



7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

THE THINGS GRANDPA LEFT BEHIND

A Story by Arkedelic



STEWARTSON

THE THINGS GRANDPA LEFT BEHIND

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THE THINGS GRANDPA LEFT BEHIND

When Mario returned to school, something had changed.

He didn't crack a joke. Didn't roll his eyes when Jane bossed everyone around. Didn't hum random tunes during snack break. Just sat. Quiet. Focused on folding a piece of paper into a perfect square.

Sid tried tossing him a silly grin. Nik offered a twisty puzzle. Sam slid over a chocolate bar.

Mario said "thanks" but didn't touch any of them.

By lunch, Jane had had enough.

"Mario," she whispered. "What happened?"

He didn't look up. Just shrugged and said, "He's gone."

"Who's gone?"

"My grandpa."

The Squad froze.

None of them knew.



“Do you want to talk about it?” Nik asked gently.

Mario shook his head. “No.”

They didn’t push. But they noticed things. He now carried around Grandpa’s old handkerchief — soft, faded blue. He kept wiping things. The desk. His pencil. The corner of a page. Wipe, fold, press. Again and again.

And he was always fixing things. A peeling sticker on the classroom wall. A crooked swing at the park. Even the broken zip on Sam’s backpack.

“Grandpa hated loose ends,” he muttered once.

Back home, Mario couldn’t sleep.

He missed the smell of Grandpa’s coconut oil. The way he’d tap the window twice when leaving. The old joke about three ducks and a typewriter. The way he’d say, “Things fall apart. That’s how you know they matter.”

Now he was gone.



No goodbye. No warning. One night, coughing. The next, hospital. The next, silence.

People kept saying things like “He lived a full life” and “He’s in a better place.” But none of those places were here. With Mario.

And the scariest part?

He couldn’t remember Grandpa’s voice anymore.

Not clearly.

Saturday, the Squad met in the park.

Mario didn’t want to come, but Jane said, “We’ll just sit. You don’t have to do anything.”

He came. He sat.

They played Monopoly. Or tried to.

“Trade you the orange set for your railway?” Nik asked.

Mario stared. “He always took the orange set. Said it reminded him of his first bike.”

He wasn’t talking about the game.

He was remembering.

And suddenly, words poured out.

“He made a drawer divider from an old shoebox. Taught me how to flip an egg. Once fixed my glasses with chewing gum. Said nothing’s useless if you look long enough.”

Silence.

Then Jane said, softly, “That’s beautiful.”

Mario blinked.

“No, I mean it,” she said. “You notice all these little things. I didn’t even know chewing gum could fix anything.”

Mario looked at her. “He used to say I didn’t notice enough.”

Sam shook her head. “I think you notice more than anyone.”

The next morning, Mario found a tiny box taped to his school locker.

Inside: a safety pin, a button, a small folded joke (the one about three ducks and the typewriter), and a note that said:

For emergencies. Fix what you can. Smile when you can't. – The Squad

He didn’t cry. But he stood still for a long time.

Later that day, Nik’s shoelace snapped.

Mario knelt beside him and tied it using a loop-lock Grandpa once taught him. He didn’t say anything. Just tapped Nik’s shoe twice — like Grandpa tapped the window.

Nik smiled. “Thanks.”

Mario nodded.





That night, Mario found the old cassette recorder Grandpa once gave him.

He pressed play.

Static.

Then, a faint voice. Grandpa's voice. Saying: "If you're hearing this, the world probably feels a little broken. But remember, kid — you fix what you can. And you let love handle the rest."

Mario smiled.

He wasn't ready to let go.

But maybe... he didn't have to.

Not completely.

Because Grandpa wasn't gone.

Not really.

Not while the swing still swayed the way he fixed it.

Not while the window still got two taps.

Not while Mario still remembered the little things Grandpa left behind.

THE END

THE MEMORY BOX PROJECT

Purpose: To help you remember and hold on to the special moments, words, and habits of the people you love — just like Mario found ways to keep Grandpa close through the little things he left behind.

What you need:

- A small box or container (shoe box, tin, or jar)
- Paper and pen or pencil
- Small items that remind you of a loved one (could be a leaf, a button, a ticket stub, a photo, or anything meaningful)

HOW TO DO:

- 1 Think of a person you love or loved — they could still be here, or they may have passed away.
- 2 Write down (or draw) at least three memories of them — it could be something they said, something they taught you, or a small thing they always did.
- 3 Place each note or drawing in the box, along with any small objects that remind you of them.
- 4 Decorate the box if you like. Keep it somewhere safe.

- 5 When you miss them, open the box and look at the little things you've collected.

FIVE FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT REMEMBERING LOVED ONES AROUND THE WORLD



1. MEXICO'S COLOURFUL DAY OF THE DEAD

Every year on November 1st and 2nd, families in Mexico celebrate Día de los Muertos by building beautiful altars decorated with flowers, candles, and photos of loved ones. They also prepare the person's favourite food, believing their spirit comes

back to enjoy it.

2. JAPAN'S LANTERN FESTIVAL

In Japan's Toro Nagashi tradition, people float paper lanterns down rivers to guide the spirits of loved ones back to the afterlife. The glowing lanterns drifting on the water create a peaceful, magical scene.

3. NEW ZEALAND'S STORYTELLING EVENINGS

Among the Māori people, storytelling gatherings are a way to pass down the life stories, sayings, and lessons of ancestors. The belief is that as long as their stories are told, they are never truly gone.

4. MADAGASCAR'S 'TURNING OF THE BONES'

In Madagascar's Famadihana tradition, families bring out the wrapped remains of their ancestors, rewrap them in fresh cloth, and dance with them to live music. It's a joyful celebration of connection, not a sad occasion.



5.SOUTH KOREA'S CHUSEOK FESTIVAL

During Chuseok, families visit their ancestral hometowns, clean the graves, and share a feast in honour of their ancestors. Special rice cakes called songpyeon are made, each one shaped with a wish for happiness.



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THE LAST THING IN THE BOX

Grandpa's box was almost empty now, except for one last object. It was small, wrapped in soft cloth, and felt heavier than it looked.

"What do you think it is?" asked Sam, her voice hushed like the box was listening.

"I don't know," said Leo. "But whatever it is... Grandpa wanted us to find it last."

Sam carefully unwrapped the cloth. Inside was...



- What was inside the cloth? Was it something surprising, funny, or deeply meaningful?
- Did the object have a secret message, a clue, or a memory attached to it?
- How did Sam and Leo feel when they saw it? Proud? Curious? Emotional?
- Did they decide to keep it safe, use it, or share it with someone else in the family?
- Did the object help them understand something new about Grandpa's life?

Your turn to finish the story

See you next Monday with another interesting story!

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