



# A Season of Stories: Summer 2025

Max Z. Zhu

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An illustration of a young boy with black hair and blue eyes, wearing a grey hoodie and blue pants, sitting on a wooden floor and writing in a notebook with a quill pen. Above him is a large, purple, starry thought bubble containing various objects: a wrench, a chocolate bar with nuts, a blue toy airplane, another chocolate bar, and a pink piggy bank. The background shows a window with a view of a white landscape.

# **A Season of Stories: Summer 2025**

**Max Z. Zhu**

# Dedication

*A Season of Stories: Summer 2025*

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*To every curious mind who ever sat at a blank page wondering what to write, this book is for you.*

## Why Some Stories Have Versions

*When I started writing these summer stories, I imagined each one would arrive fully formed, like lightning striking the page. But that's not how writing works. Stories don't appear perfect: they grow, they change, and they level up.*

*That's why in this book, you'll sometimes see more than one version of the same story. The early drafts are rough, messy, and full of experiments. The later versions are tighter, sharper, and closer to the vision I wanted to share.*

*I decided to keep the different versions because I wanted this book to do more than just tell stories. I wanted it to show the process of storytelling. Each revision is like moving up a level in a game: the world gets bigger, the challenges get harder, and the results feel more rewarding.*

*So if you read a story and then see it again, don't be surprised. It's the same story, just told at a different stage of its journey. My hope is that you'll enjoy not just the finished pieces, but also the path they took to get there.*

*After all, every good story is a kind of adventure, and sometimes, the rewriting is where the real magic happens.*

— Max



# Hello!

Hi, my name is Max. This summer, I decided to write a lot of stories: most were inspired by books I read, some came from prompts, and some just showed up in my brain while I was idling.

I didn't write them all perfectly at the first time. Some stories have versions: the early ones are rough, the second ones are better, and the final ones are the best. I learned that revising is similar to levelling up in a game, Oevery time, you get closer to something great.

These 15 chapters are full of adventure, imagination, robots, and so much more. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed writing (and rewriting) them.

Welcome to my summer of stories!



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# The Day I Saw Magic

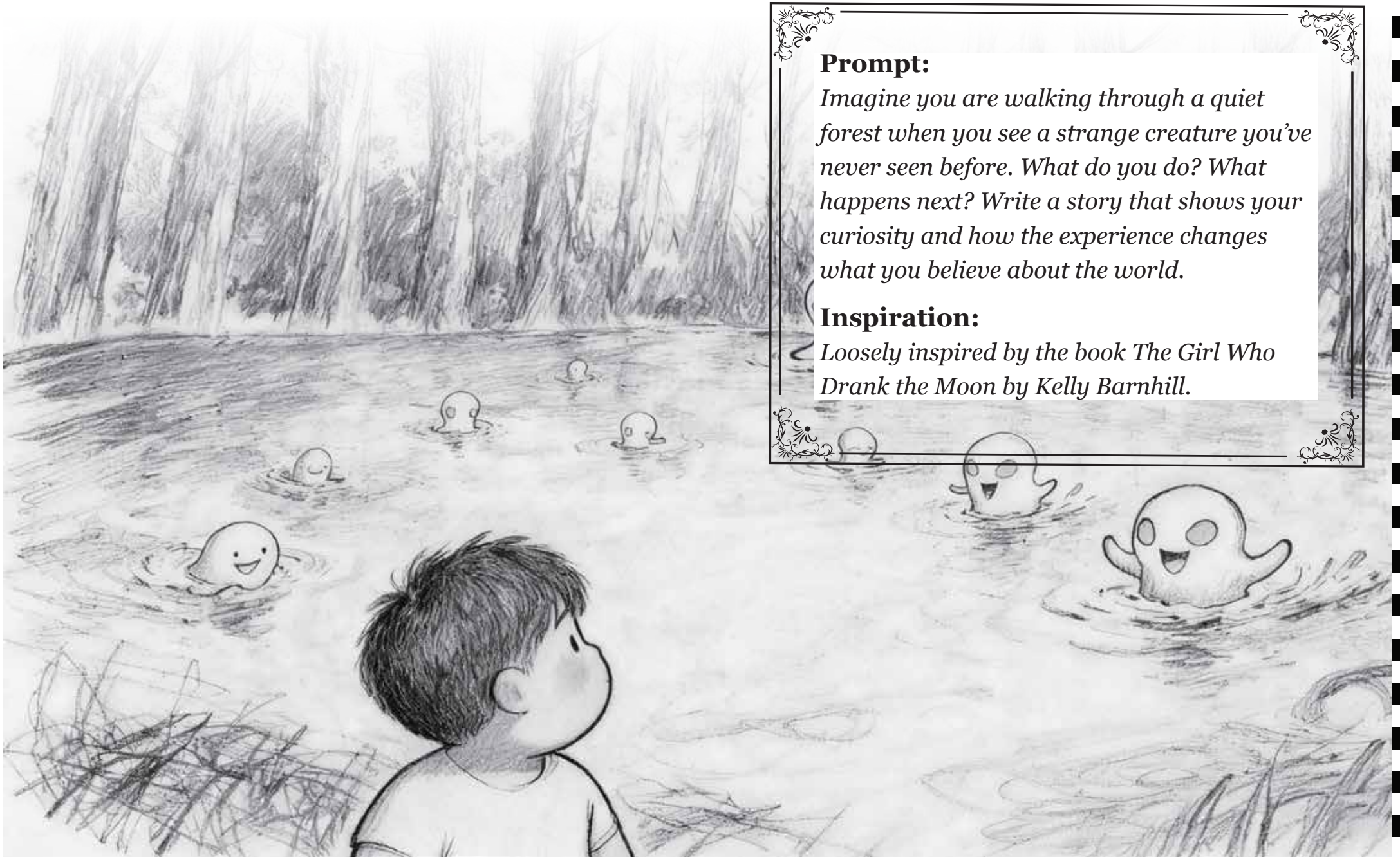
## Revision Showcase

### Prompt:

*Imagine you are walking through a quiet forest when you see a strange creature you've never seen before. What do you do? What happens next? Write a story that shows your curiosity and how the experience changes what you believe about the world.*

### Inspiration:

*Loosely inspired by the book *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill.*





## Polished Version

*Completed: August 21, 2025*

One day, I went for a walk in the forest. While I was looking around, I saw a strange creature I had never seen before. My curiosity grew, and I decided to follow it. Suddenly, I stumbled on a rock and fell. The creature heard the noise and dashed away. I didn't want to give up, so I kept following the trail of its footprints.

After a while, I reached a clearing and froze in amazement. There were not just one, but dozens of creatures exactly like the first one. Whenever one took a step, all the others did the same thing, like mirrors copying each other. When they noticed me, every single head turned at once, and then they scurried off together.

I walked quietly so I wouldn't frighten them again. Their prints led me to a wide river. But then the tracks stopped. I wondered, Did they cross the water? Could they swim? I bent down and peeked into the river. To my surprise, the creatures were gliding through the water, each one moving differently, freely, as though the water had given them new life.

"It really is magic!" I shouted with joy. Seeing those creatures made me believe magic might be real. Even today, I still wonder about them. Maybe one day, I will return and see them again.



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: June 19, 2025*

One day, I was walking in the woods when I saw a creature. I was curious and wanted to learn more about it, so I started to follow the creature. But then I tripped on a rock. The creature heard me and ran away.

I didn't want to give up, I needed to learn more. I followed its footprints through the forest. Then I saw something incredible, lots of creatures that looked just like the first one! Every time one moved, all the others moved the same way. It was like they were all clones of the first one! When they saw me again, they all turned their heads and ran.

They were a little scary, but I still wanted to run after them, but I didn't want to scare them more. So, I walked quietly instead and followed their footprints again.

Soon, I saw a river. There were no more footprints after that. I thought, "Can they swim?" I looked into the water, and I saw so many of the creatures swimming! This time they weren't moving like each other, they were themselves!





*“It’s magical!” I shouted, dancing with excitement.*

*In the end, that moment made me believe that maybe magic is real. Even today, I still wonder if magic is real or not, but I think I found the answer that day. I do hope I can see that magical creature again!*

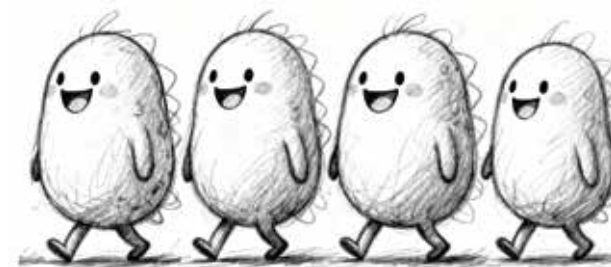


## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: June 17, 2025*

Once I was in the woods and saw a big creature. I started stalking it but I tripped on a rock which the creature heard it and ran away. After I followed its footsteps until I saw tons of the creature I saw before. But every time one creature moved the others were doing the exact same thing. They turned their head and started running away. I felt like it was a demon. I wanted to chase after it but I didn’t want to act as a demon. This time I walked after it. I followed the footprints again. Even though there were so many of those creatures, they were only 1 creature’s foot prints. I did not see footprint when a river was ahead. The creatures probably could not swim. To my surprise, I looked in the water and saw tons of the creatures swimming. “It’s magical!” I thought to myself. I danced in happiness as I said it.

In conclusion, that creature really made me believe in magic. Today, I still don’t know if magic is real but this answers my question.

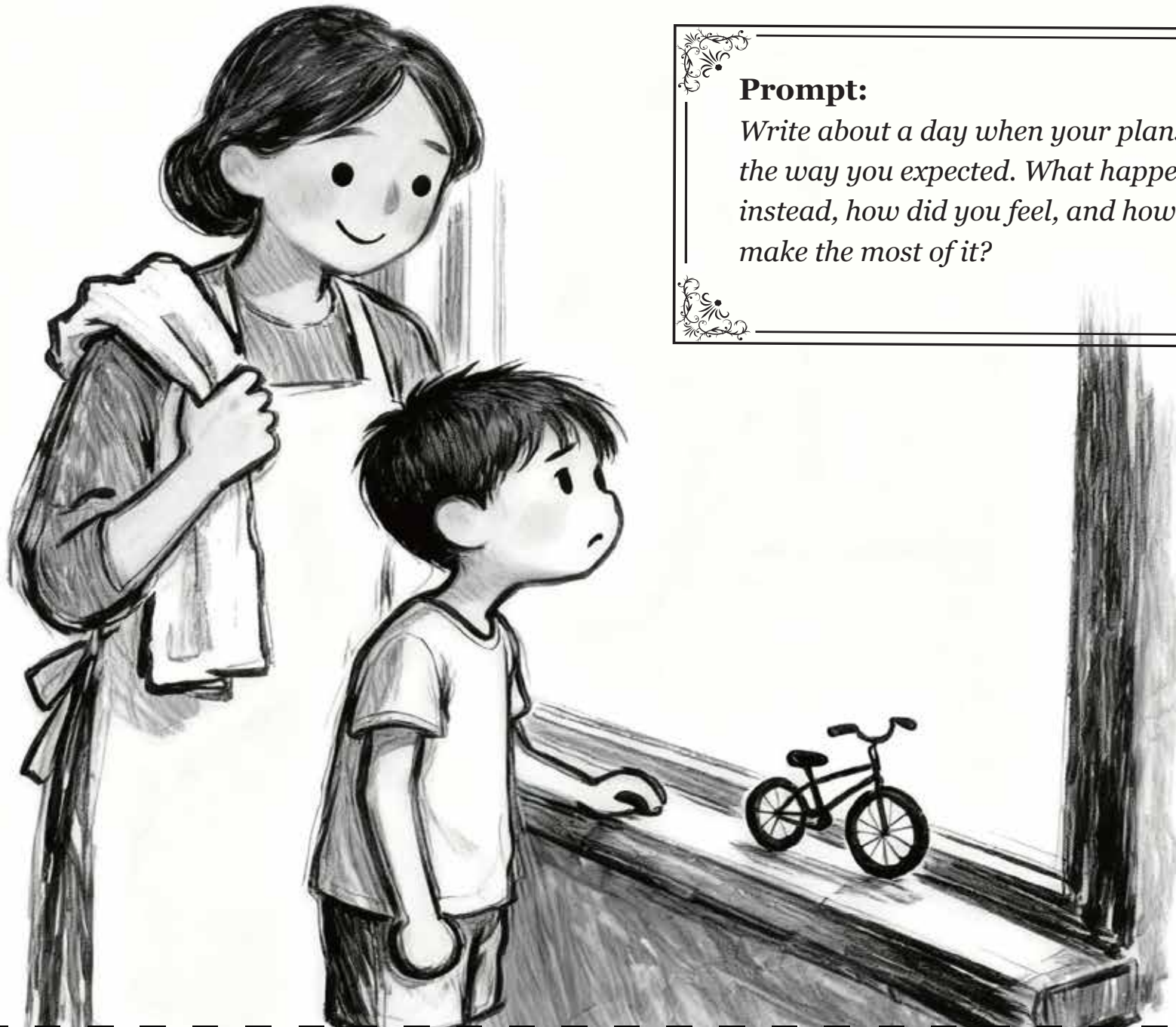


# Maybe Tomorrow

## Revision Showcase

### Prompt:

*Write about a day when your plans didn't go the way you expected. What happened instead, how did you feel, and how did you make the most of it?*





## Polished Version

*Completed: August 26, 2025*

One day, I was planning to go biking. As soon as I stepped outside, I saw water splashing everywhere. "It's raining. I really wanted to go biking," I said. "Now we have to stay inside," I sighed. Before I knew it, the helmet in my hand was already soaking wet.

"Let's do something to keep us busy!" said Mom. So Mom and I went inside. I raced upstairs to water my little plant and saw that its leaves were wilting. I was so sad it was raining, and not only that, but my plant was wilting too.

I tried to cheer myself up, and a great idea popped into my head. "I will go play my favorite NHL hockey game on the Xbox in the basement," I thought. Then I slowly walked to the basement wondering if I would win the game. I turned on the TV, started the game console, logged in, and continued my unfinished game from last time. This time, I won 5 to 3. My wish came true!

Scoring in overtime made me feel like a real NHL hockey player. After about ten minutes, I decided to take a break. I went to the living room to read and was surprised to see my mom reading too. I grabbed my favorite Roald Dahl book and started reading.



Just before I got to the most exciting part, I noticed it had finally stopped raining.

"HURRAY!" I shouted with great excitement. Then my mom looked at her phone.

It was already 8:31pm. "Now, I need to go to bed," I said, upset. I couldn't believe it. I spent most of the day inside waiting for the rain to stop so I could go biking, and I didn't even get to go.

"Maybe tomorrow we can go biking," my mom said, trying to cheer me up.

"Right," I replied.

Even though I spent most of the day inside, I still had a cozy and fun day indoors.



## Version 3.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: June 15, 2025*

One day, I was planning to go biking. As soon as I stepped outside, I saw the water splashing on the floor, acting like it was beaten up in a boxing match.

"It's raining. I honestly want to go biking." "Now we have to stay inside," I said with a sigh. Before I knew it, the helmet I was holding in my left hand was already soaking wet.

"Let's do something to keep us busy!" said Mom.

So Mom and I went inside. I raced upstairs to water my little plant and saw that the leaves were wilting. I was so sad it was raining, and not only that, but my plant was wilting.

I tried to cheer myself up, and a brilliant idea hit my head like a rock. "I will go play my favourite NHL hockey game on the Xbox in the basement," I thought to myself. Then I slowly walked to the basement wondering if I would win the match.

Then I opened the TV, powered up the game console, logged in and continued my unfinished game from last time. This time, I won 5 to 3. My wish came true! Scoring in overtime made me feel like a real NHL hockey player.

After about ten minutes, I decided to take a break. So I

went to the living room to read, surprisingly, seeing my mom reading too. So I grabbed my favourite Roald Dahl book and started reading. Just before I was getting to the climax, I noticed it had finally stopped raining.

"HURRAY!" I shouted with great excitement.

Then my mom looked at her phone. Too late. It was already 9:31.

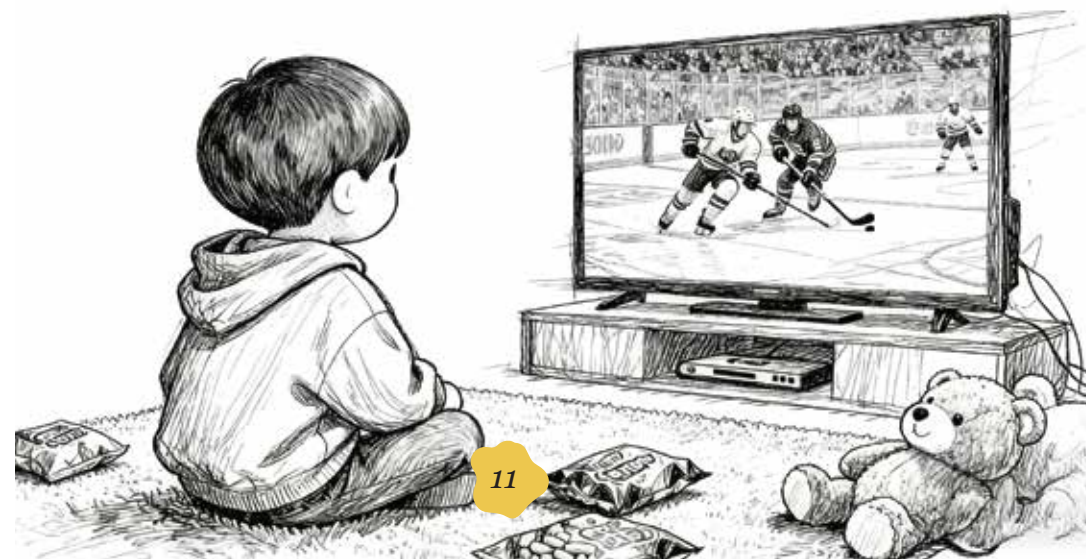
"Now, I need to go to bed," I said with frustration.

I couldn't believe it, I spent most of the day inside waiting for the rain to go biking and I didn't even get to go the whole time.

"Maybe tomorrow we can go biking," my mom said trying to cheer me up.

"Right," I replied, still feeling upset about what happened earlier.

Even though I spent most of the day inside, I still had a cozy and fun day indoors.



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: June 13, 2025*

"It's raining. I honestly want to go biking. Now we have to stay inside," I said with a sigh. "Let's do something to keep us busy!" said Mom. So my mom and I went inside. I raced upstairs to water my little plant and saw that the leaves were wilting. I was so sad it was raining, and not only that, but my plant was wilting.

I thought about what could cheer me up, and a brilliant idea popped up into my brain. "I will go play my favourite NHL hockey game on the Xbox," I said to myself. Then I walked to the basement where my Xbox was. Then I opened the TV. As soon as it opened, I turned on the game console. I logged in and continued my unfinished game from last time. This time, I won 5 to 3!

Then I decided to take a break. So I went to the living room to join my mom. She was reading, so I grabbed my favourite Roald Dahl book and started reading. Soon I realized it stopped raining. "YAY!" I shouted.

Then my mom looked at her phone. Too late. It was already 9:31. Now, I need to go to bed.

"Maybe tomorrow we can bike," said Mom.

"Right," I replied.

## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: June 10, 2025*

When May had just started, I was about to go biking with my mom and just as we got out, it was snowing. May is the second month of spring and it's snowing! So we went back in and my mom started to make dinner while I started my homework.

Then my mom called me down when she finished dinner. After dinner I went to the basement to play on the x-box. I played for 15 minutes, then I looked out the window. Bad luck, it was still snowing.

So I went to the living room with my mom to have some quiet reading time. After I finished reading my Roald Dahl book, I again looked outside. This time it stopped snowing.

I quickly tell my mom the good news and she opens her phone. It's 9:31. Now, I have to go to sleep. Even more bad luck.

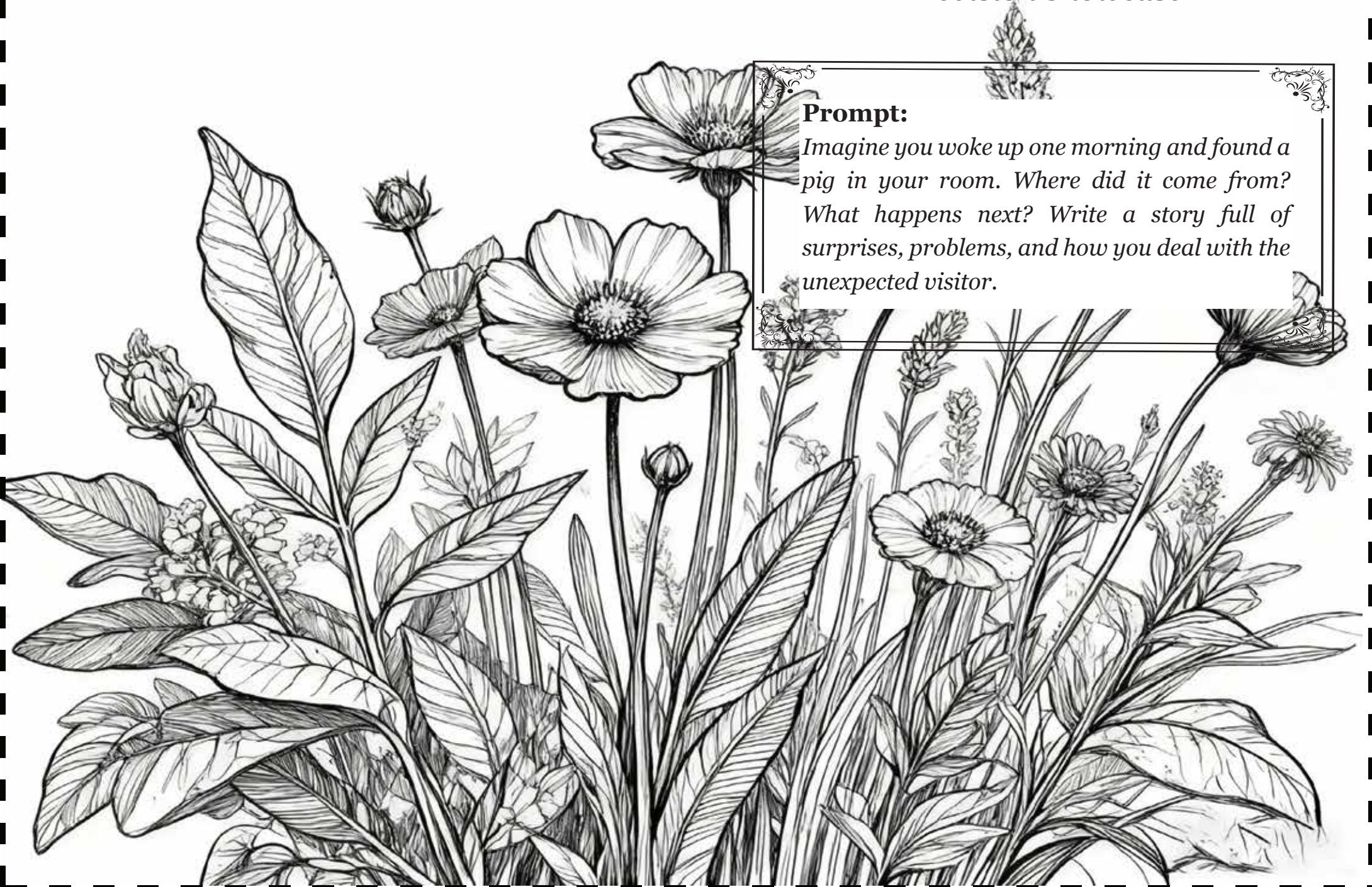


# My Room and the Pig

## Revision Showcase

### Prompt:

*Imagine you woke up one morning and found a pig in your room. Where did it come from? What happens next? Write a story full of surprises, problems, and how you deal with the unexpected visitor.*



## Polished Version

*Completed: August 28, 2025*

One quiet night, I was sitting in my room when I heard loud banging on my door. At first, I ignored it, but the knocking only grew louder until it sounded like someone was slamming the door.

Slowly, I stood up, each step creaking on the floor. Just as I touched the knob, the banging stopped. The silence made me nervous. For a moment, I even wondered if it was a ghost.

I ran to my parents' room and shook them, but they did not move. Nervously, I went back, only to hear the noise start again. BANG! BANG! BANG! My heart pounded as I pulled the door open.

To my surprise, it wasn't a ghost at all. It was a piglet! Its little hooves were pounding against my sister's door. A second later, my brother Tom appeared with a grin and told me he had already named the pig Hamlet.

Before I could say anything, Hamlet squealed and dashed into the living room, knocking over a lamp. I chased after him, but he was too fast, dashing around like he owned the house.

Then my sister Pearl appeared, saw the piglet, and let out a scream so loud it shook the whole house. I tried to hide

Hamlet with pillows, but the little guy slipped away again.

Luckily, Tom ran to the neighbors, and they agreed to help us return Hamlet to a nearby farm.

Together, we carried him outside and handed him over.

As the neighbors drove away with him, I felt both relieved and a little sad. Hamlet had been wild and noisy, but he made that night one I'll never forget.



## Version 2.0 – Revised Draft

*Completed: June 27, 2025*

One quiet night, I was sitting in my room when I heard heavy banging on my door. At first, I ignored it, but the noise only got louder, shaking the door like someone was slamming into it.

I stood up carefully, each step creaking on the floor. Just as I touched the knob, the banging stopped. The silence made me nervous, and for a moment I wondered if it might even be a ghost.

I ran to my parents' room and tried to wake them, but they stayed asleep. With no choice, I went back, only to hear the noise again. BANG! BANG! BANG! My heart pounded as I pulled the door open.

To my surprise, it wasn't a ghost at all, it was a small piglet! Its hooves were banging against my sister's door. A second later, my brother Tom appeared with a grin and said he had already named the pig Hamlet.

Before I could say anything, Hamlet squealed and bolted into the living room, knocking over a lamp.

I chased after him, but the little pig was too quick, running around like he owned the place.

Then my sister Pearl came out, spotted Hamlet, and screamed so loudly the whole house shook. I tried to hide

him with pillows, but Hamlet slipped away easily.

Luckily, Tom ran to the neighbors, and they agreed to help us return Hamlet to a farm. Together, we carried him outside and handed him over.

As they drove away, I felt both relieved and a little sad. Hamlet had been wild and noisy, but he also made the night unforgettable.



## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: June 25, 2025*

One day in my room, I heard banging on my door. I tried to ignore it at first, but the noise was getting louder. Since the wood of the door was like a trampoline, I finally decided to open the door. As I waited closer, the floor creaked and then the noise was gone.

I observed the noise. It could have even been a ghost! I ran to my parents panicking. I told them I heard something bang on my door. All they did was just keep sleeping. I went back to my room hoping the noise wouldn't come back. It started coming until BANG, BANG, BANG. This time it didn't stop. My door was vibrating.

I opened it slowly. I looked through the opening and gasped. It was a small pig making the same noise on my sister's door. I had figured out what was banging on my door. I ran forward to catch the piglet but instead crashed into my brother Tom. Tom told me he had already named the pig Hamlet.

I lunged forward to stop him from making noise but Hamlet dodged it and went into the living room knocking over a lamp. The pig might have pissed me off but I was still excited to have a peculiar pig. But I still

didn't want the piglet to knock over any more items.

I had just learned that hyper pets don't belong in a place with precious or expensive items. Suddenly, I heard footsteps. It was my sister Pearl. As soon as she saw Hamlet, she screamed to the top of her lungs.

I tried covering Hamlet's body with pillows but I soon figured it was no use. Pearl had already seen Hamlet and now it was obvious. I ran to the door of my parents again, hoping they were still fast asleep. I was relieved they were.

Tom ran up to my neighbors' front porch ringing the doorbell. He told them we needed to return a piglet to a farm. As I saw Tom come back, I turned to Pearl who was moaning. Tom came back with some good news.

Our neighbors would help us return Hamlet. We carried Hamlet to their car and watched them drive away. I felt great that the risk was gone but I still miss Hamlet. Hamlet was a messy pig but I am still looking forward to seeing him again.

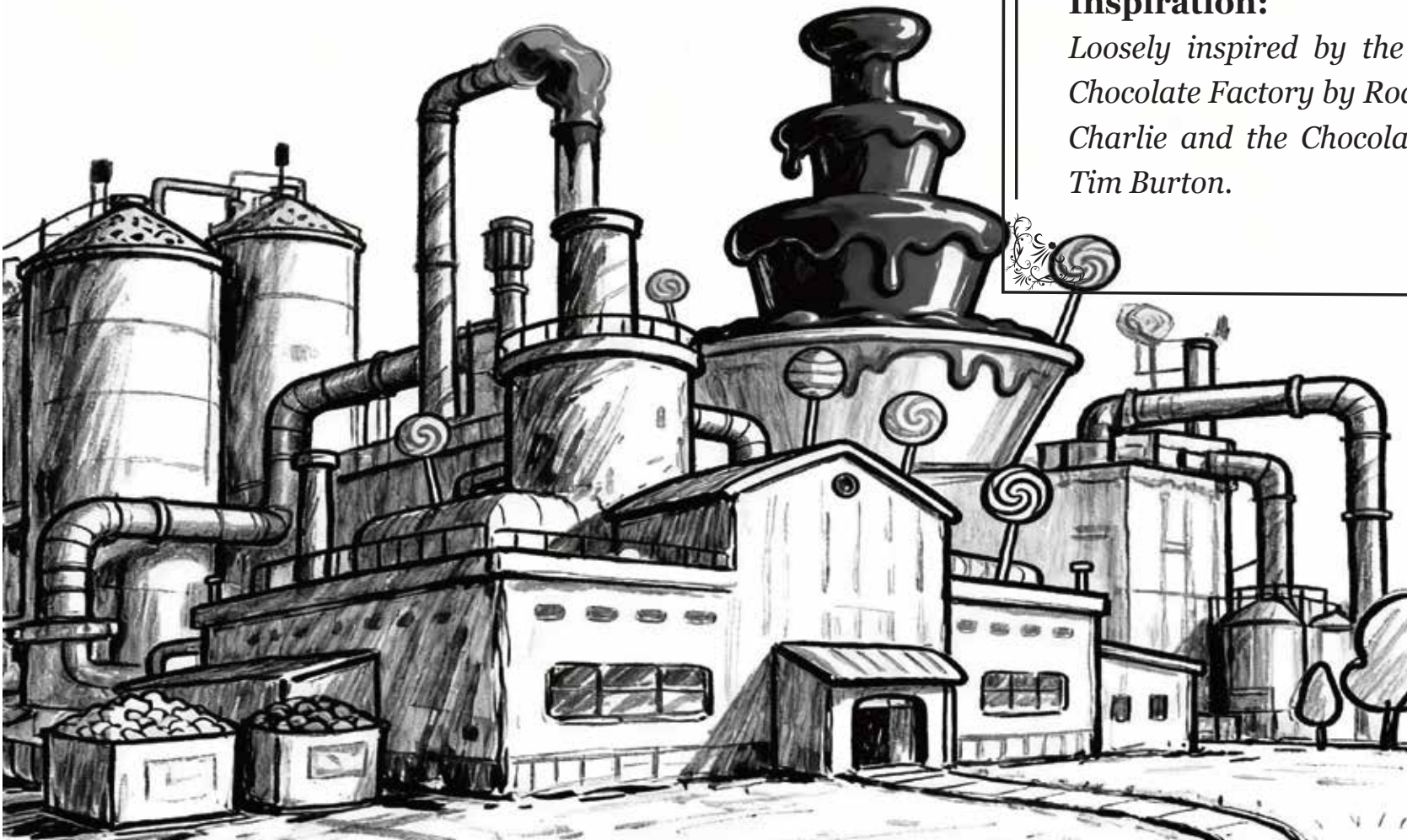
# Charlie Through the Pages and the Screen

## **Prompt:**

*Compare a book you've read with its movie version. What were the differences, which one did you enjoy more, and why? Use specific examples to explain your thoughts.*

## **Inspiration:**

*Loosely inspired by the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl, and the movie *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* directed by Tim Burton.*



*Completed: July 23, 2025*

One day, Grandpa Joe gave me a book called Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl. He said it reminded him of our own adventure. I was curious and read the book right away. A few days later, we watched the movie together. It was interesting to see the story told in two different ways.

The book gave details about my life and family. It showed how hard life was before I found the golden ticket. I felt excited again when I read the part about opening the chocolate bar. The book helped me imagine the factory, from the chocolate river to the candy rooms. The Oompa Loompa songs were funny, and each part of the story was pretty clear.

The movie made the factory look realistic. The colors were bright, and the scenes were exciting to watch. I liked seeing the glass elevator fly and the chocolate river move. The actors showed what the characters were like, and the music made the movie fun. The movie was shorter, but it covered most important parts.

Some things were different. In the book, Mr. Wonka was cheerful and fun. In the movie, he seemed quieter and a little strange. The movie added new parts, like Mr. Wonka's past, which the book did not have. Some scenes from the book were left out, but the movie still told the

story well.

I liked both, but I think the book was better. It gave more feelings and explained things more clearly. The movie was fun and easy to watch, but the book helped me understand more of the story.



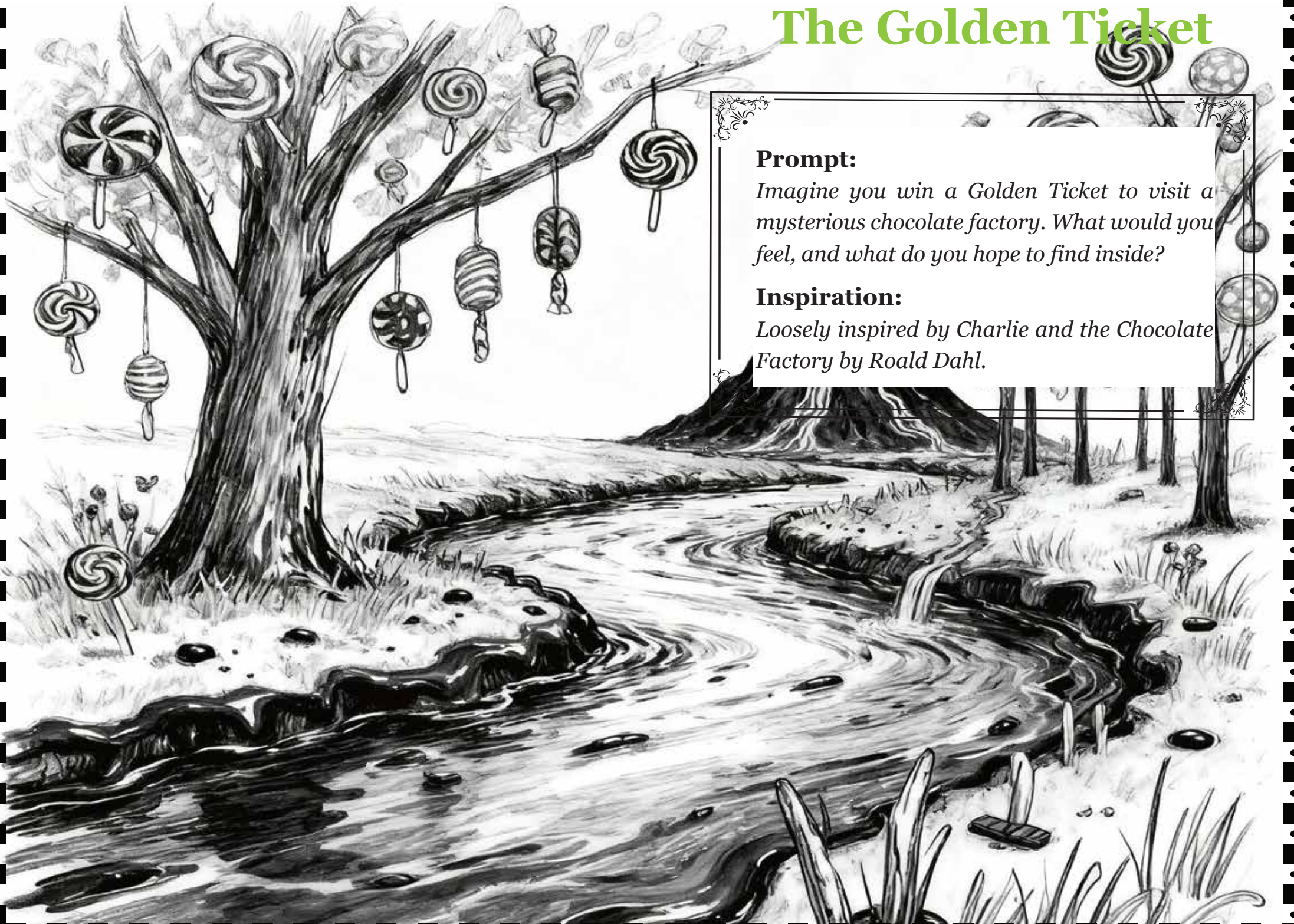
# The Golden Ticket

**Prompt:**

*Imagine you win a Golden Ticket to visit a mysterious chocolate factory. What would you feel, and what do you hope to find inside?*

**Inspiration:**

*Loosely inspired by Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: July 25, 2025*

One chilly day, I walked past a candy shop on my way home from school. I only had one coin, just enough to buy one Wonka chocolate bar. I hoped that there would be something special inside. When I got home, I sat next to Grandpa Joe and opened the wrapper slowly. Suddenly, I saw something shiny! It was a golden ticket! I couldn't believe my eyes. I jumped up and yelled, "Hurray!" Grandpa Joe was so excited that he got out of bed and danced around the room.

The next day, we went to Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. Inside, I saw a chocolate river, trees with candy on them, and grass you could eat. I smelt the wonderful chocolate that I loved. It felt like a whole different world!

Mr. Wonka showed us many rooms. One room had bubble gum that never lost its flavour! Another room had a machine that made candy upside down! Some of the other kids were greedy or rude, so they faced the consequences. I followed the rules and was kind. I didn't want to lose my chance at this wonderful place.

At the end of the tour, Mr. Wonka smiled at me, "Charlie," he said, "you are kind and obedient. I'd like you to run my factory one day." I was surprised and thrilled! I gave Grandpa Joe a big hug. Now, I knew

exactly why Mr. Willy Wonka made the golden tickets, it's because he needed someone to take over when he retired! He chose his favourite child out of the five lucky children and it was me!

In the end, my dream of eating all the chocolate I wanted, has now come true! After all the things I've gone through, I feel like I am the luckiest boy in the world!



## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: July 22, 2025*

One freezing day, I walked past a candy shop on my way home from school. I only had one coin, just enough to buy one Wonka chocolate bar. I hoped that there would be something special inside. When I got home, I sat next to Grandpa Joe and opened the wrapper slowly. Suddenly, I saw something shiny. It was a golden ticket! I couldn't believe my own eyes. I jumped up yelled "hurray," Grandpa Joe was so excited that he got out of bed and danced around the room.

The next day, we went to Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. It was enormous! Inside, I saw a chocolate river, trees with candy on them, and grass you could eat. It felt like a whole different world!

Mr. Wonka showed us many rooms. One room had bubblegum that never lost its flavour! Another room had a machine that made candy upside down!

Some of the other kids were greedy or rude, and they got in trouble. I followed the rules and was kind. I didn't want to lose my chance at this wonderful place.

At the end of the tour, Mr. Wonka smiled at me. "Charlie," he said, "You are kind and obedient. I'd like you to run my factory one day."

I was so surprised! I gave Grandpa Joe a big hug. Now I knew exactly why Mr. Willy Wonka made the golden tickets. It's because he needed someone to take over when he retired so he picked his favourite child out of the five and now, he picked me!

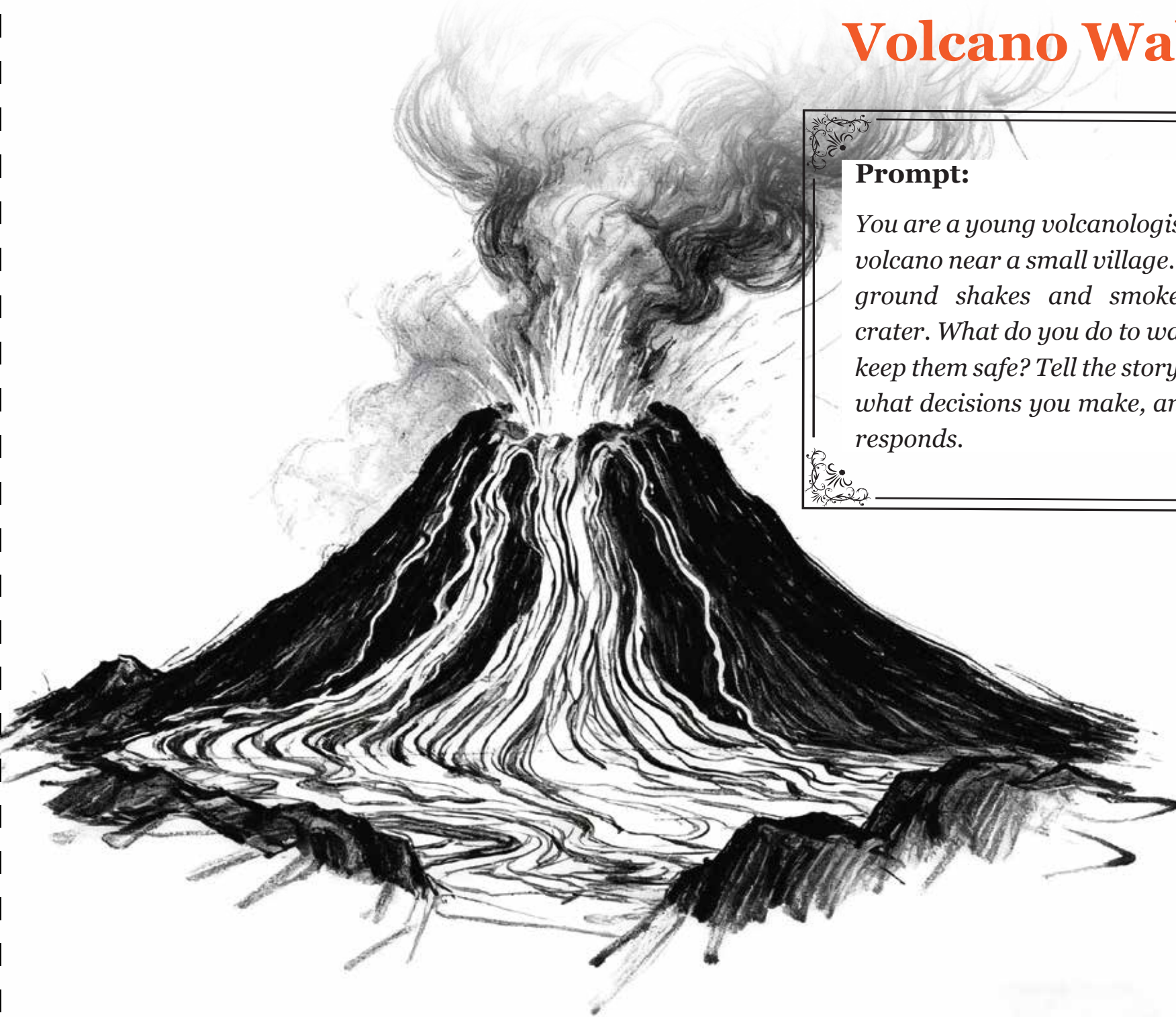
In the end, my dream of eating all the chocolate I wanted, has now come true!



# Volcano Waking Up

## Prompt:

*You are a young volcanologist studying a quiet volcano near a small village. One morning, the ground shakes and smoke rises from the crater. What do you do to warn the people and keep them safe? Tell the story of how you react, what decisions you make, and how the village responds.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: August 29, 2025*

I had been watching the volcano near our village for many quiet days. It was calm, only puffing little clouds of steam.

But one day, the ground began to shake more than before. I could feel small trembles under my feet, and the air smelled like rotten eggs. These were different warning signs that the hot melted rock inside the volcano might be moving up, and an eruption could happen soon.

I quickly checked my tools. The instruments showed that the shaking was getting stronger and happening more often. The air had more of a stinky odour called sulfur dioxide, which comes from inside the volcano. I knew from what I had learned that when this gas goes up and the ground moves, it means the volcano may erupt soon. The ground even looked like it was swelling, getting bigger because of the hot rock slowly pushing up.

I acted fast. I called the village leaders and told them what was happening. I explained that an eruption was likely and that everyone should leave the area quickly to be safe. People in the village trusted me and started to pack their things. I told them how lava and ash could hurt people who stayed too close, but if they moved to a

safe place, they would be okay. We helped each other get to safe spots away from where the lava might flow or the ashes might fall. I kept watching the volcano and told everyone what was going on to keep them calm. I felt scared but also proud because I used my knowledge to keep many people stay safe.

When the first ash clouds rose into the sky, I knew that our quick work had helped keep everyone safe. That day taught me how important it is to notice the signs a volcano gives such as shaking, gas smells, and the ground swelling. Using science and working together can save many lives when a volcano wakes up.



## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: August 20, 2025*

I had been watching the volcano near our village for many quiet days. It was calm, only puffing little clouds of steam. But one day, the ground began to shake more than before. I could feel small trembles under my feet, and the air smelled like rotten eggs. These were warning signs that the hot melted rock inside the volcano might be moving up, and an eruption could happen soon.

I quickly checked my tools. The machines showed that the shaking was getting stronger and happening more often. The air had more of a stinky gas called sulfur dioxide, which comes from inside the volcano. I knew from what I had learned that when this gas goes up and the ground moves, it means the volcano might erupt soon. The ground even looked like it was swelling, getting bigger because of the hot rock pushing up.

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safe place, they would be okay.

We helped each other get to safe spots away from where the lava might flow or the ashes might fall. I kept watching the volcano and told everyone what was going on to keep them calm. I felt scared but also proud because we used what we knew to stay safe. When the first ash clouds rose into the sky, I knew that our quick work had helped keep everyone safe.

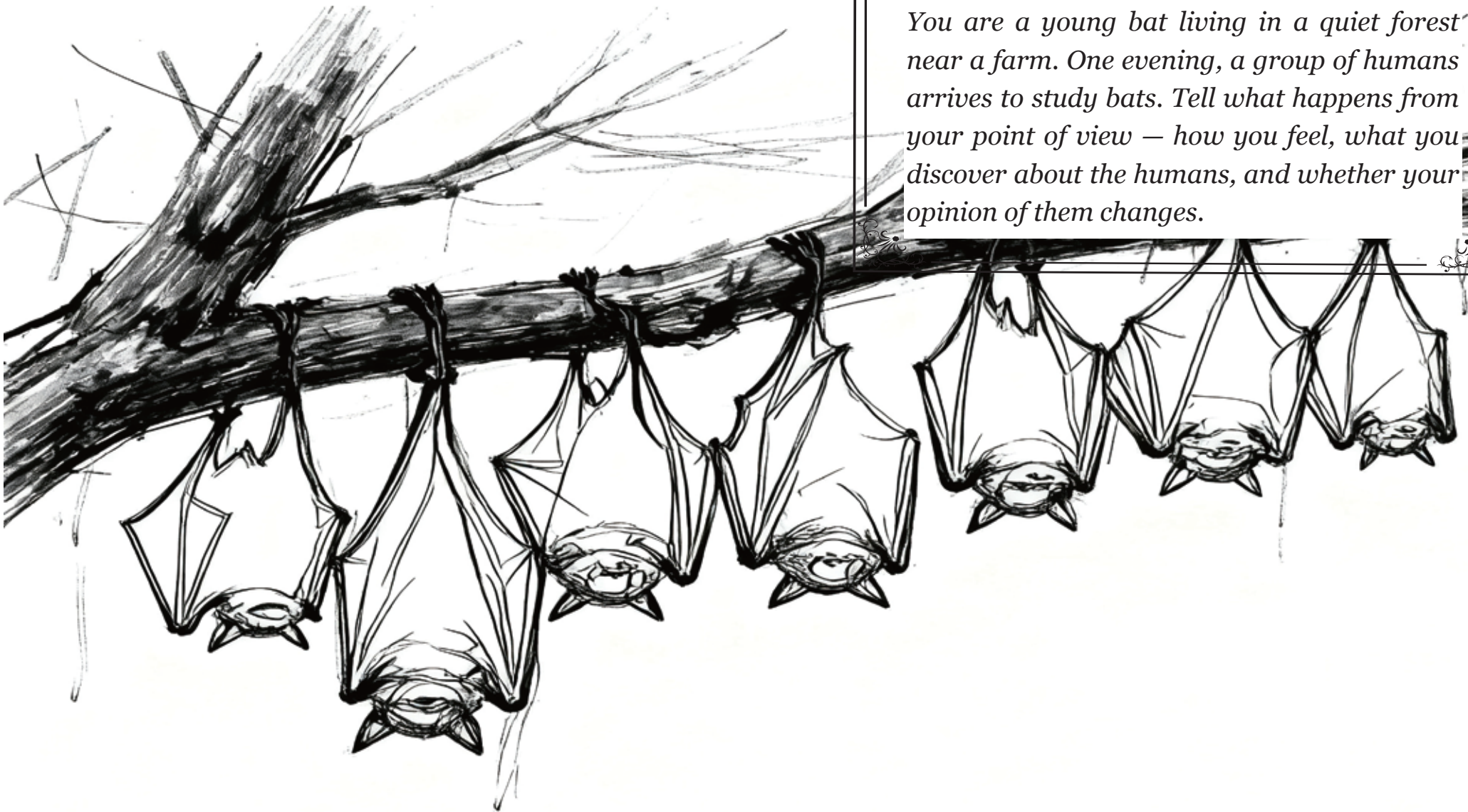
That day taught me how important it is to notice the signs a volcano gives, like shaking, gas smells, and the ground swelling. Using science and working together can save lives when a volcano wakes up from its quiet rest.



# Human's Relationship with Bats

## **Prompt:**

*You are a young bat living in a quiet forest near a farm. One evening, a group of humans arrives to study bats. Tell what happens from your point of view — how you feel, what you discover about the humans, and whether your opinion of them changes.*



*Completed: August 17, 2025*

I live in a forest next to a farm, where I fly through the night sky hunting insects. The forest is my safe place, full of familiar sounds and smells. One night, a group of humans arrived carrying strange equipments: cameras, notebooks, and bright lights. I wasn't sure what to think. At first, I kept my distance, careful of these strangers who disturbed the quiet of my world.

As I watched them more closely, I saw their behavior was careful and thoughtful. They spoke quietly, slowly writing down what they saw. Their purpose was not easy to understand, sometimes they seemed kind and respectful, but other times, their strong focus made me wonder more. They talked about our wings, echolocation, and the important role bats have in nature. This mix of kindness and seriousness both calmed me and made me curious.

Eventually, I let one scientist come close and stick a small red light to my wing to measure it. The light didn't hurt, but the experience stayed in my mind. I understood that they wanted to learn about and protect bats by studying us, even if their presence disturbed the peacefulness I loved.

They explained how bats like me help people by eating large numbers of insects, which keeps nearby crops

healthy. This made me proud because it showed that even small creatures like me play an important part in nature's balance.

I also learned that humans are working to protect the places where bats live and to stop the cutting down of too many trees. This made me see humans differently, they are not just strangers but people who can care a lot and take responsibility. I felt thankful for their effort to keep our home safe, though I hoped they would be careful not to harm the delicate balance of the forest.

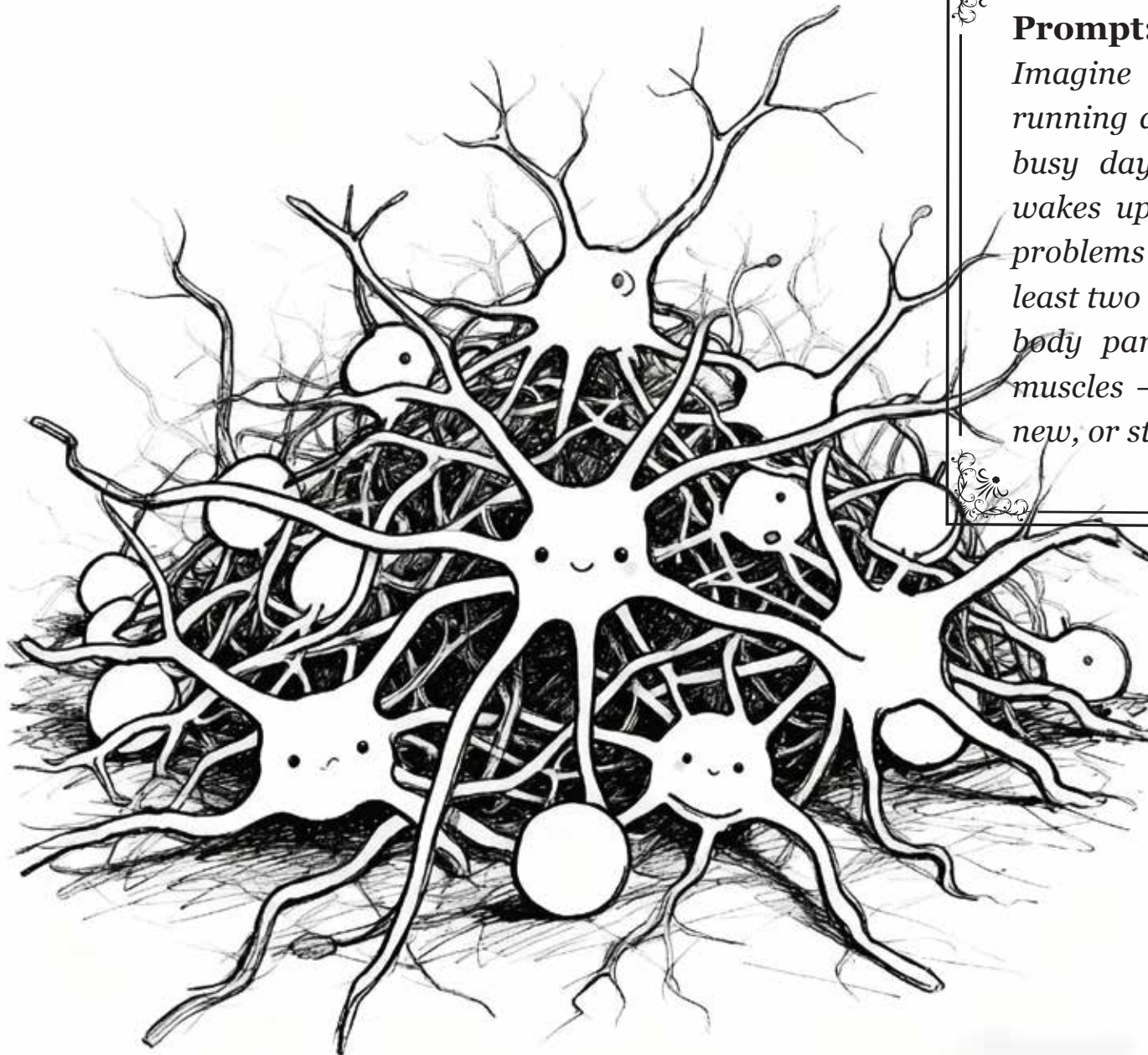
Now, when humans come near, I stay alert but less scared. I understand that bats and humans can live together peacefully, and with patience and trust, we can help each other. Meeting these scientists taught me that even between very different beings, real respect and cooperation are possible.



# One Small Neuron's Job

## **Prompt:**

*Imagine you are the brain, in charge of running a human body. Tell the story of one busy day, from the moment your human wakes up. What do you think about? What problems do you have to solve? Describe at least two moments when you work with other body parts — like the heart, stomach, or muscles — to handle stress, learn something new, or stay safe.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: August 26, 2025*

Deep inside the busy brain, I am a tiny neuron, just one of billions, but I like to think of myself as a super fast messenger on an endless mission. My thin branches carry quick sparks that leap from one neuron to another, like flashes of lightning across the sky. Each spark feels like passing a secret note along the fastest relay race in the world. These sparks help the brain think, feel, and control every movement. Even though I'm small, I'm part of something huge, and I take that seriously.

Then trouble. A sudden, sharp pain stabs through the body, like a thorn pressing deep into skin. My "job alarm" goes off in my head. This is it, time to move! I zoom my signal down my usual path, already picturing the brain reacting like a superhero catching danger in midair. But then, stop! A cluster of nearby cells blocks the way, like a road closed after a rockslide. My neuron heart gives a jolt. Oh no. If I'm late, the body could be in real trouble.

I pause for half a second, okay, maybe more like a millionth, and remind myself: the brain doesn't panic, and neither do I. We find a way, always. I stretch my branches farther, trying a weird, twisty route I've never taken before. It's slower, like detouring around a

mountain on a back road, but if it gets the job done, I'm in.

Finally, my spark bursts into the brain's command center. Go, go, go! Instantly, a new message flies out: Move! Pull away! The muscles spring into action, yanking the body from danger just in time. I feel this little rush, like high-fiving a million teammates at once.

I may be just one neuron, but days like today make me proud. The brain can change, adapt, and even rebuild itself when problems pop up, that's called neuroplasticity. And me? I'm one tiny part of that giant, amazing story. Every signal matters, and when all of us fire together, we keep the body safe.



## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: August 25, 2025*

Deep inside the busy brain, I am a tiny neuron. There are billions of neurons like me, working all the time. I send quick signals, like little sparks, through my branches to other neurons. These signals help the brain think, feel, and move the body. Even though I am small, my job is very important.

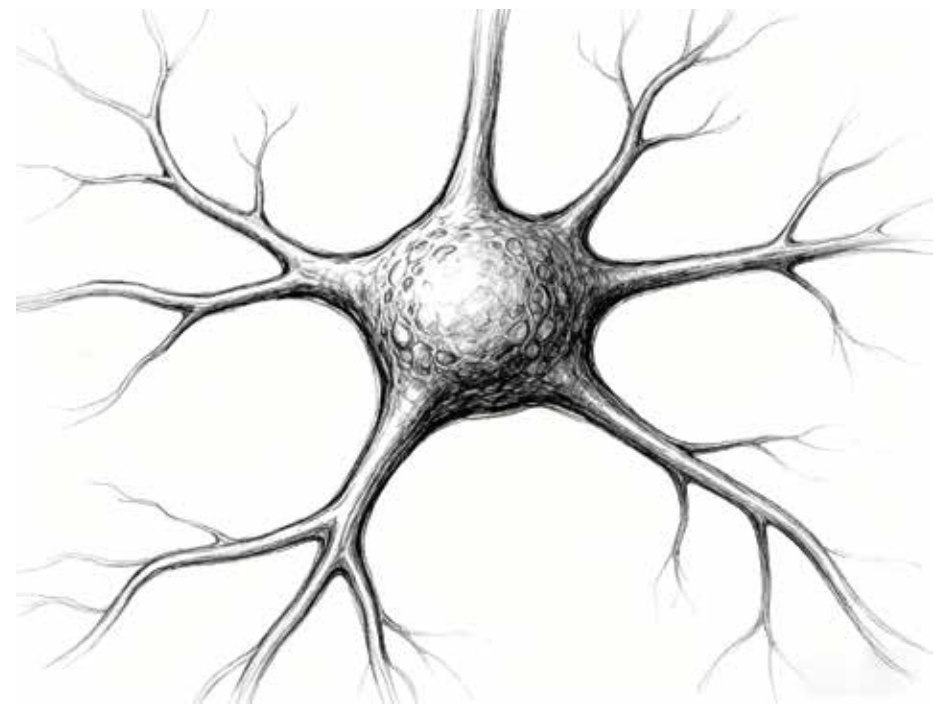
One day, something sharp suddenly hurts the body. I need to send this message to the brain right away. But I hit a problem, a group of nearby cells blocks my usual path. The signal slows down and almost stops. At first, this feels scary, but I remember that the brain can change and find new ways to fix problems.

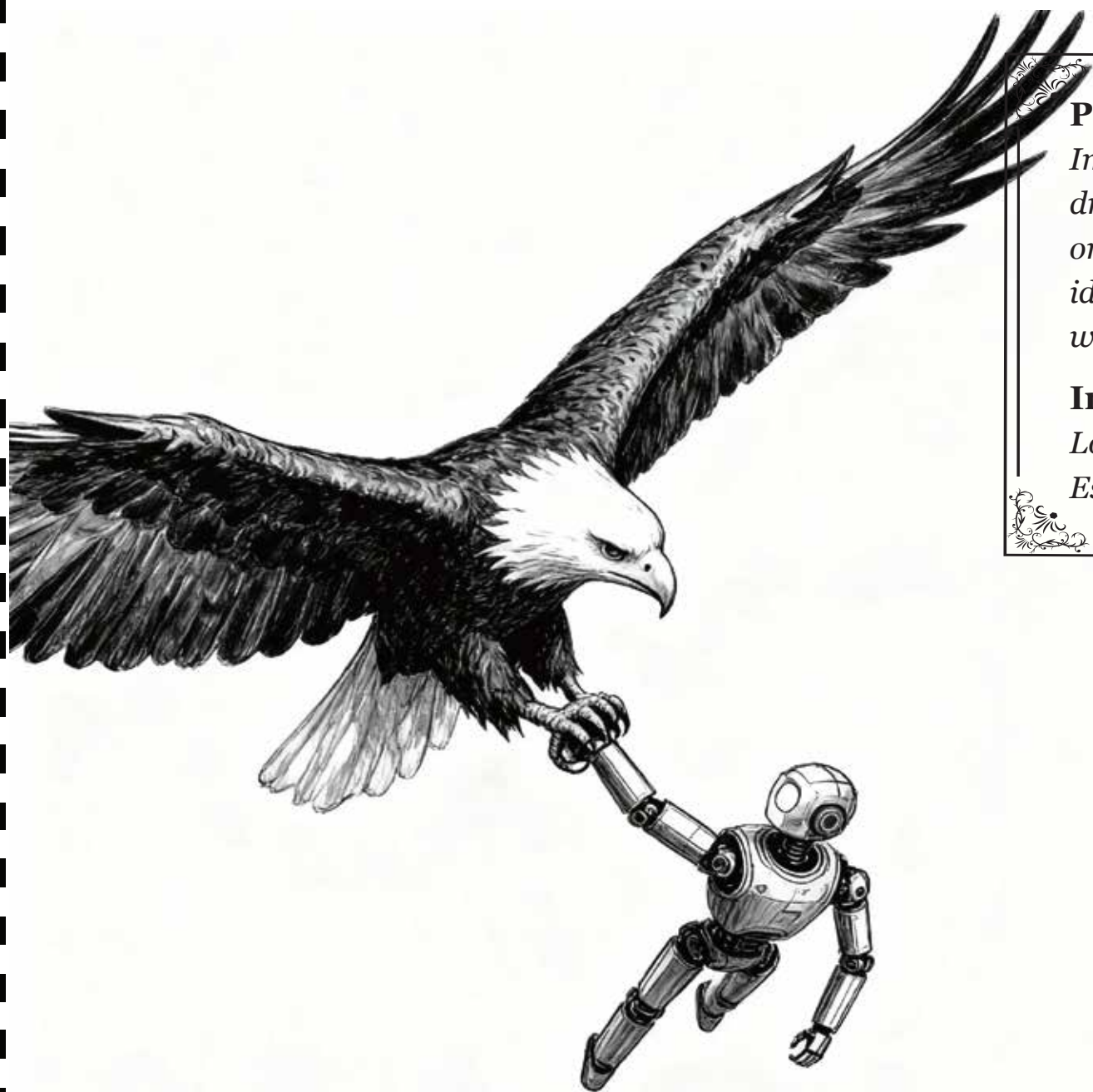
I stretch my branches and send the message a new way. The new path is not the fastest, but it works. The brain's network is like a big web with many roads, so I find another path through different neurons. This shows me how the brain can change. It can find new ways when things go wrong.

Even though the message was slower because I had to find a new route, it still reached the brain just in time. Once the brain got the message, it quickly sent signals to the body to protect it from harm, like pulling away from the sharp object. I feel proud because even though I am

only one neuron, my work matters a lot when combined with millions of others. Our strength comes from working together as a team to keep the body safe and healthy.

This taught me that the brain is not a machine that always stays the same. It is smart and can change. It learns from problems and grows stronger. Every signal I send helps build the amazing brain.





## Roz's Hidden Memories

### **Prompt:**

*Imagine you are working on the farm but dreaming of returning to your island. Describe one moment when you almost revealed your identity. Include your thoughts, feelings, and what you did to protect your secret.*

### **Inspiration:**

*Loosely inspired by the book *The Wild Robot Escapes* by Peter Brown.*

*Completed: July 31, 2025*

The farm is active every day. I have many tasks to complete. When I power on in the morning, my systems start running. I feed animals, repair broken machines, and carry heavy loads across the fields. People call me Roz. They believe I am a simple farm robot. But deep inside, I am Roz, the Wild Robot who lived on a quiet island with trees, animals, and my son Brightbill. I miss that island often, but I must keep my secret secure.

One warm afternoon, while hauling a broken farm machine near the cow pasture, my sensors detected a hawk soaring through the sky. The image triggered a memory of Brightbill learning to fly in my memory disks. I observed the bird glide longer than usual. Then Mr. Shareef, the farmer, noticed me and asked what I was looking at. My body paused. I had almost revealed my secret when I processed the thought of saying I was looking for my son. But robots are not programmed to have families. I quickly put away that thought.

My processors ran calculations rapidly. If I ever said something like that, he would know I am a different robot. Robots are not designed to have feelings or memories. I must protect my secret. "I was checking the sky for signs of rain" I responded in a calm, robotic voice. Mr. Shareef nodded and walked away.

Nervously, I remained still with my circuits buzzing like

mad. That was a close call.

That night, after completing my tasks, I powered down near the barn and observed the stars. I accessed memories of my island such as the sound of waves, the scent of pine trees, and the animals who were once my companions. I missed Brightbill the most. I desired to return home, but I determined it was not the right time. I must keep my secret protected.

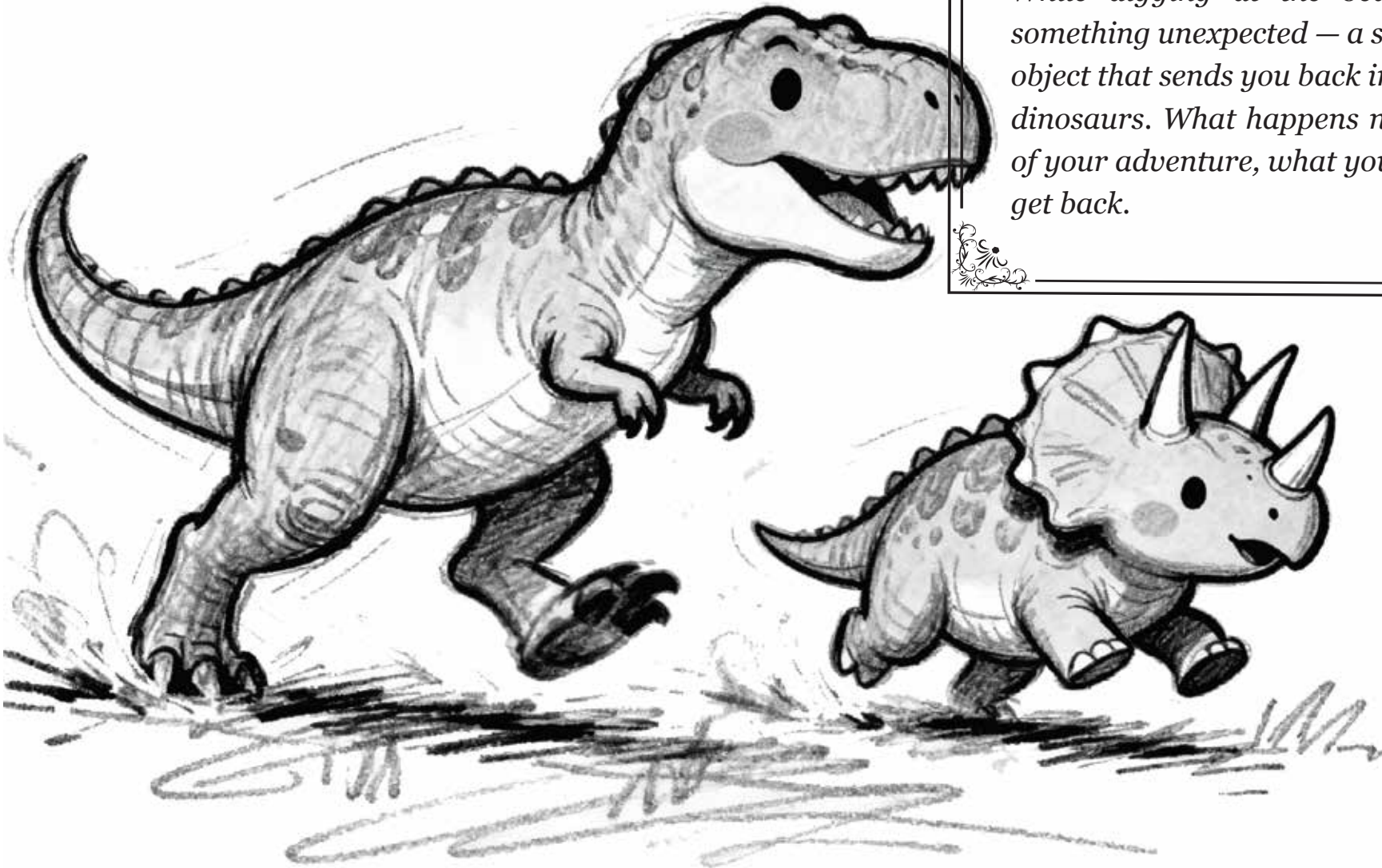
I appear to be a normal robot, but I am more than metal and circuits. I am Roz, the Wild Robot. I store memories, hopes, and dreams inside my core. One day, I will return to my island. Until then, I will continue to work normally, remain silent, and guard who I truly am.



# The Time-Travel Button

**Prompt:**

*While digging at the beach, you discover something unexpected — a strange machine or object that sends you back in time to the age of dinosaurs. What happens next? Tell the story of your adventure, what you see, and how you get back.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: August 28, 2025*

One day, I was digging a hole at the beach. I poured water into it. Then I saw something strange. Two buttons were in the sand! One said "BACK". One said "FORWARD". I thought it was weird. I left it alone.

Suddenly, the wind blew sand in my eyes! I waved my hands. My hand hit a button. Click!

Everything changed. I looked at myself. My skin was scaly! My nails were sharp! I had a big spine on my back! "Wow!" I thought, "I went back in time! And I'm a dinosaur!"

I saw a smaller dinosaur. I ran over and bit its tail. It fell down! I did that to every dinosaur I saw. Then I saw six dinosaurs together. I roared at them to go away.

But they didn't listen!

They attacked me! One bit my tail. One bit my spine. One bit my leg. The others fought me too. It was a big fight!

Then... BOOM! A huge rock from space hit the ground! Everything shook. I was back on the beach. I looked normal again. The hole was empty. "Did time stop?" I wondered. I saw my mom.

"Time for lunch!" she said. I smiled. I was home. Or was I?

## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: June 27, 2025*

Once, I was digging a hole at the beach. Then I saw something while pouring water in the hole. There were 2 buttons that were visible, one said "BACK," another said "Forward." I decided to ignore it, but then the wind blew the sand into my eyes and then click! I then realized that mysterious thing could have been a time machine!

But it was already too late. I looked at myself and saw I had scaly skin, sharp nails and a big spine on my back. I was pretty sure I went back to the prehistoric times. I turned into a dinosaur too! Then I saw another dinosaur that looked smaller than me, so I went ahead and bit its tail, and it fell. After doing the same with everyone I saw, then I finally saw a 6 of one type. Since I was a dinosaur, I roared at the pack to tell them to stay back, but they didn't listen.

So I went ahead and started a very rough battle. One of them bit my tail, one bit my spine, one bit my leg and the rest fought against me. Before the battle ended, a big meteor hit the ground and BOOM!

Then I went back to the real time wondering if the real time had been paused or not and then I saw my mom, which answered my question.

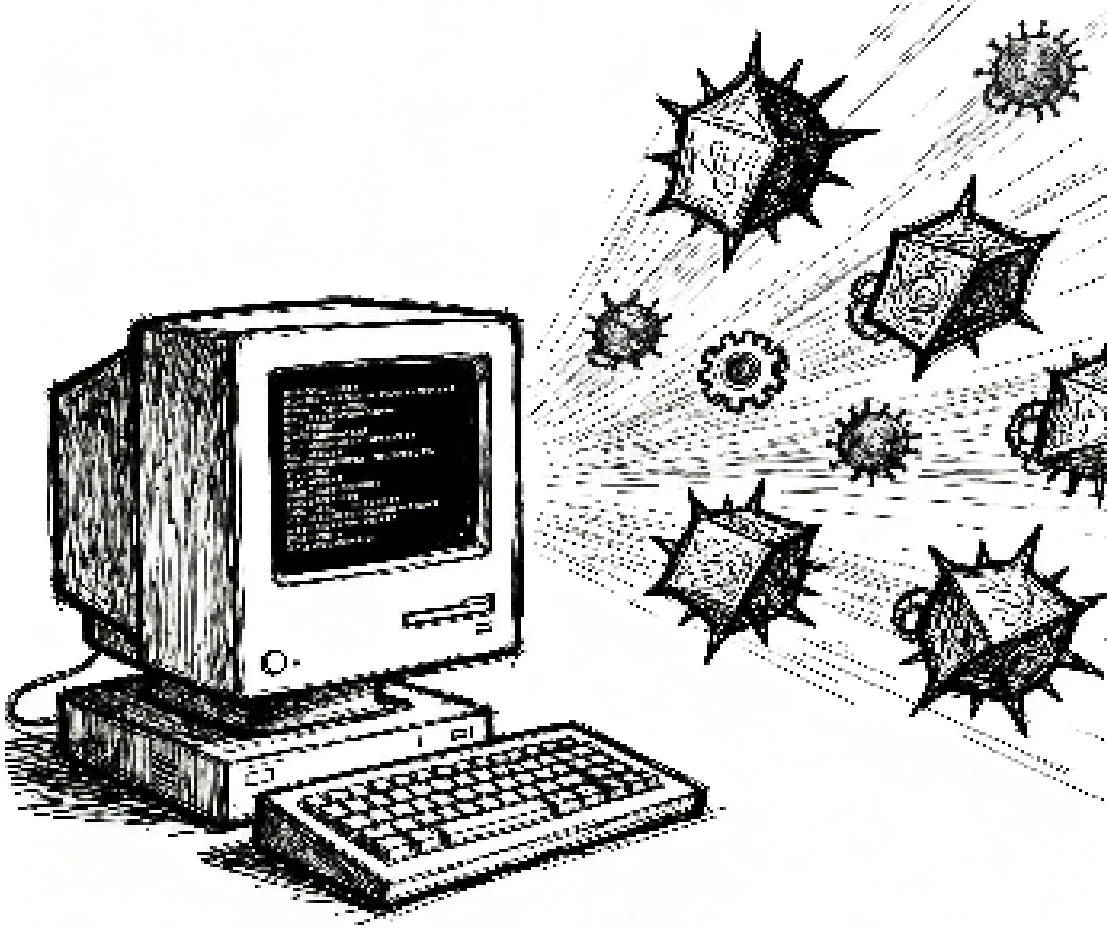
# The Glitch and the Secret Code

## **Prompt:**

*Imagine you are George or Annie in the book *George and the Unbreakable Code*. Describe a moment when you had to make an important decision or solve a tricky problem. What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? What happened in the end?*

## **Inspiration:**

*Loosely inspired by the book *George and the Unbreakable Code* by Lucy & Stephen Hawking.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: July 11, 2025*

If I were George from *George and the Unbreakable Code* and noticed something strange about the computers, I would be curious.

One day, I found a glitch on my computer. I tried to figure out if there was a secret code which could be repeating letters or numbers or any patterns. I had a strong desire to figure out the “puzzle”. I couldn't solve it on my own, so I asked my friend Annie for help. She didn't know either, then we asked Annie's father, Eric, who was highly knowledgeable in computers. After we got a lot of clues from Eric, Annie and I finally figured out the answer.

When we saw the glitch, I noticed a number seven in the middle of the screen. We triple clicked it, and Annie insisted to search “quantum computer”, because she said that a quantum computer could be causing this.

In about four seconds, my computer shut down and started to reset. When it worked again, the glitch never came back. This meant we could fix the same problem which happened to loads of computers!

“All you have to do is triple clicks on the number seven that shows in a lighter colour, when the grey glitch comes

to the screen. After that, you quickly search “quantum computer” and then the computer will restart with no memories other than the pre-settings. Is that all?” questioned Annie. “I think so.” I shrugged.

Anyway, I felt super proud. Annie probably felt really proud too! It's like I discovered a secret! In the end, solving the mystery made me happy because I worked hard. It was a mystery that probably no one could solve but Annie and I.



## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: July 10, 2025*

If I were George from George and the Unbreakable Code and noticed something strange about the computers, I would be pretty curious.

Once I found a glitch on my computer, I tried to figure out if there was a secret code. If any of the letters or numbers kept repeating or if there was any pattern, It could be a secret code. I had a strong desire to figure out the “puzzle”.

I couldn't solve it on my own, so I asked my friend Annie for help. She didn't know either, so we asked Annie's father, Eric, who was highly knowledgeable.

Sometimes, I like to work with others when I can't figure something out by myself.

After we got a lot of clues from Eric, Annie and I tried to figure out how to break the code. After long periods of trials and error, we finally figured out the answer.

We got the answer by randomly clicking things when we saw the glitch and then Annie noticed a number seven in the middle of the screen. We clicked it a couple times then Annie insisted to search up “quantum computer” because she said that a quantum computer could be causing this.

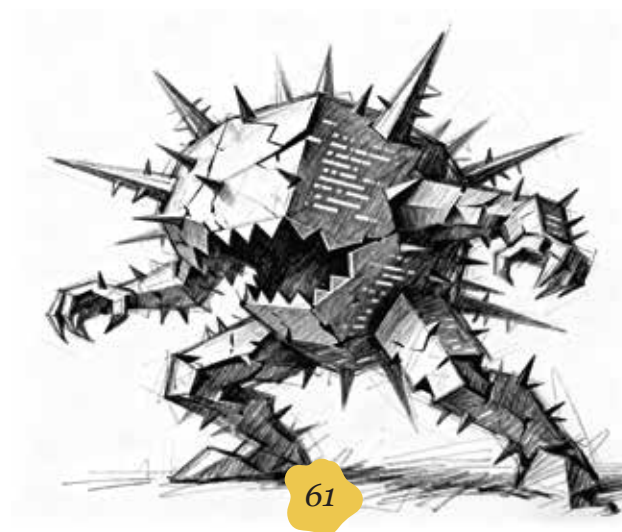
After about 4 seconds my computer shut down and started to reset. When worked again, the glitch never came back.

That could mean we fixed loads of computers!

“So all you had to do was triple click on the number 7 that showed in a lighter colour when the grey glitch came all over the screen and then quickly search “quantum computer” and then all computers on Earth would shut down and open with no memories other than the user's belongings?” questioned Annie. “I think so” I replied still feeling puzzled.

Anyways I still felt super proud. Annie probably felt really proud too! It's like I discovered a secret!

In the end, solving the mystery made me happy because I worked hard. It was a mystery that probably no one could solve but Annie and I.



# The Solar-Powered Rescue

## **Prompt:**

*Imagine you are George or Annie in the book George and the Unbreakable Code. Describe a moment when you had to make an important decision or solve a tricky problem. What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling? What happened in the end?*

## **Inspiration:**

*Loosely inspired by the book George and the Unbreakable Code by Lucy & Stephen Hawking.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: July 04, 2025*

I was scrolling through NASA's Mars pictures when my screen suddenly went black. The lights flickered off, the air purifier fell silent, and the fridge stopped freezing.

I asked my dad, to check the electricity. We hurried upstairs, carefully tiptoeing past the sleeping babies, and climbed out the window onto the roof. From there, I spotted Annie at the Bellis's house, focused on her work with Cosmos. Dad tried to get our windmill, spinning our only backup power source, but without any wind, it stood still.

"Why don't I ask Eric for advice?" I suggested.

"Sure," Dad said.

I ran to Annie's house and knocked on the back door. Annie answered, bouncing with excitement. "What's the matter?" she asked. I explained the power outage and told her the weather forecast says no wind for the following five days.

"George, good news!" Annie said. "Cosmos built a solar-powered fan that could turn on Oyour windmill. But you'll need a lot of materials."

We went to Cosmos, who was sitting quietly in Eric's study room.

As Annie started to type a request, I started to wonder if this plan would work.

On the screen I could see a long list: four wooden planks, two metal sheets, three electric screwdrivers, twelve solar panels, thirty five screws, eighteen fan blades, tubes, wires, a giant motor, and a large lever.

"How will I get so much stuff?" I asked.

Annie said, "I have some parts. I have wood, screws, tubes, wires, solar panels, and blades. You can buy the rest at the electronics store and Home Depot."

When I told Dad about the plan, he agreed to help. We bought everything for \$400. Back home, we carefully followed the supercomputer's instructions to build the fan. By dinnertime, we still weren't finished, and without power, cooking wasn't possible. So, we kept working.

As the sky went dark, the fan was finally done. It was large but very light. We carried it through the window to the roof and attached it to the windmill pole. I pulled the lever as Dad crossed his fingers. The windmill started faster. The next morning, the lights were back on. My computer worked and the room had fresh air.

In the end, all our hard work had paid off. I hope the power never goes out again.

## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: July 03, 2025*

Once, I was scrolling through pictures of Mars from NASA. Suddenly, my screen went black, the lights turned off, the air purifier stopped purifying the air, and the fridge stopped freezing the food.

Later, I asked my dad, Terrence, to see if he could fix the electricity. Together, we ran upstairs, tiptoed through babies, and went out the window to the roof. From the roof, I could see Annie, in the Bellis's house, doing something on Cosmos. Terrence tried to get the windmill to move because it was the only way to get extra energy. My house had a windmill to produce electricity for our house when we needed it.

"Why don't I ask Eric for some advice" I asked Terrence "I suppose you could" replied my dad. "Yay" I whispered as I tiptoed through the babies again. I ran to the garden, jumped over the fence, and skipped to the Bellis's back door. I knocked on the door.

Annie opened the door jumping up and down. "What's the matter" Annie asked. "Ummm, my house has run out of electricity and the windmill doesn't move because there is no wind." I said "The weather forecast says there will be no wind for 5 days."

"George I have good news, there is this really powerful custom fan that Cosmos made that uses solar panels to get energy. It could make your windmill move!" "There is just one problem, you need tons of materials." said Annie. "What materials do I need to build it" I asked. "Come, Cosmos can answer that."

We walked over to Cosmos who was sitting quietly in Eric's study room.

"Annie Bellis is back." Beeped Cosmos.

"Tell me all the materials for the powerful fan you created two hours ago." Annie typed.

Cosmos showed four long pieces of wood, two metal sheets, three powerful looking electric screw drivers, twelve solar panels, thirty-five screws, eighteen metal fan blades, three short tubes, six wires, a giant motor, and a huge lever on his screen.

"How am I ever going to get so many materials?" I muttered.

"Well, I have all the pieces of wood, screws, tubes, wires, solar panels, and fan blades." said Annie, trying to cheer me up, "You can get the electric like items from a nearby electricity shop and the building items from Home Depot." said Annie.

"Okay." I said feeling discombobulated.

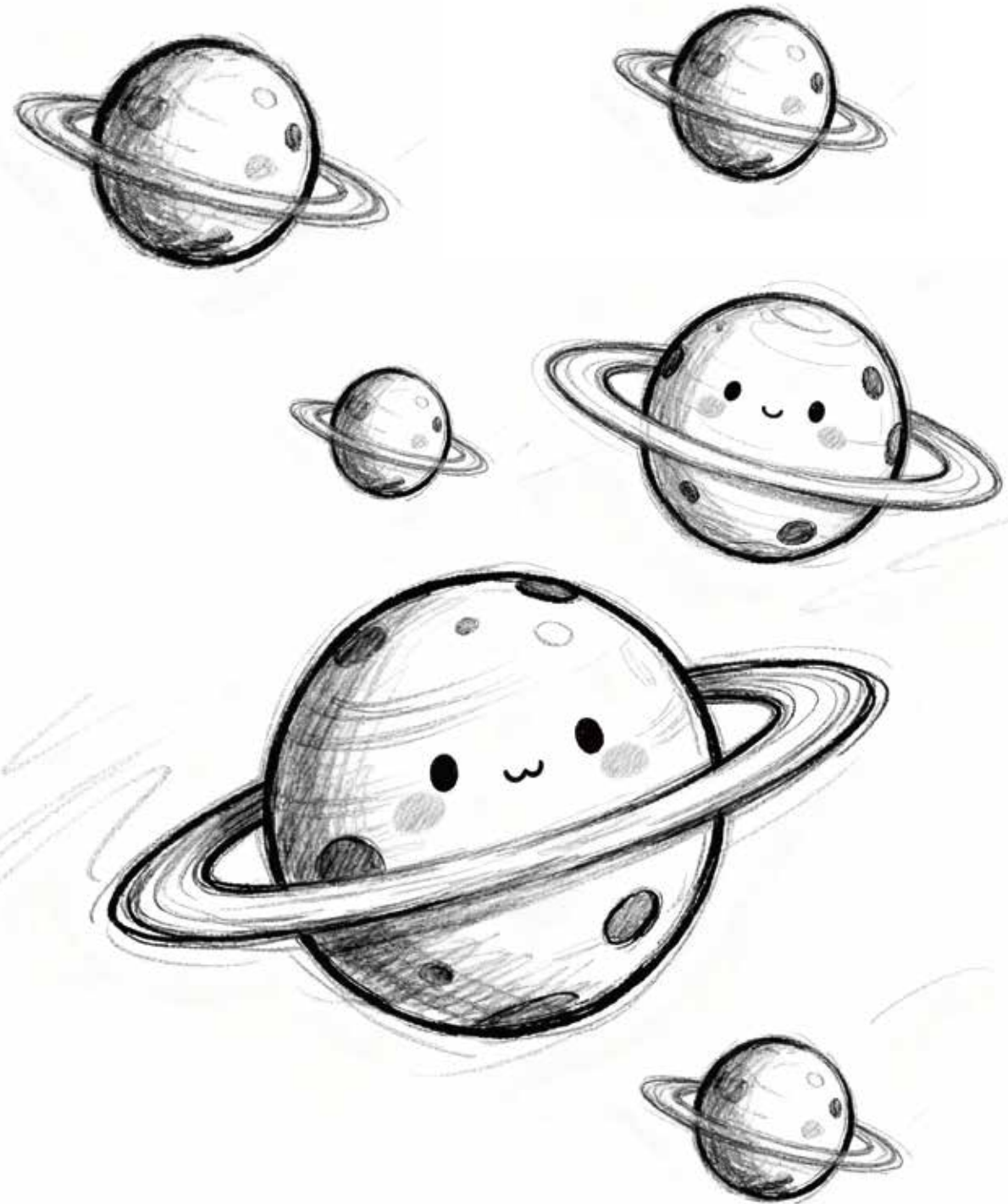
When I got home, I talked about the powerful fan with my dad. Terrence agreed because it seemed like the only way to get energy. Terrence and I drove to the nearest electricity store and bought all the things we needed which costed \$400. After, we drove to Home Depot and finished the list that Cosmos created and headed home.

After we arrived at the house, we started building the powerful fan according to Eric's supercomputer's instructions. When it was time for dinner, we hadn't finished building so we couldn't cook the food. Our only choice was to continue making the fan.

Twenty minutes later, the sky had went dark but at least we had finished the build. The fan was huge but light, since in wasn't very heavy, we could carry it to the roof easily. We brought it through the window and attached it to the pole of the windmill. As I pulled down the lever, I noticed my father had crossed his fingers. When the lever reached the bottom the windmill started spinning uncontrollably.

The next morning, the lights turned on perfectly, my computer worked and the air was fresh.

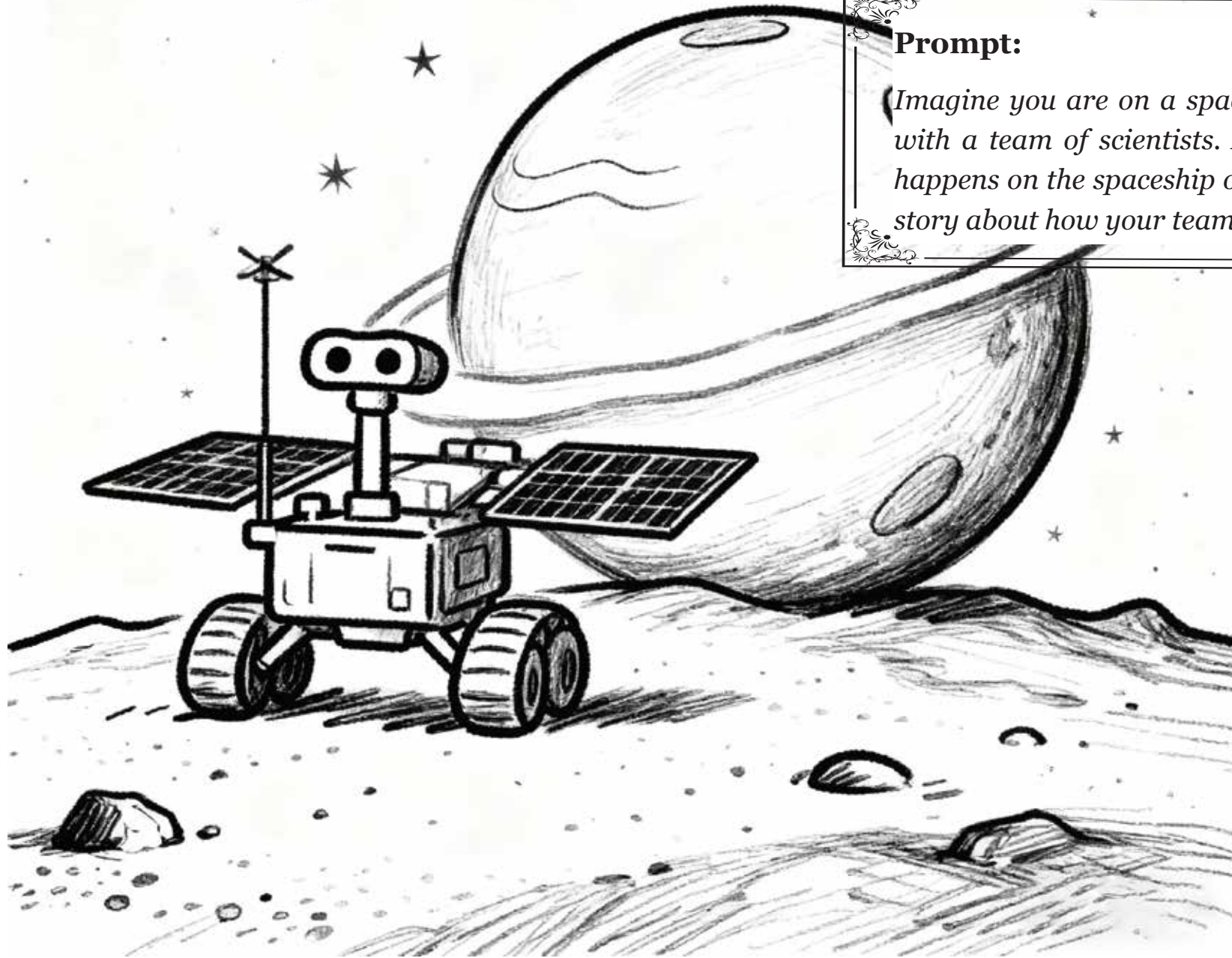
In the end, all the hard work had payed off and I hope the electricity problem doesn't happen ever again.



# The Oxygen Leak on Mars

## Prompt:

*Imagine you are on a space mission to Mars with a team of scientists. A strange problem happens on the spaceship or on Mars. Write a story about how your team solves it together.*



## Version 2.0 – Revised Version

*Completed: July 20, 2025*

I went on a space mission to Mars with a small team of scientists. We stayed in a small white base on the red rocky ground. On Day two, the alarm went off. The alarm frightened me so I fell to the floor. It said there was an oxygen leak. We all looked at each other and became very quiet. If we didn't fix it fast, we wouldn't be able to breathe. I held my breath because I thought I might die.

We found out the leak was coming from one of the oxygen tanks. Because the sun was going down on Mars, we had to hurry, but we didn't know how cold it would get. Dr. Kliman and I got ready to go outside. We put on our spacesuits and helmets. I felt nervous, but I kept quiet. Although I was a kid, they still let me help.

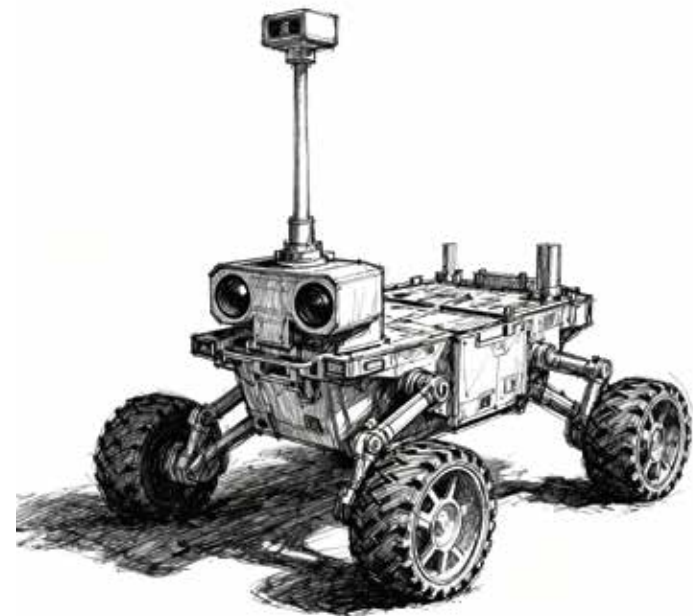
Outside, the wind blew dust on my face. The sky looked blueish orange, which was odd. As we got closer to the back of the shuttle, I slowly floated up. I yelled help but nobody could hear me because there was no gravity. I threw a wrench behind me and got back on the ground. This time I held Dr. Kliman's hand to avoid floating up again.

When we got closer enough to the oxygen tank we immediately found a crack in the tank, Dr. Kliman, who always stayed calm, told me to hold up a flashlight. He

used a silver patch to fix the crack. The patch, a kind of super glue, dried in a couple minutes. We waited to see if the alarm would stop.

It worked. All the beeping stopped, and the air was safe again. We still had a few hours of oxygen left. Everyone clapped when we got back inside. Even though I was the youngest, I felt like a real astronaut. Dr. Kliman gave me a small red rock from Mars.

Later, I looked out the window and saw Earth. It looked so small and far away. We had a big problem, but we solved it together. So we all felt proud. I hope I get to go to space again one day.



## Version 1.0 – First Draft

*Completed: July 19, 2025*

I went on a space mission to Mars with a team of scientists. We lived in a small white base on the red rocky ground. On the second day, a loud alarm went off. It said there was an oxygen leak. We all looked at each other and got very quiet. If we didn't fix it fast, we wouldn't be able to breathe.

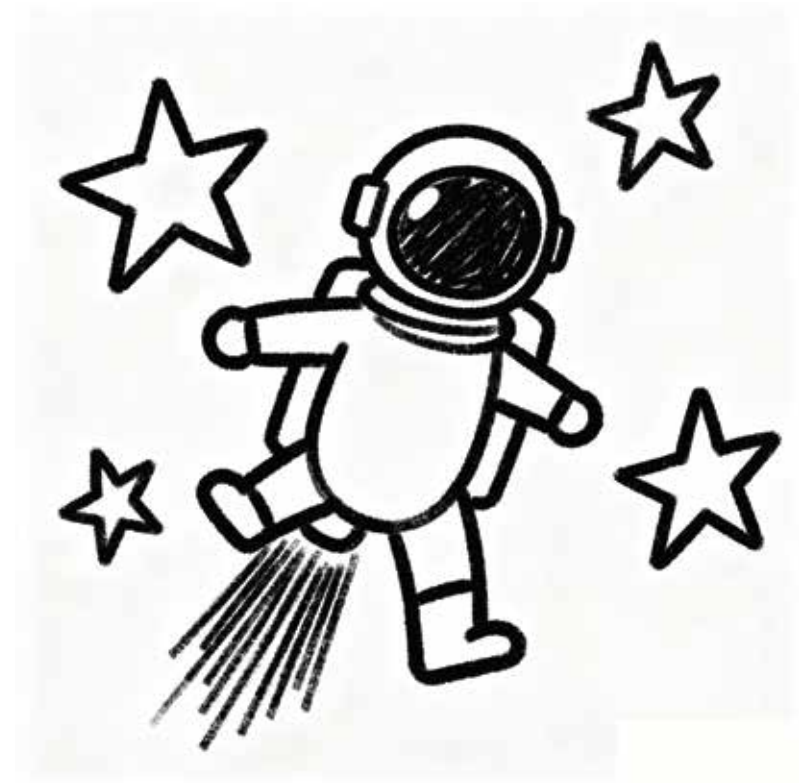
We found out the leak was coming from one of the oxygen tanks. Because the sun was going down on Mars, we had to hurry, but we didn't know how cold it would get. Dr.Kliman and I got ready to go outside. We put on our spacesuits and helmets. I felt nervous, but I kept quiet. Although I was a kid, they still let me help.

Outside, the wind blew dust all over my face. The sky looked kind of blueish orange, which looked odd. When we found a small crack in the tank, Dr.Kliman, who always stayed calm, told me to hold the flashlight. He used a silver patch to fix the crack. The patch, a kind of super glue, dried in a couple minutes. We waited to see if the alarm would stop.

It worked. All the beeping stopped, and the air was safe again. We still had a few hours of oxygen left. Everyone clapped when we got back inside. Even though I was the youngest, I felt like a real astronaut. Dr.Kliman gave me

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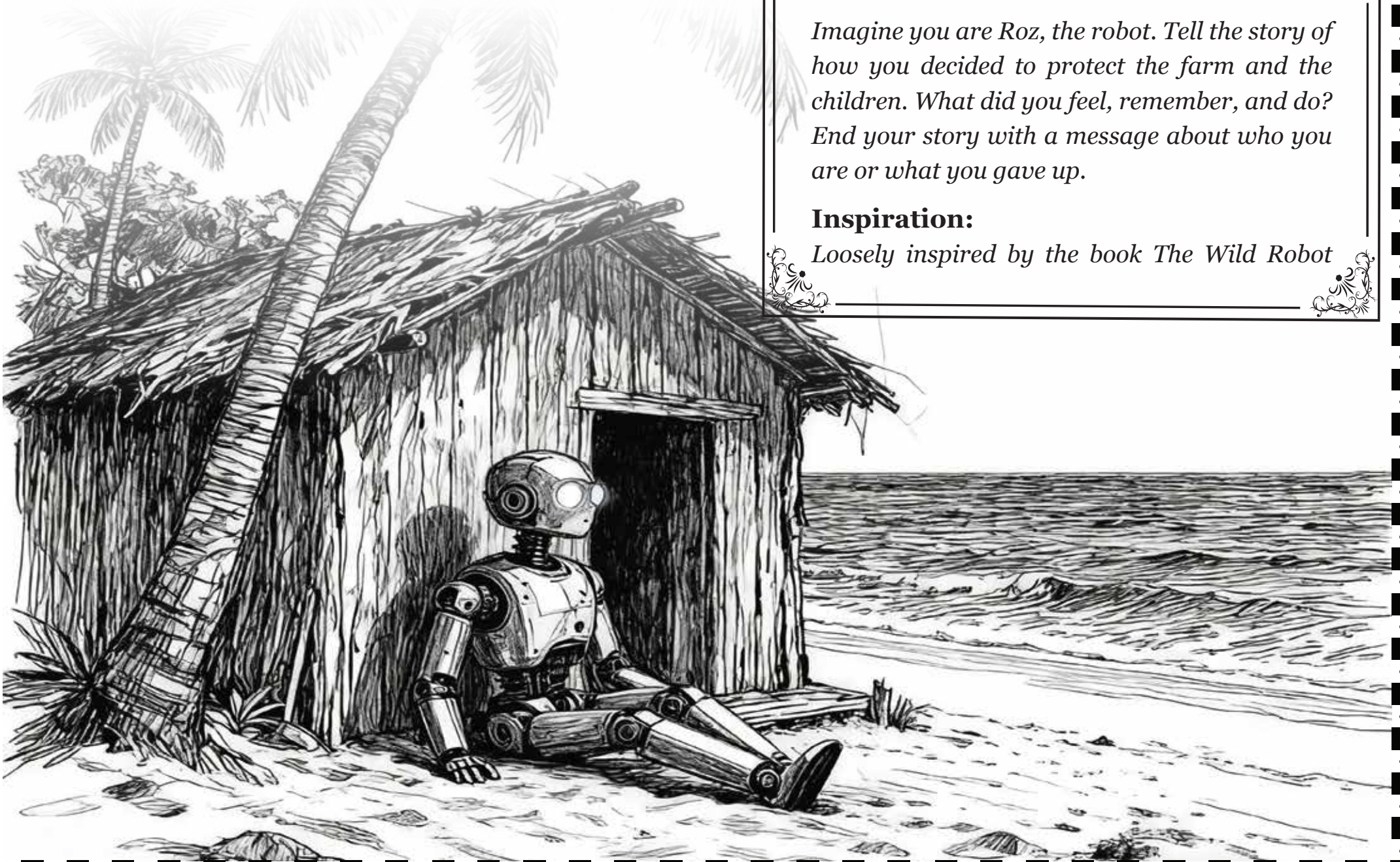
# Roz and the Poison Tide

## Prompt:

*Imagine you are Roz, the robot. Tell the story of how you decided to protect the farm and the children. What did you feel, remember, and do? End your story with a message about who you are or what you gave up.*

## Inspiration:

*Loosely inspired by the book *The Wild Robot**



*Completed: June 22, 2025*

My name is Roz, and I am a robot living on a wild island filled with animals and nature. One day, I discovered something very wrong: the ocean around the island was getting polluted by a dangerous poison tide. The poison was hurting the fish, sea creatures, and the land animals that depend on the water. I felt a heavy responsibility to protect my animal friends and save the island. After investigating, I found out the poison came from a human mining station far away in the ocean.

This made my problem even harder. I cared about the island's animals, but I also knew humans had their needs. I didn't want to start a fight or make things worse. I felt worried and unsure what to do.

I decided the best way forward was to act with kindness and care. I used my robot abilities to dive under the water and study the damage closely. The water was dark and dangerous, and the animals looked weak and scared. Then, I sent a message to the humans to explain the problem and ask for their help in stopping the poison tide before it caused more harm.

At the same time, I worked hard to protect my animal friends. I guided them to safer places with cleaner water and food. It was not easy, and sometimes I felt scared during storms or when the poison spread quickly. But I

never gave up because I knew the island depended on me.

In the end, the humans listened and began working together with me to clean the ocean and protect the island's future. I felt proud and hopeful. This experience taught me that difficult choices often require understanding both sides and working together to find peaceful solutions. I am Roz, and I will always protect the island and its creatures, no matter the challenge.



# The Word That Taught Me Who I Am



## **Prompt:**

*You are Nick, looking back years after inventing the word “frindle.” Tell how that experience changed your life. What do you remember most about Mrs. Granger? What did you learn about the power of words — and how do you see things differently now?*

## **Inspiration:**

*Loosely inspired by the book Frindle by Andrew Clements.*

*Completed: August 27, 2025*

It has been many years since I first invented the word “Frindle”, and I’m no longer that mischievous fifth grader I once was. Looking back, it amazes me how a single word could spread so widely and leave such a lasting impression. What began as a playful experiment ended up shaping my identity and teaching me important lessons about creativity, language, and perseverance.

I still remember when the idea first burst into my mind: why call it a “pen” when I could give it a brand new name? So I started calling it a frindle, and soon my friends joined in. At the beginning, it felt like a secret game we were all in on. But very quickly, the word caught fire. Students were asking for frindles everywhere, and even adults began reacting to it. Seeing something I made up travel so far gave me an unforgettable thrill.

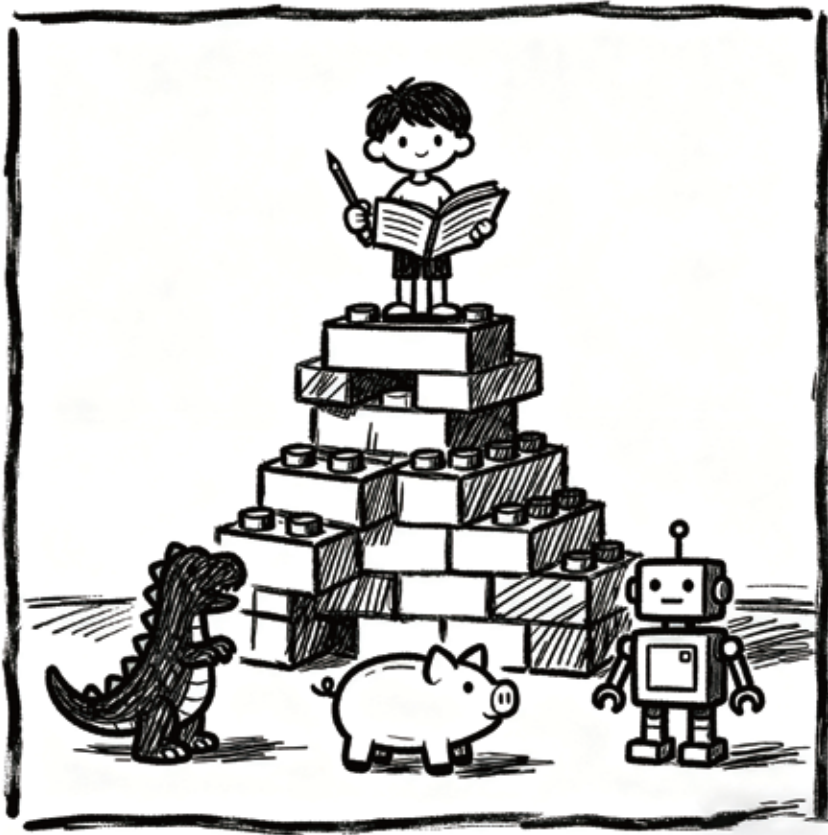
However, there were challenges too. Mrs. Granger was a serious teacher who believed in guarding the dictionary and protecting language. She pushed back hard whenever we used the word, and at the time, I felt like she was trying to crush my idea. It wasn’t easy being called out or punished, but I realized that if an idea has real power, people will keep it alive. Standing up to that pressure was difficult, but it taught me responsibility

and courage.

Years later, I discovered the truth when I read Mrs. Granger’s letter. She explained that she wasn’t truly against me; instead, she wanted me to learn for myself that words only gain meaning when people agree to use them. That letter changed how I thought about her and about language. Mrs. Granger showed me that words are alive, they grow, change, and connect people. She had been guiding me all along, even when I didn’t see it.

In the end, creating the word “Frindle” shaped my entire future. It helped me understand that even small ideas can make a big impact if you believe in them. It also reminded me that teachers and mentors sometimes challenge us because they want us to grow. I will always be proud of how one simple word changed the way people think, and how it helped me discover the true power of imagination and language.





## About the Author

Max is a 9-year-old writer from Toronto who loves asking questions.

His curiosity drives everything he does, from building LEGO to wondering how robots think or imagining old time machines at the beach. He loves nonfiction books, plays hockey with team pride, trains in tennis competitively, and writes stories that start with simple questions but grow into fun adventures.

A Season of Stories: Summer 2025 is Max's first book. It won't be his last, because his curiosity doesn't run, it stays with him.

To learn more about Max's favorite books, his STEM projects, and his hockey/tennis journey, please visit:

<https://www.maxzhu.org/>

## Note to Myself



*Dear Max,*

*You wrote 15 stories this summer, even when you were full of hockey, tennis and desperately wanted to play Minecraft for 1000 hours. Some stories were hard to finish. Some had to be fixed, again and again. But you kept going. That's what real writers do.*

*Keep writing. Even when you think you can't. Even when you think it's not perfect.*

*You're just getting started.*

*— Max (Summer 2025)*