

Prompt 1: The Tin Box Under the House

"The Tin Box Beneath the House"

My slipper had rolled somewhere under the house during a game of hopscotch, and Daddy sent me crawling beneath the wooden planks to retrieve it. As the spiderwebs brushed against my face like ghostly fingers, I found an old tin box wedged between two beams. For some reason, this tin box piqued my interest, and in that moment, the slipper no longer mattered.

The box was rusted at the edges, its surface decorated with faded flowers that had once been bright pink. I tugged it free, dust raising like a tsunami, and carried it out into the sunlight. "What's that?" my sister Priya asked, peering over my shoulder. "Don't know," I said, prying open the stiff lid with trembling fingers.

Inside were old marbles, a cracked harmonica, and a folded piece of paper yellowed with age. I unfolded it carefully. It was a child's drawing — stick figures standing beside a house that looked remarkably like ours, signed at the bottom: *"Anthony, age 9."* "That's Daddy's name!" Priya gasped.

We rushed inside to show him, nearly tripping over the doorstep in our excitement. Daddy's eyes went soft and distant when he saw the drawing, a smile spreading slowly across his face like sunrise breaking over hills. "I drew this when I was your age," he murmured, running his thumb over the faded lines. "I completely forgot I ever hid a treasure box under there."

He told us stories about his own childhood, playing marbles in the very yard where we now stood, his harmonica once filling these same walls with music. That evening, we placed the tin box on the living room shelf, no longer a forgotten thing hidden in darkness, but a small window into Daddy's own childhood, dusted off and given new light.



Prompt 2: The Diving Block

"There's No Turning Back Now"

The pool deck was slippery beneath my bare feet, and the chlorine smell stung my nose as I climbed to the highest row in the stands. I wanted to see the entire race without hindrance. Rows of spectators filled the bleachers, their voices blending into a wall of noise. Standing at the top of the diving block with the whole school watching, Reshma took a deep breath and thought, "There's no turning back now." You could read her mind by her facial expression. Her hands trembled slightly as she adjusted her goggles.

The whistle blew sharp and sudden, and she launched forward, slicing into the cool water like an arrow released from a bow. Her arms pulled hard against the water, her legs kicking in perfect rhythm. We all watched as the world reduced to bubbles before our eyes.

Halfway through the race, we all began to hope and pray. Right before our eyes, another swimmer seemed to be gaining momentum alongside Reshma. Their splashes crashed together like waves colliding. "*Just a little more,*" I whispered to myself, knowing Reshma could not hear my hushed support.

Suddenly, the wall appeared beneath Reshma's fingertips, as she slapped it hard, gasping for air, ripping her goggles. The scoreboard flashed above the pool. First place — by half a second.

Cheers erupted from the bleachers, and the school's coach pumped his fist in celebration. Reshma's chest heaved as she floated in the water looking exhausted but triumphant. As she climbed out onto the deck on wobbly legs, she accepted her teammates' hugs, still catching her breath.

Somewhere between the diving block and the finish line, I had discovered a strength inside myself I never knew existed. I now wanted to be like Reshma.

Prompt 3: The Old Fishing Net

"Tangled in the Net"

Uncle Winston's fishing boat, the *Sea Breeze*, needed fresh paint and mending before the fishing season began. Always looking for an adventure, I gladly agreed to spend Saturday morning helping him repair the old wooden hull. While helping uncle, I noticed something tangled in the old net draped across the sand. From the distance, I couldn't tell exactly what it was, but being a 'maco' in training, I knew I needed a closer look.

"Uncle Winston, look!" I shouted from the distance. He wiped his hands on his shorts and crouched beside me. Tangled deep within the ropes was an average sized sea turtle, its flipper caught fast, it's dark eyes wide with exhaustion. "Easy now," Uncle Winston murmured, his weathered hands moving carefully as he began loosening the knots. "Fetch my knife from the toolbox, quick."

My fingers fumbled with excitement and nervousness as I found the knife and passed it over. Uncle Winston sliced through the stubborn ropes one strand at a time, working slowly, making sure not to hurt the frightened creature.

Finally, the last rope fell away, and the turtle lay still for a moment, as if unsure it was truly free. "Go on, then," Uncle Winston coaxed gently, nudging it toward the water's edge. The turtle shuffled forward hesitantly before finally sliding into the waves, its flippers pushing it gracefully out to sea like it belonged there all along. We watched until it's dark shape disappeared beneath the surface.

"You did good today," Uncle Winston said, ruffling my hair with his salty hand. I beamed with pride, the morning sun warm against my back. The boat still needed painting, the net still needed mending, but none of that mattered anymore. Today, we had given something back to the sea that had given us so much.

