EXT. STREET. MORNING.

A gloomy closed window. The window shutters open and we find ourselves on the street.

Snow is melting. The grass is turning green. First leaves appear on the trees. A bird lands on a branch and begins to sing. The first flowers bloom.

EXT. STREET. MORNING.

Close-up, SOPHIA (9) sits wrapped in a blanket. We see her only from the chest up. She clutches a worn book of fairy tales to her chest. Her gaze is filled with wonder and joy. Behind her is a gloomy building. SOPHIA's gaze glides over a small garden beyond which lies an endless horizon. Close-up. SOPHIA's hand releases an apple that rolls to a bush, next to which is a hedgehog. The hedgehog is startled by the apple and curls up, releasing its spines. SOPHIA's laughter off-screen.

EXT. STREET. MORNING.

The hedgehog rummages in the garden. A small rabbit emerges from behind the grass. The rabbit cautiously approaches the apple and begins to eat it.

EXT. STREET. MORNING.

SOPHIA reads a book.The camera is directed at the book and moves into the book itself, emerging into SOPHIA's imagination.

EXT. SOPHIA'S IMAGINATION.

SOPHIA rides a dragon among the clouds. The wind blows through her hair. The dragon roars. The dragon dives downward.

EXT. STREET. EVENING. SUNSET.

A NURSE (23) walks down a narrow path toward SOPHIA. A welcoming smile on her face. The NURSE touches SOPHIA's shoulder.

NURSE

(Gently)

Sophia, it's time for dinner and bed.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIA

(Sadly)

So soon? But I've only just landed in the village.

I need to save it from the evil wolf.

NURSE

(Tenderly)

You're doing great, Sophia. (Pats Sophia on the head) Well, (crouches down) the sun is already setting and I think the village will soon fall asleep too. You'll definitely continue the rescue tomorrow. Deal?

SOPHIA

(Sadly)

Okay.

NURSE

Wonderful. Come on, let's take care of you, dear.

EXT. STREET. EVENING.

The nurse carefully takes the book from the girl's hands and puts it in a side pocket. The camera pulls back and we see the NURSE begin to push the wheelchair in which SOPHIA sits.

SOPHIA looks back at the sunset. And whispers.

SOPHIA

I'll definitely come back.

INT. SHELTER CORRIDOR.

Children run through the corridor. The NURSE pushes the wheelchair. SOPHIA sadly watches the children.

INT. SHELTER FOYER.

Two people enter the shelter foyer. MARTHA (30) and TOM (33). Dressed in comfortable explorer-traveler clothing. A small telescope is attached to the woman's belt. Their faces are filled with hope.

(CONTINUED)

INT. SHELTER FOYER.

MARTHA and TOM are greeted by the stern MRS. WHITMORE (60), director of the shelter.

MRS. WHITMORE

(Sternly yet courteously)

Welcome to our shelter, "Saint Mary's."

My name is Mary Whitmore. Please follow me.

MARTHA

(Excitedly)

Mrs. Whitmore, we're looking for this girl.

MARTHA holds out a drawing to MRS. WHITMORE. It depicts SOPHIA.

MRS. WHITMORE is first surprised, then a tender smile appears on her face, and slight moisture in her eyes, which she tries to hide.

MRS. WHITMORE quickly composes herself and gestures for them to follow her.

EXT. HOT AIR BALLOON. SKY.

MARTHA looks through a telescope, surveying the horizon. Then her gaze glides over clearings and hills, until it stops on a little girl sitting in the middle of a garden in a wheelchair with a book in her hands, behind her other children are playing. Then the gaze slides behind the girl to a building. On its facade is an inscription: "Saint Mary's Shelter"

Tears stream down MARTHA's face. And she whispers.

MARTHA (Happy) There you are, our daughter.

EXT. BALLOON-SHIP. SKY.

A balloon ship floats across the sky above a desert. TOM holds the ship's wheel. MARTHA studies a map.

SOPHIA holds a telescope in her hands, sitting in a new wheelchair. Nearby on a perch is a multicolored parrot TEDDY (3)

(CONTINUED)

TEDDY

Horizon, horizon. Head for the horizon.

The camera pulls back and we see the balloon-ship in the sky, its shadow resembling the shape of a dragon.

The ship flies toward the horizon.