

Prompt 1: The Hidden Cave

"Footprints in the Sand"

The tide had pulled back further than usual that morning, leaving behind smooth patches of wet sand that sparkled like scattered diamonds. I wandered along the shoreline collecting chip-chip shells for my collection, the salty breeze tugging at my hair. Bending down to grab a particularly shiny shell, I noticed footprints leading toward a hidden cave I had never noticed before, tucked behind a cluster of mini coconut trees. My curiosity buzzed like a hive of bees.

"Should I go look?" I asked myself, glancing around for my cousin Nadia, who had wandered further down the beach. I decided to follow the footprints alone, just a little way.

The cave mouth was cool and shadowy, smelling of salt and damp stone. Water dripped somewhere deep inside, echoing like a clock ticking. My heart hammered as I stepped carefully over slippery rocks, my flashlight app casting a thin beam ahead. Then I saw them — an old fisherman, sitting quietly on a rock, mending a torn net with weathered hands.

"Careful there," he said without looking up, his voice calm as still water. "These rocks get slippery." I nearly jumped out of my skin. "Who — who are you?" He chuckled. "Just an old fisherman who likes the quiet. Been coming here forty years." He gestured to his net. "Storm tore this up last night."

We talked for a while about the sea and the strange creatures he'd seen over the years — glowing fish, giant turtles, even a dolphin that followed his boat every full moon.

When I finally returned to Nadia, breathless with excitement, she didn't believe a word of my story — until she saw the old man's fishing hook, gifted to me as a keepsake, glinting silver in my palm.

Prompt 2: The Trembling Market

"The Day the Market Shook"

Saturday mornings at the market were always loud and lively, filled with the smells of fresh fish, ripe pommecythere, and Aunt Merle's famous doubles. I was helping Mummy carry a bag of provisions when without warning, the ground beneath the market stalls began to tremble. Hanging pots for sale clattered, vendors shouted, and a stack of orange crates toppled over like dominoes. My stomach dropped as if I were on a fast-moving swing. "Earthquake!" someone screamed.

Mummy grabbed my hand so tightly it almost hurt. "Stay with me, stay under the awning post, away from the stalls!" she shouted over the chaos. I clung to a sturdy wooden post as the ground rolled beneath my sneakers, and for a few terrifying seconds, the whole world seemed to sway like a boat on rough water. A shelf of glass jars shattered nearby, and I squeezed my eyes shut, my heart thundering.

Then, as suddenly as it started, the shaking stopped. Silence hung over the market for a moment before everyone began talking at once, checking on their neighbours, sweeping up broken glass. Aunt Merle rushed over, her hands still dusted with flour. "You two alright?" she asked, her voice shaking slightly.

Mummy nodded, though her hands trembled as she smoothed my hair back. "That was a big one," she whispered. Together, we helped Aunt Merle pick up scattered oranges rolling across the pavement like runaway marbles, laughing nervously with relief each time one rolled under someone's stall.

By the time we walked home, the market had returned to its noisy self, vendors calling out prices as if nothing had happened. But I noticed Mummy held my hand a little tighter than usual the whole way home.



Prompt 3: The Hidden Talent

"The Voice I Never Knew I Had"

Independence Day concert practice was always my least favourite part of the school term. I stood at the back of the choir, mouthing the words instead of singing, terrified my voice would crack like an old door hinge. While practising for the school's Independence Day concert, you accidentally discovered a hidden talent — well, that's exactly what happened to me, though I never expected it.

Miss Charles, our music teacher, clapped her hands. "Let's try sectionals. Altos, step forward and sing the verse alone." My stomach twisted into knots tighter than a fishing net. I mouthed along nervously, but somehow, this time, actual sound came out — clear, strong, and steady, like water flowing smoothly over stones.

The room went quiet. Miss Charles's eyebrows rose in surprise. "Was that you?" she asked, pointing directly at me. My cheeks burned hotter than the afternoon sun. "I — I think so, Miss." "Sing that again," she said, "just you this time." My knees wobbled like jelly, but I took a breath and sang the verse alone. The classroom fell into complete silence, everyone staring, until Miss Charles broke into a wide smile.

"You've been hiding this beautiful voice all year!" she exclaimed. "You'll sing the solo verse at the concert." I wanted to protest, to disappear into the floor, but something inside me — pride, maybe, or courage — made me nod instead.

On the night of the concert, my legs shook like coconut branches in the wind as I stepped up to the microphone. But when the music began, my voice rang out clear across the auditorium, and the applause afterward felt like warm sunshine wrapping around me. I never mouthed the words again.

