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NARRATIVE SAMPLE: **STATUES**

LOCATION: A street in a medium-sized city outside a subway station entrance, leading down onto a subway platform. Evening, after sundown, it's raining heavily. Clean, dark blue-grey tones, sombre and utilitarian but mostly lifeless. Light from a streetlamp and the glowing subway sign. There are a few people around, heads down and tucked into hats and collars, but otherwise it's mostly empty and we hear a rumble of a train passing somewhere below while our character walks.

CHARACTER: Katie is in her mid 30s. Works in a creative field, smart and diligent, tidy in her appearance, a bit quiet. Was once vibrant and enthusiastic but now tired, lacking energy and motivation, wondering if her field and reasonable accomplishments and successes are enough anymore.

ACTION: Player must walk the character into the subway and down the stairs, to the end of the platform. Can stop and read the bulletins, missing person posters, plaques and other things along the way.

PART I: THE SUBWAY

On a city street, it's late, around midnight, stormy and windy with heavy pouring rain. Katie is walking slowly under the streetlights, holding a broken umbrella. She's in office wear, her raincoat and leather shoes soaked, small bag over one shoulder, hood up but hair wet and dripping. She steps out of the rain into the subway entrance, past a bulletin board with community notices and several posters of missing people. Then through the turnstile and into the subway station, she crosses the entryway and heads for the stairs down to the train platforms. A few people pass her, heads down, heading for the exits, but it's mostly empty.

Katie: I loved this umbrella. Weird to be this attached to a stupid umbrella, I know, but it's perfect. Well, it was perfect. Felt perfect in my hand, just the exact right shape and texture, not that slick, cheap plastic that slips under your gloves. It's survived late night snack runs to the corner store, hours walking off the bad days, and downpours, drizzle and even a snowstorm or two. I kinda wish I'd known that today would be it's last day. That this one last storm would crack its spine.

She passes another poster: "Have you seen this missing person?"

Katie: I should have stayed home today. I broke my favourite mug too. I'd picked it up and it was so weird — my fingers just seized. And there was a moment where it just hung there in midair before smashing on the tile. I stood there, eyes closed, listening to the whirr of the fridge, hoping that I'd open my eyes and it hadn't really happened. No shards, no cracked bit of tile, no brown mess seeping into my cheerful rainbow mat under the sink and disappearing under the stove.

She pauses at the bottom of the stairs beside a garbage bin, and after a few moments looking down at the umbrella, holding it like a wounded bird, she carefully tucks it into the bin and walks along the platform, heading toward a bench at the far end. Her low heels click slowly on the tile. The platform is empty except for some benches and several tall public art statues, big sweeping stylized totem-like shapes, tucked along the wall in regular intervals, reaching to the ceiling.

Katie: It's like something is wrong. And not just today. Something bigger, deeper. My legs are stiff like I pushed too hard in a workout yesterday, but I've barely walked more than 15 minutes to and from the subway for weeks. No, months. People talking to me sound muffled, like someone has turned the sound way down, even when they're right in front of me. Especially at work I smile and nod and hope no one notices. It seems to be enough. For now. (Pause)
I'm just.... So. Tired. All..... The. Time.

Just before the farthest bench, she passes one of the large statues and stops beside a plaque on the wall. She runs her hand over it. It reads:

These statues are part of an ongoing public art exhibition. The artist wishes to remain anonymous. They hope you will dream of totems, talismans and golems tonight. Statues placed here by the hands of others, here for you, to help you rest. Keep you safe. To see you, to help you on your way.

She stands for a moment looking up at the underside of the giant head, partly hidden in shadow, then she carries on towards the bench. There's a smaller statue sitting on the edge of the bench. It's life-sized and eerily realistic.

Katie: I love them all. But these ones... Don't you think they look scary-real? Probably 3D printed but amazing. How do you make hair like that in stone? Or skin or cloth? Or a perfect handbag? Are they molds of real people? And this artist is making new ones all the time! (Pause)

I used to feel that excited about making my work, about everything really. Always pushing, hustling and doing all this stuff after hours. I LOVED it. (Pause)

And then one day, that extra gear I could kick into when I needed it, one day it wasn't there. (Pause)
I'm slipping. I know it, and it's freaking me out, but the harder I push, the more I feel like I'm sinking.

There's a sign on the bench that says "Please don't touch the statue." She sits down, studying its face. The statue is of a woman about her age, short curly hair, cute jacket, dress skirt and smart but reasonable shoes. But everything is slightly askew, a bit disheveled, wrinkles in her blouse, collar a little bit off centre. And her face — her head is tilted down, eyes closed, a look of exhaustion and despair.

Katie: See that? That's exactly how I feel. Everything pulling at her, draining whatever she has left. Is that how the artist feels? And yet, she can't stop, keeps making these beautiful, haunting things. What will she do, when she feels like she can't do this anymore?

She reaches over to touch the statue's face. Her fingers brush the cheek and suddenly her hand freezes. She tries to jolt it free.

Katie: What the —

She tries to pull her hand back, which jerks slightly, but it's mostly frozen. She tries a few more times, getting frantic.

Katie: I can't.... I'm stuck. What is going on...?!

Very slowly, the statue's eyelids flutter. Then stop. Then the eyes blink a few times, then open. Blink again, it's head starts to move, looking around. It takes a long slow breath in. Katie is panicking, breath coming

short and fast, but now completely immobile. Then very slowly, the statue's eye rolls towards her, then slowly, the head begins to turn in her direction.

Katie: This can't be happening. Is this happening?!

The statue is looking at her fully now. Then closes its eyes and takes a giant shaky breath and as its chest rises, it begins to crack. Gently at first, like a thin layer of plaster starting to break all over its body, it starts to flex its limbs, flexes feet and rolls its head on its neck. The plaster bits dissolve into dust as it shakes the last bits off the clothes, brushes a clinging piece from the face and dusts pieces from the hair. It stands up, and when it starts to speak, its voice is first deep, then starts to crack and becomes more of a normal womans' voice.

Statue: Oh. Wow. That was... something.

Getting more colour back into her face, the statue brushes more dust off her clothes, looks around the station in awe for a moment, then turns to face Katie. She lowers Katie's hand stiffly, straightening her posture on the bench, tucks a curl of hair behind her ear.

Statue: I know you're scared. Don't fight it. Just go with it. Couple of deep breaths.

The statue grins at her, almost manic, and gently reaches down to touch her cheek.

Statue: Sleep now, my friend. It'll be over before you know it.

Katie tries to scream while her head tilts down, a tear slides down her face as her eyes slowly slide shut into darkness.

NARRATIVE SAMPLE: **THE MANSION**

Location: an overgrown trail in an untended orchard, leading towards a break in a fence. Past the fence is a derelict mansion, once purple and majestic, but long neglected with peeling paint, broken roof tiles, a leaning porch and broken steps. It's a tall, imposing, 3 floor house with boarded up windows on the main floor and dark yawning windows on the top floors, with some tattered curtains in the top rooms behind windows partly opaque with grime.

Music/sound: naturalistic, quiet spring morning, birds chirping, a bit of wind.

Characters:

Violet is a feisty 12 years old, who lives in a group foster home a few miles from the mansion. She'd never met her father and lost her mother to an illness when she was 6, but has memories of a kind, loving mother and likes to tell the other kids about how wonderful she was. She is a strong, smart, resourceful, curious kid, not shy and is quick to ask questions and often jumps in to lead others. She always has a plan.

Bobby is an earnest, scrappy little 10 year old, boisterous, kind hearted and loyal, who was given up for adoption as a baby. They aren't related, but he looks up to her, sees her like a big sister, and would follow her anywhere.

Player Goal: Once Violet falls into the well, she has to climb out, get to the house and find a way inside, eventually working her way through the puzzles in each room to the top floor, to discover the house's final secret and make peace with her new situation.

Action: Player must find the first few handholds in the well that Violet's hands don't pass through, to start climbing. Then as Violet gets closer to the top, activate a cut scene where she finishes climbing, and as she pulls herself through the boards, sees the figure in the top floor window of the house more clearly this time. She narrates as she climbs through the fence and walks through the yard. Once she arrives at the front porch, she needs to solve a colour-based puzzle to get inside. Each time she solves the puzzles of a room, the room is restored in full colour to its former glory, and it unlocks a new clue to solve the final puzzle of the house and the people who used to live there.

PART I: THE WELL

Violet and Bobby are walking briskly through an overgrown path in an old orchard, and as they pass a few trees and round a corner, an old fence, partly falling down, comes into view.

Violet: I don't believe in ghosts. Ghost are dumb.

Bobby: They are not! I saw one upstairs. I swear I did, Violet.

Violet: There's someone in the house, dummy. A REAL person. And we're going to get proof and show everybody. I've got a plan.

Bobby: You always have the best plans.

Violet: Of course I do. I'm the brains and you're my apprentice.

She musses his hair and he smiles up at her. As they get closer to the fence, they can see the mansion looming in its large, unkempt yard. A twig snaps off to one side and Bobby looks toward it. Violet sees a curtain move in one of the top floor windows. She points.

Violet: There's someone there! In that window. Look!

They start to run and Violet steps on a couple of rotting boards hidden by dirt and grass, and CRACK, she disappears into the well. Bobby runs to the hole and crouches down, trying to see into the darkness.

Bobby: Violet! Are you okay? Violet? Can you hear me?

He looks around, frantic.

Bobby: I'm gonna get help, okay? I'll be back! I promise!

As he runs off, Violet comes to at the bottom of a well. She gets up, dusts herself off and looks around. It's dim with light filtering through the broken boards about 30 feet above her. Then she looks down and she sees her crumpled body on the ground, her head at an unnatural angle.

Violet: Oh. That wasn't in the plan.

Then she holds her hand up in front of her face, turning it over, seeing the wall through her palm and fingers.

Violet: Oh, okay. Well... I'm still here. I think. (Pause) But wait till Bobby finds out there really are ghosts! I guess? (Pause) I'd better see if I can get out of this well first. As mom used to say, every problem has a solution.

She steps toward the brick walls and looks up.

Violet: Let me see... Maybe I can climb.

She steps up to the wall and swipes at a few areas but her hand passes through.

Violet: OMG what if I get stuck here. Out of all the places to haunt, I get stuck at the bottom of a well? With no one around to haunt?! This CANNOT be my fate. Focus, Violet. Don't panic. Deep breaths, Violet. Okay, calming down...

She pauses and scans the wall

Violet: Let me see... I wonder if I can hold onto anything...?

One of the bricks shimmers slightly, suggesting she give it a try.

Violet: Well, that looks promising. Let's give that a try.

POETRY SAMPLE: **MID-FLIGHT**

Sit down, stare at the blank screen, watch the cursor blink.

Get up, make tea, do the dishes, wipe the counter clean, pet the cat, clear the clutter off your desk, start the washing machine, add laundry detergent to the grocery list, scrub the dirt from the cupboard moldings, slip on shoes and jacket and take the elevator to the first floor to check the mailbox, then back up to rustle around in the junk drawer for a screwdriver to tighten the door handle that's been wobbly for three years since you moved in, place your cat on the comfy chair beside your desk and bury your face in its tummy, check your socials, close them down then check them again, then annoyed at how unconscious that is, practice those five-in, seven-out deep breaths, then settle at your desk, read an article on the top 10 practices of very efficient people and hand write this list and tape it to the wall, then get up to make tea, loose leaf this time, and waiting for the tea to steep, stand by the glass door looking out on the porch, watching the birds flitting between the trees, and wonder if they ever think "wow, I can fly" and then

Notice the dead bird just outside the door

wonder if you should plan a funeral attended by one, or maybe two if your cat wakes up
and then wonder how long it's been there, just out of the rain
and wonder if you were home when it hit and
maybe you could have helped
if you'd been looking out instead of in.

And then the tea is forgotten on the counter, its heat slipping away, and you're sitting, feeding the first pieces of a new world onto a white page, a woman appears in front of the glass, a burst of laughter as she steps into the light, her head turned back to her friend, her smile wide and she reaches forward
to open the door just in time
for a bird in mid-flight.