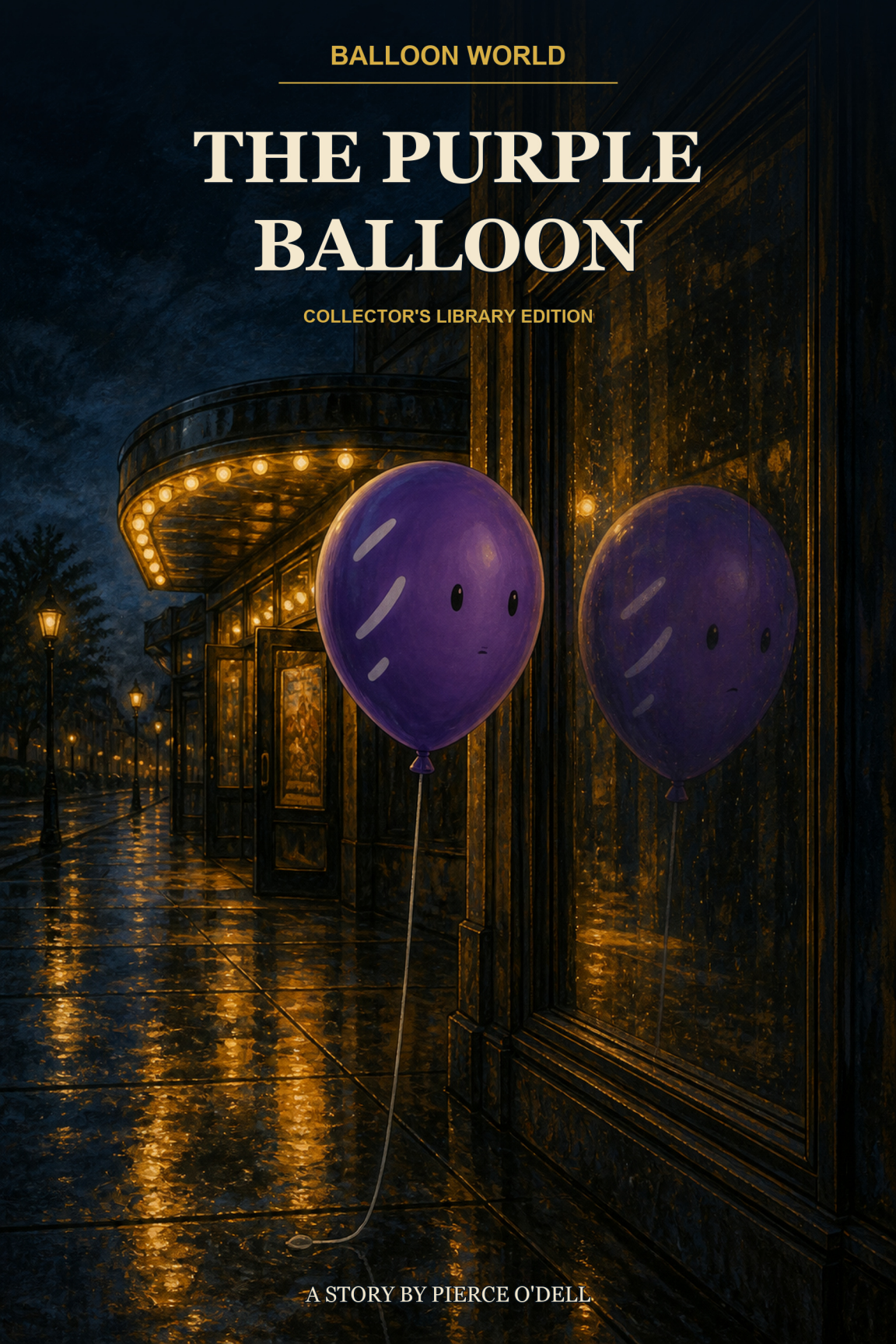
BALLOON WORLD

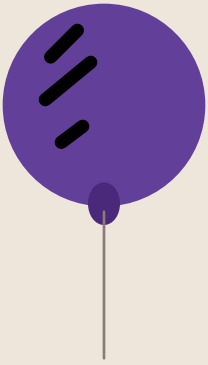
THE PURPLE BALLOON

COLLECTOR'S LIBRARY EDITION



A STORY BY PIERCE O'DELL

BALLOON WORLD

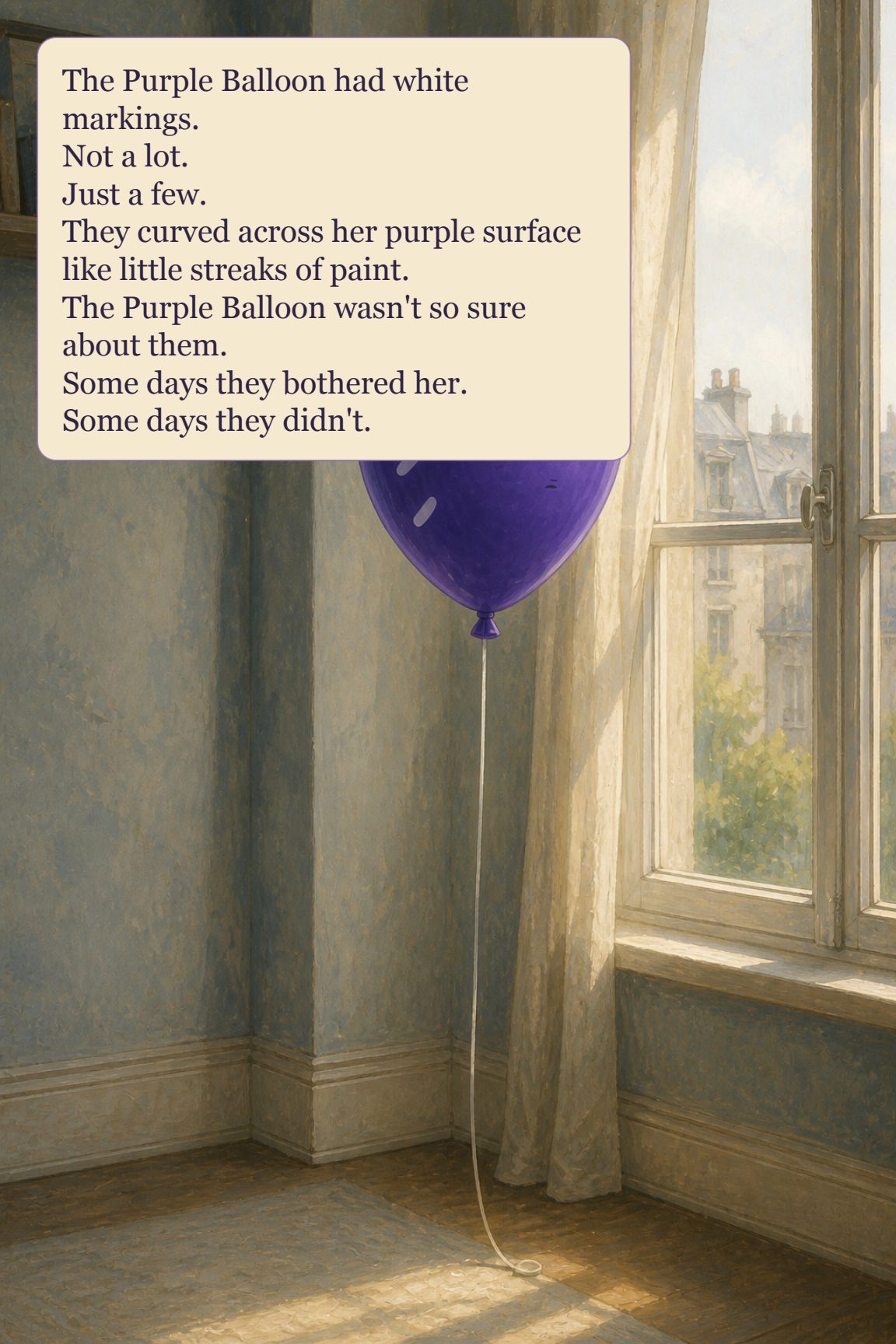


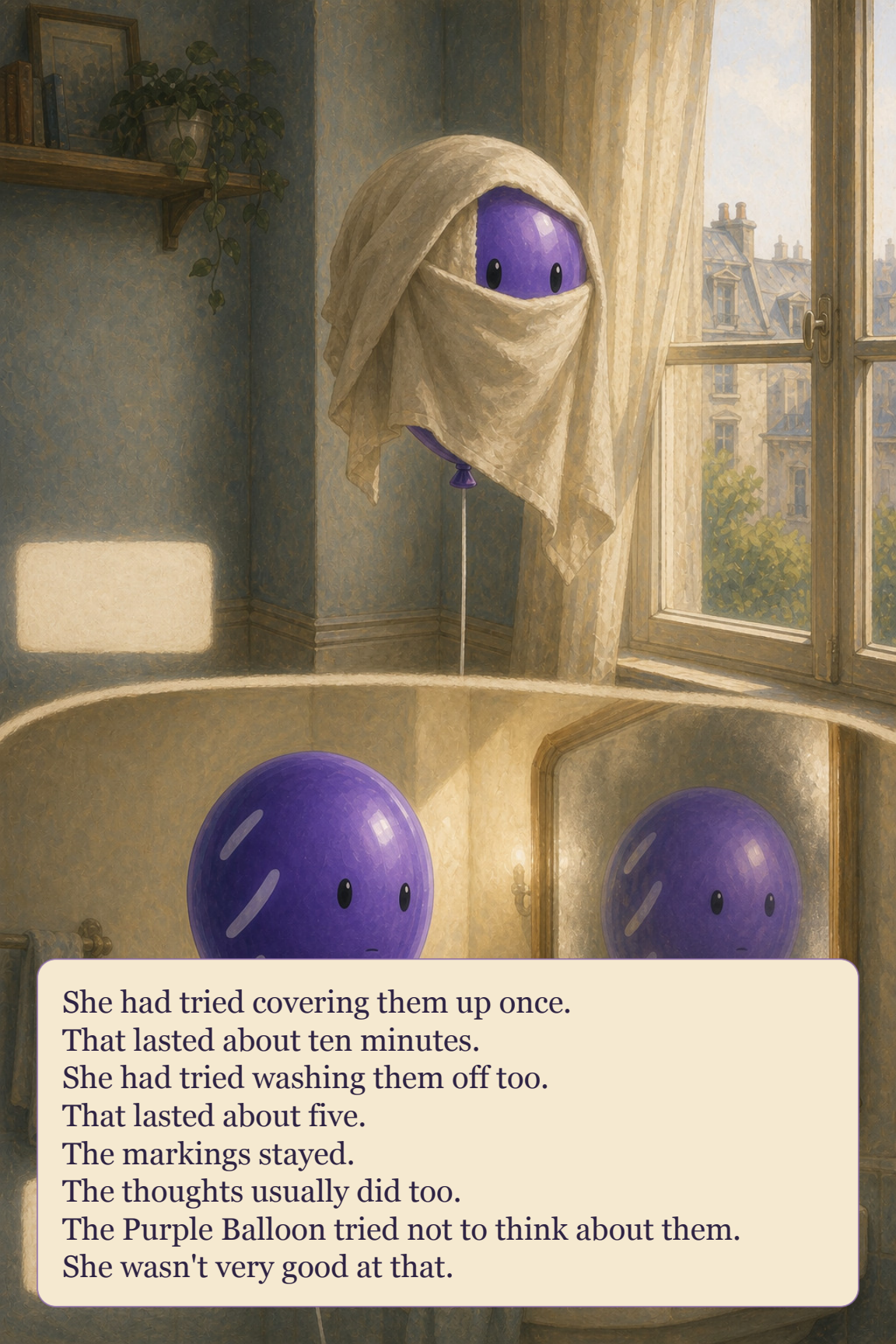
THE PURPLE BALLOON

A short story by Pierce O'Dell

COLLECTOR'S LIBRARY EDITION

Free to read. Free to share.


The Purple Balloon had white markings.
Not a lot.
Just a few.
They curved across her purple surface like little streaks of paint.
The Purple Balloon wasn't so sure about them.
Some days they bothered her.
Some days they didn't.



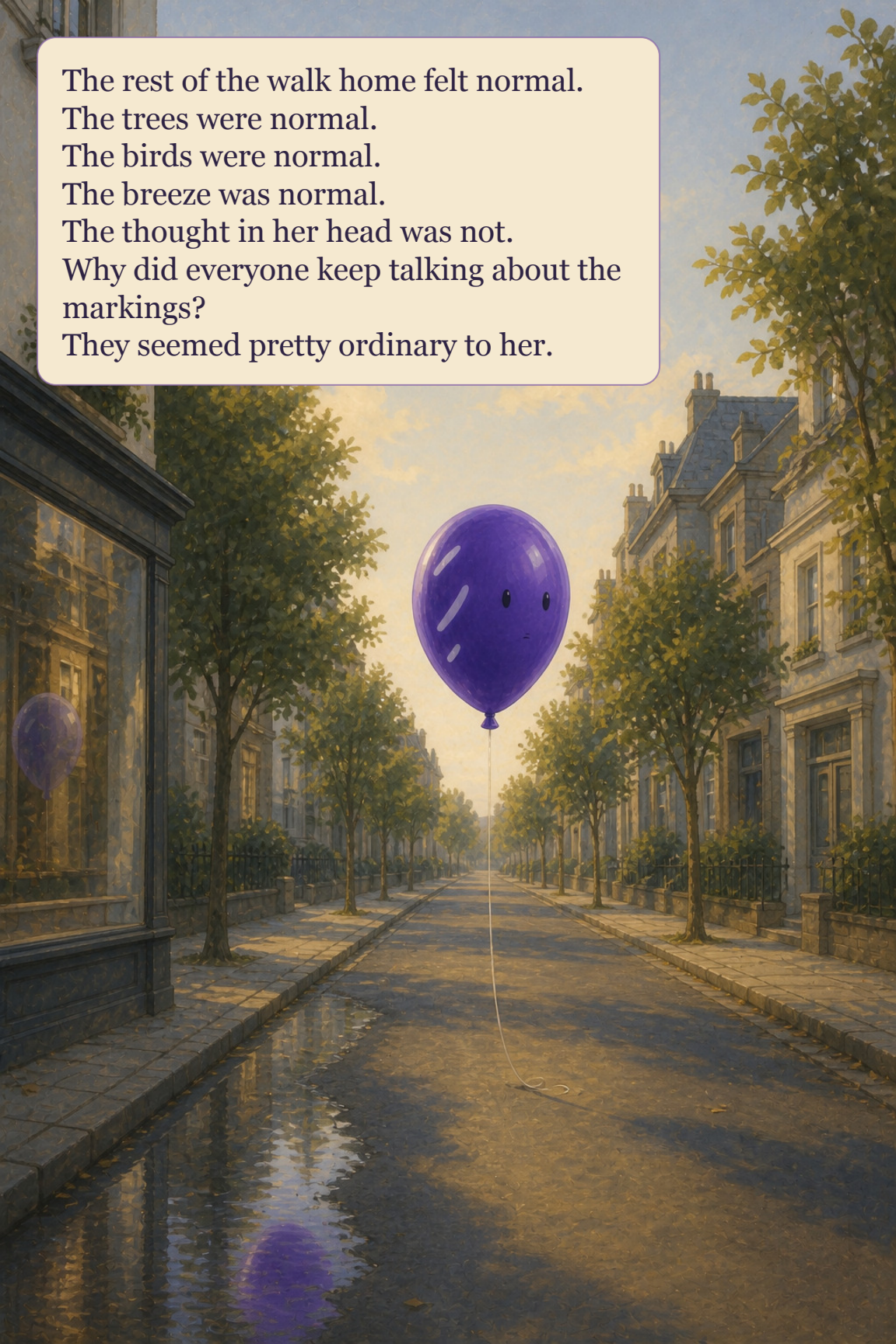
She had tried covering them up once.
That lasted about ten minutes.
She had tried washing them off too.
That lasted about five.
The markings stayed.
The thoughts usually did too.
The Purple Balloon tried not to think about them.
She wasn't very good at that.



One afternoon she floated through a park.
A small balloon tugged on her mother's string.
"Mom, look!"
The Purple Balloon looked down.
There were the markings again.
The little balloon bobbed toward her.

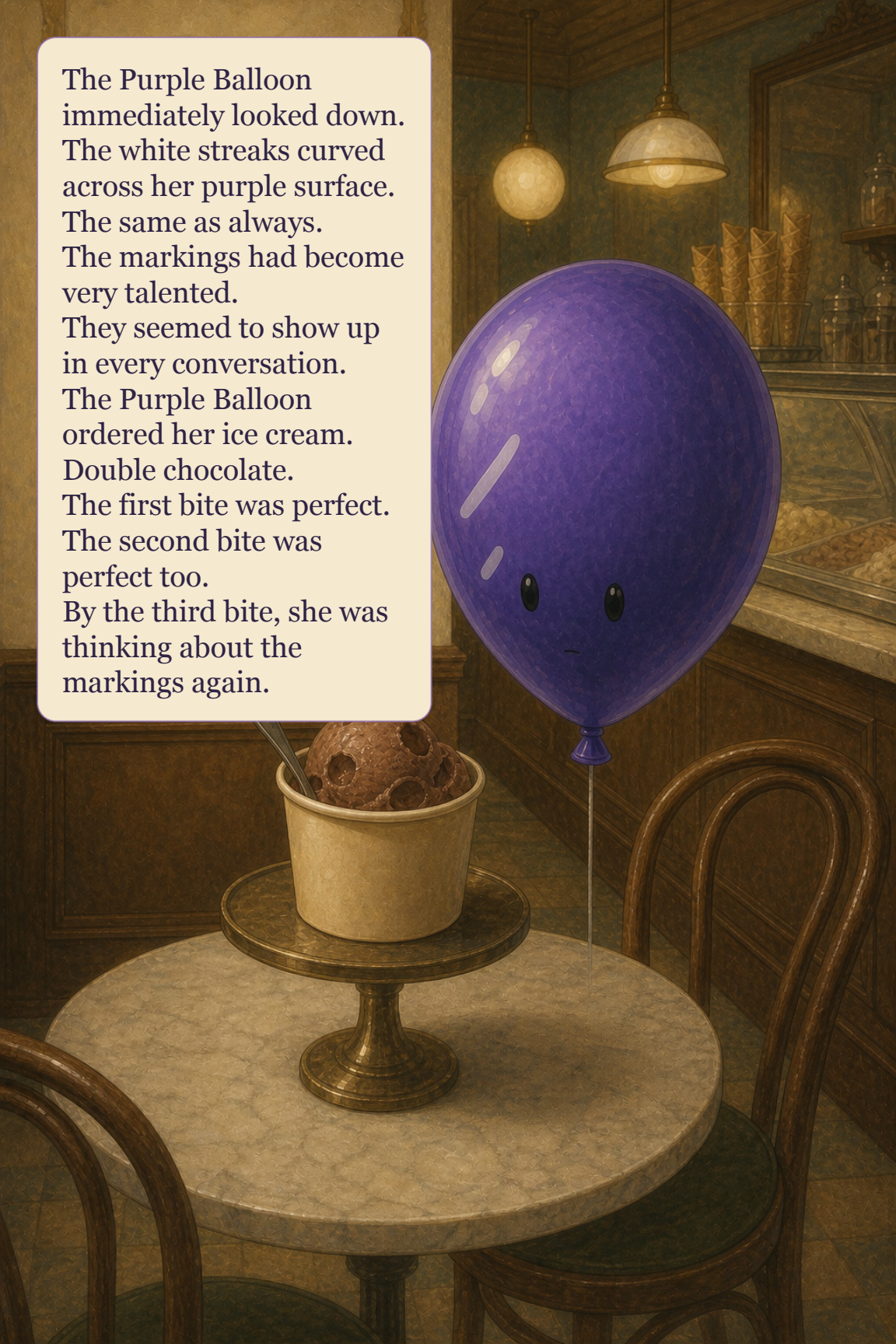


"I wish mine looked like that."
Her mother floated a little closer.
"I know. They're beautiful."
The Purple Balloon kept floating.
She pretended she hadn't heard them.
But she had.
She heard every word.

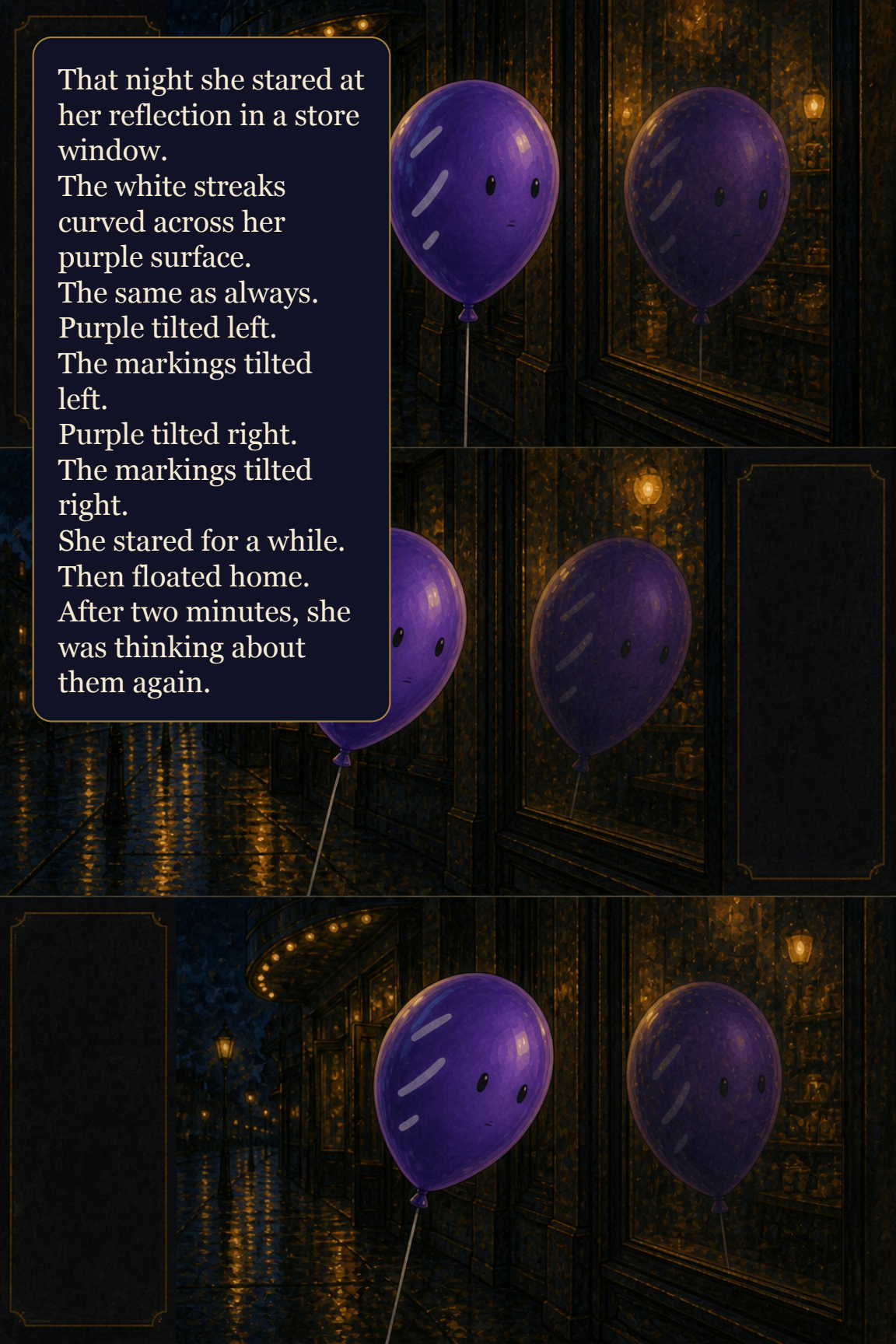

The rest of the walk home felt normal.
The trees were normal.
The birds were normal.
The breeze was normal.
The thought in her head was not.
Why did everyone keep talking about the markings?
They seemed pretty ordinary to her.

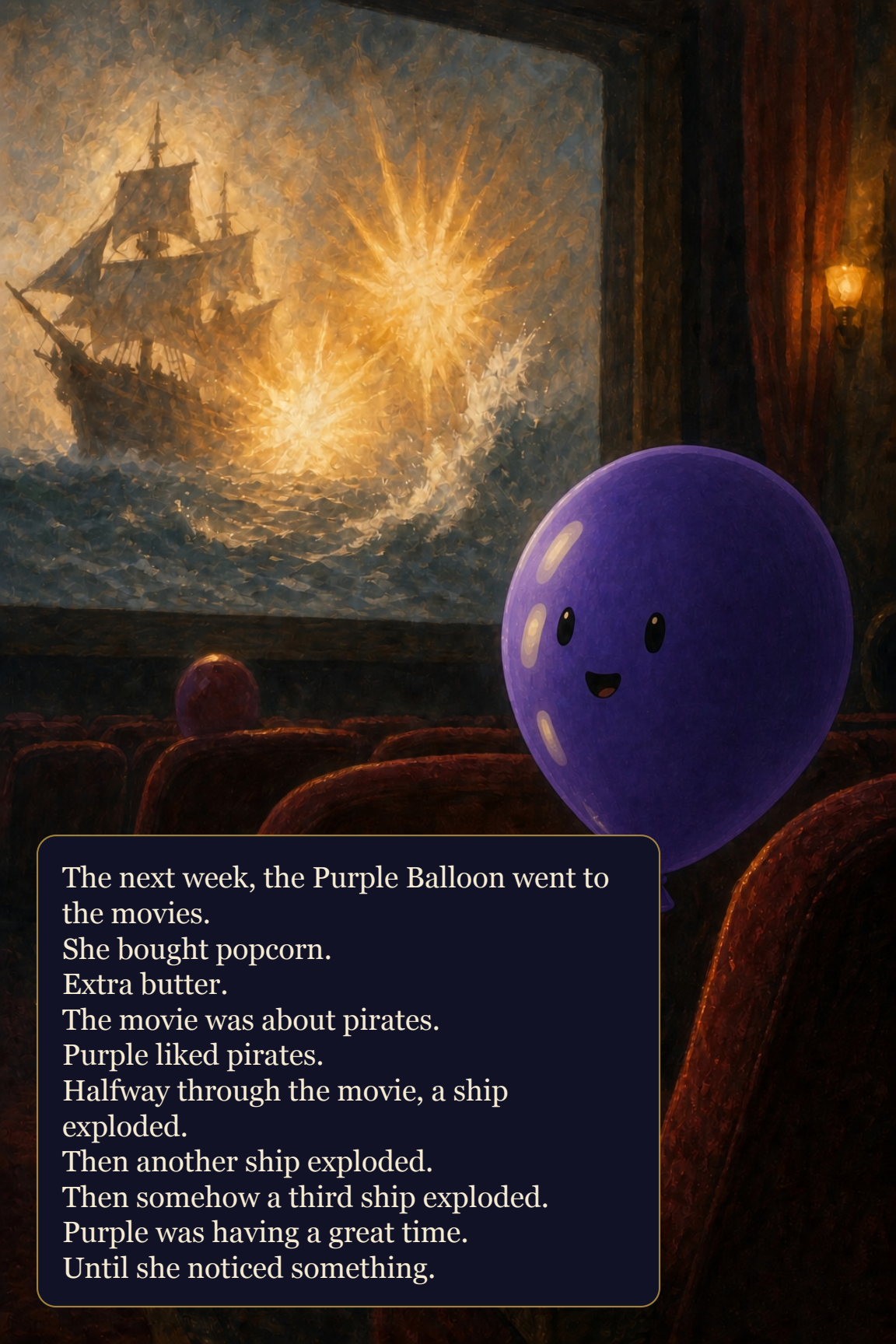


A few days later, the Purple Balloon stopped by an ice cream shop.
There was a line.
Purple liked lines.
They gave her something to do besides think.
Unfortunately, this line was not helping.
Two balloons in front of her were whispering.
"I love those white markings."
"Me too."
"They look so cool."


The Purple Balloon immediately looked down.
The white streaks curved across her purple surface.
The same as always.
The markings had become very talented.
They seemed to show up in every conversation.
The Purple Balloon ordered her ice cream.
Double chocolate.
The first bite was perfect.
The second bite was perfect too.
By the third bite, she was thinking about the markings again.


Purple sighed.
The markings were just sitting there.
They weren't doing anything.
Yet somehow they had become the loudest part of her day.


That night she stared at her reflection in a store window.
The white streaks curved across her purple surface.
The same as always.
Purple tilted left.
The markings tilted left.
Purple tilted right.
The markings tilted right.
She stared for a while.
Then floated home.
After two minutes, she was thinking about them again.

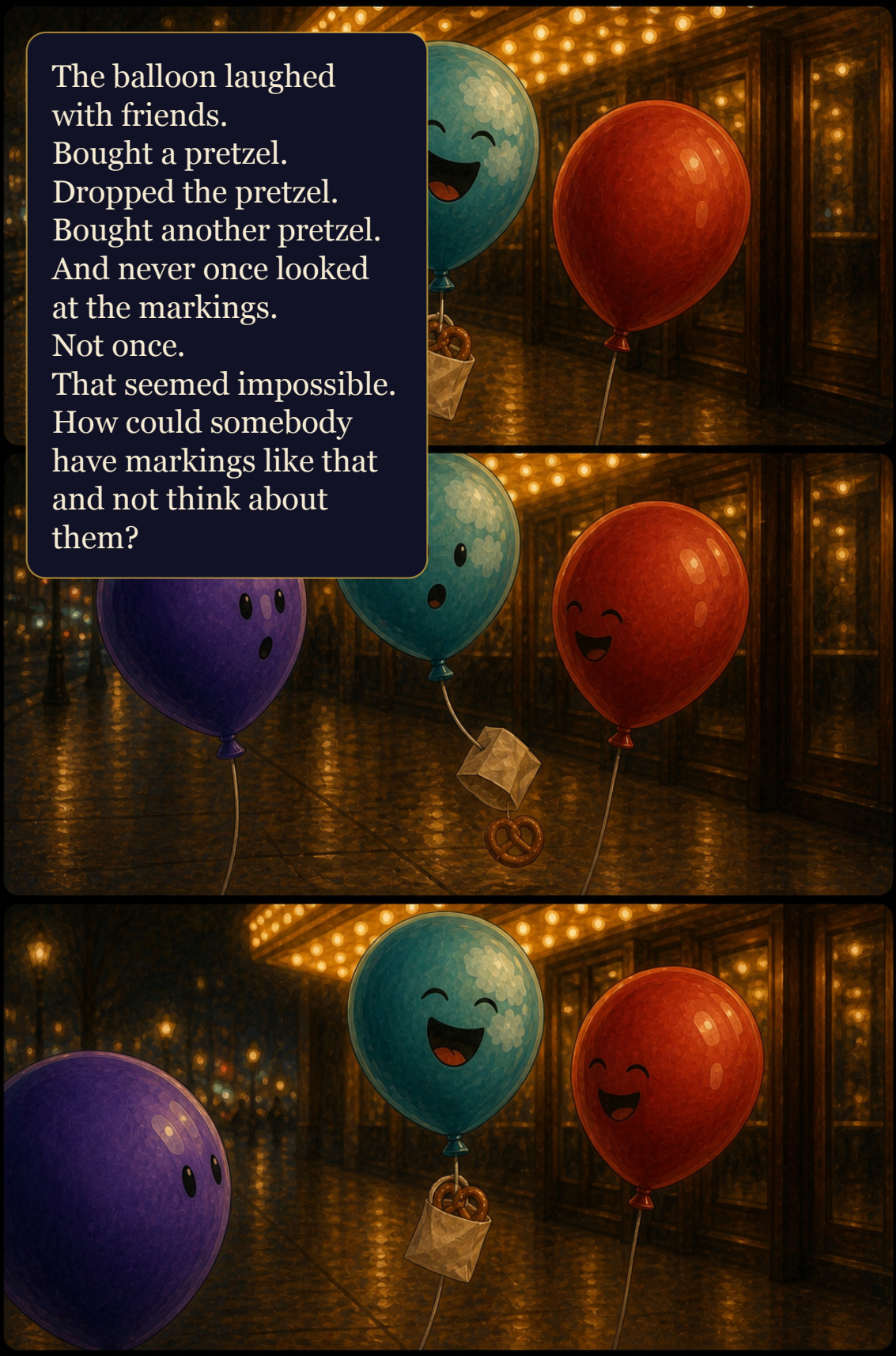


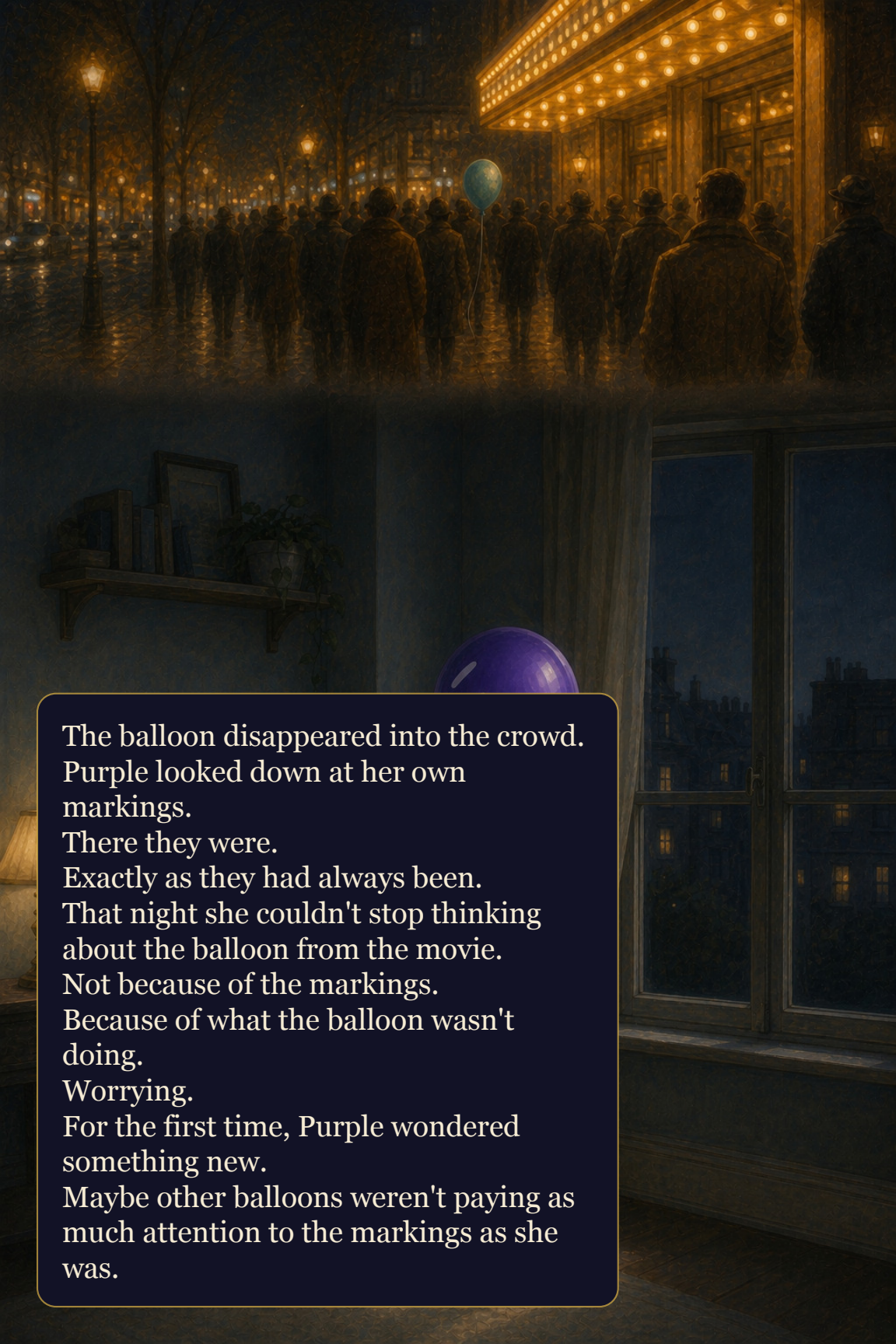
The next week, the Purple Balloon went to the movies.
She bought popcorn.
Extra butter.
The movie was about pirates.
Purple liked pirates.
Halfway through the movie, a ship exploded.
Then another ship exploded.
Then somehow a third ship exploded.
Purple was having a great time.
Until she noticed something.





A balloon floated a few rows ahead of her with white markings.
Not exactly the same.
But close enough to make Purple stare.
When the movie ended, she followed the balloon outside.
Not in a creepy way.
Just in a curious way.


The balloon laughed with friends.
Bought a pretzel.
Dropped the pretzel.
Bought another pretzel.
And never once looked at the markings.
Not once.
That seemed impossible.
How could somebody have markings like that and not think about them?



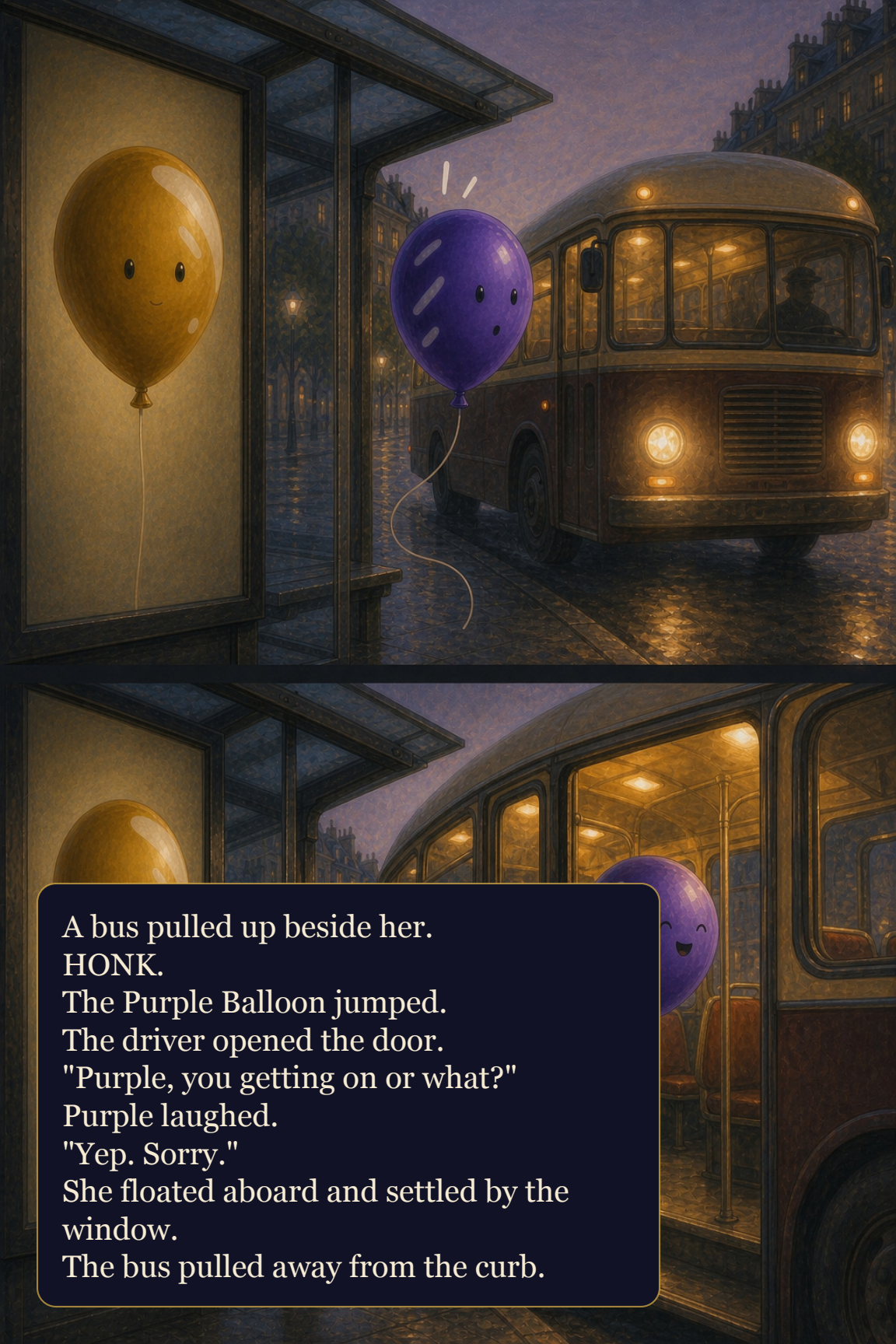
The balloon disappeared into the crowd.
Purple looked down at her own markings.
There they were.
Exactly as they had always been.
That night she couldn't stop thinking about the balloon from the movie.
Not because of the markings.
Because of what the balloon wasn't doing.
Worrying.
For the first time, Purple wondered something new.
Maybe other balloons weren't paying as much attention to the markings as she was.



A few days later, the Purple Balloon was waiting for a bus.
A poster hung beside the bus stop.
A very famous balloon hovered in the advertisement.
The celebrity had white markings.
Not the same markings.
But close.
Close enough.
The Purple Balloon floated closer.



She looked at the poster.
Then at her own reflection in the glass.
Then back at the poster.
The celebrity seemed happy.
Comfortable.
Normal.
The markings weren't hidden.
They weren't being shown off either.
They were just there.
Purple stared for a moment.
Then another.
And for the first time, a strange thought crossed her mind.
If those markings looked beautiful on her...
maybe mine aren't so bad either.


A bus pulled up beside her.
HONK.
The Purple Balloon jumped.
The driver opened the door.
"Purple, you getting on or what?"
Purple laughed.
"Yep. Sorry."
She floated aboard and settled by the window.
The bus pulled away from the curb.



Purple looked outside.
The city drifted by.
The trees drifted by.
The clouds drifted by.
For the first time in a long time, she felt lighter.
She floated a little taller.
A little straighter.
The reflection in the window looked back at her.
The same purple balloon.
The same white markings.
Nothing had changed.
Purple stayed with the reflection for a moment.
...
A tiny smile appeared somewhere no one else could see.

Stories are more fun when they're shared.

WRITTEN WITH CURIOSITY

Free to read. Free to share.

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