddenly, everything stops. Drops of water float motionlessly alongside yellow traffic lights that never turn red. Then, the alleyway begins to blur and fade away. As I close the shutter on my mental camera, my eyes resume observing what truly lies before me. My brain feels fuzzy, and I save what I've imagined for later. That night, lying in bed, I try to resume the scene, but I can't. Something's missing. As I fall asleep, I wonder: how does it end?

My mental movies began at a young age. After watching the show 'Wild Kratts,' I imagined epic animal battles spanning entire species and ecosystems. Once introduced to Toy Story, I dreamt of my stuffed animals' everyday lives and adventures. I represented these stories through play, organizing and moving my toys as though they were props in a film. After covering my room in carefully-placed toys, I would go running to my parents so they could watch as I performed my movie.

However, as the ideas inside my head expanded, I grew frustrated with the limitations I faced in sharing my movies. For starters, my toys couldn't fly, climb, or jump, let alone re-enact the complex motions I imagined. In response, I found ways to improve my crafting skills. My Mom taught me how to use her sewing machine to design costumes. I took an engineering course by Mark Rober to improve my set-building. I practiced creating Rube-Goldberg machines to incorporate dynamic motion. Ultimately, I used these skills together to continue furthering my mind-movies.

As my crafting improved, my lack of knowledge became an obstacle. I learned the necessity of understanding a vast amount of information to funnel into a concise creative project. In pursuit of this knowledge, I asked my parents for a two-year subscription to TIME magazine, and I absorbed each issue as it arrived week by week. With my newfound focus on learning, I came to understand my classes differently. The multitude of AP and Honors classes I had been grudgingly fighting through became exciting opportunities to expand my knowledge. In my free time I took to news outlets and online articles, allowing my films to grow in depth and focus.

Pushing past these limits to my creativity, my dream-movies flourished. Eager to continue cultivating my films, I took drawing classes in high school, where I spent dozens of hours crafting intricate works. Today, I can imagine every detail for each scene in my mind, from the colors reflecting on puddles to the frozen raindrops I could count one by one. After drawing, I enrolled in Freestyle Academy and took Digital Media and Animation. My understanding of digital applications and practice creating videos allows me to consider how I could construct the scenes in my mind. The use of rotoscoping in Adobe After-Effects to allow the man in all black to continue moving while everything else remained frozen. The narrative arc and pacing to stimulate emotion and vested interest, as the man turns and stares directly at me. The vivid imagination to forget it's all in my head, and step into the scene as if it was real life...

My mind-movie starts to play and I enter the San-Franciscan alleyway. Raindrops still frozen in the air, the man clad in all-black faces me and begins to speak. As he does so, time breaks free of its stoppage: reflections shimmer, rain crashes down, and yellow street-lights finally turn red. The thundering rain drowns out the man's words, but I understand his message. The scene begins to fade away and I open my eyes. I wonder: what's next?