

Prompt 1: The Garage Box

"The Secret in the Old Box"

The garage smelled like dust and old engine oil, the kind of smell that made my nose twitch like a rabbit's. Daddy said we had to clean it out before Grandma came to visit, so I dragged out boxes while Mummy swept cobwebs from the corners.

That's when I saw it — a small wooden box tucked behind the paint tins, its lid closed tight like a secret keeping itself safe. I wiped away the dust with my sleeve and lifted the lid slowly, my heart thumping like a drum in a steelband.

Inside were old black-and-white photographs, a folded letter, and a tiny gold ring. The photographs showed a young woman smiling on a beach, her dress blowing sideways in the wind. I turned one over. Written on the back in shaky handwriting was: *"Rosa, before the wedding, 1962."*

"Mummy!" I shouted, my voice cracking with excitement. "Come and see this!" She hurried over, and when she saw the photograph, her eyes went wide as saucers. "That's your great-grandmother," she whispered. "I haven't seen this picture in years. Everyone thought it was lost forever."

We sat together on the garage floor, forgetting all about the cleaning, and Mummy told me stories about Great-Grandma Rosa — how she used to sing calypso while cooking, and how she crossed the sea from another island to start a new life.

By the time Daddy called us for dinner, the garage was still messy, but I didn't care one bit. I had found something far more precious than a clean floor — a piece of my family's history that had been waiting quietly in the dark, like a hidden treasure just for me. That night, I placed the photograph on my nightstand, right where I could see it before I closed my eyes.



Prompt 2: The Village Drums

"When the Drums Went Silent"

The evening air was thick with the smell of roasting corn and the chatter of villagers gathering for the harvest celebration. Lanterns glowed like fireflies strung between the houses, and I sat cross-legged near the fire, waiting for the drummers to begin.

The moment the drums began to beat, the whole village went silent. Even the crickets seemed to stop chirping to listen. The rhythm rolled through the ground and up into my chest, steady as a heartbeat, and dancers stepped into the firelight with painted faces and swirling skirts. I watched, mesmerized, until I noticed my little brother Kwame was no longer beside me. Panic shot through me like a jolt of lightning. I scanned the crowd, but he was nowhere in sight.

I slipped away from the fire and searched between the huts, calling his name in a whisper so I wouldn't disturb the ceremony. Finally, I found him near the old mango tree, crouched down and crying softly, his ankle twisted from a fall. "I got lost," he sobbed. "I couldn't find you."

I helped him up, letting him lean on my shoulder like a broken branch needing support, and together we hobbled back toward the firelight. Grandma spotted us immediately and rushed over, her bangles jingling with every step.

"You found your way back to the drums," she said gently, wrapping a cool cloth around Kwame's ankle. "That's what they're for — to guide us home." We sat together for the rest of the night, Kwame's foot propped on a cushion, the drumbeats wrapping around us like a warm blanket. I realized then that some sounds don't just fill the air — they hold a whole village together.



Prompt 3: The Riverbank Sound

"The Splash by the River"

The afternoon sun sprinkled gold across the water as I walked home along the riverbank, my school bag bouncing against my back. Birds chattered overhead, and the river gurgled softly, like it was whispering secrets to the stones.

Then I heard it — a strange splashing sound, followed by a soft whimpering cry. My feet stopped moving on their own, frozen like statues. I crept toward the sound, pushing aside the tall grass that scratched at my ankles.

There, tangled in some vines near the water's edge, was a small dog, paddling frantically to keep its head above the current. Its eyes were wide with fear, and every splash sent ripples racing outward like rings around a stone. Without thinking, I dropped my bag and grabbed a long stick lying nearby. "Hold on!" I shouted, though I wasn't sure the dog understood. I stretched the stick toward it, my arms trembling with the effort, the river tugging at my sneakers.

The dog clamped its teeth gently onto the stick, and I pulled with all my strength, my sneakers sinking into the muddy bank. Slowly, slowly, the dog came closer until I could grab its soaking fur and haul it onto solid ground.

It shook itself like a wet mop, spraying water everywhere, then looked up at me with grateful brown eyes. "Where did you come from, little fellow?" I laughed, wiping muddy water from my face.

I carried the shivering pup home wrapped in my sweater, and by the time we reached my gate, he had already fallen asleep in my arms, warm and safe. Mummy said we could keep him until we found his owner — but somehow, I already knew he wasn't going anywhere.

