

STORY
WALKER
365

7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

THE DISAPPEARING ACT

A Story by Arkedelic



STRETCH CONC

THE DISAPPEARING ACT

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THE DISAPPEARING ACT

Nik had vanished. Again.

Third Squad hangout in a row. No message. No call. Nothing.

"I swear, if he says 'whatever' one more time," Mario muttered, bouncing a tennis ball off the court wall. "He's doing it again. Poof. Gone."

"He's probably just busy," Sam offered, though her tone wasn't confident.

"Or moody," Sid added.

"Or mad," Jane said flatly.

The Sunshine Squad was used to Nik's moods. He was funny, quick-witted, loyal. But lately, he'd been folding into himself like a disappearing trick. Dramatic locker slams. Ghosting in the middle of conversations. Shrugging off invites with one-word replies.

The first time, they waited. The second time, they checked in. By the third, Mario had had enough.



"He's doing it for attention," he said, tossing the tennis ball hard. "And guess what? It's working. We're all here, talking about him."

That's when Nik showed up.

Dust on his jeans. Hoodie pulled low. And a look like he expected to be yelled at.

"Didn't think you'd still be here," he said, not meeting their eyes.

"Didn't think you'd show up," Mario snapped.

Nik flinched. Jane opened her mouth to say something, but Mario held up a hand. "No, seriously. You disappear. You act all mysterious. You don't answer texts. Then you walk in like we're the problem? What's going on, Nik?"



Nik looked like he might bolt again. But then, oddly, he laughed. A bitter, quiet kind of laugh.

"Nothing's going on," he said. Then:
"Everything's going on. I don't even know."

"Nik," Jane said gently, "you've been... off. We're not mad. But we're confused."

Nik looked down at his shoes.

"It's just... at home, everything's so loud. Mom's on calls all day. Dad's travelling. When I talk, no one listens. Not really. So I stopped talking. But then I felt like I wasn't even there. Like I didn't matter. So I... I don't know. I figured if I vanished, someone might notice."

Silence.

Then Sid whispered, "We noticed."

Nik's eyes welled up.

"I don't want to be this person," he said. "Storming off, going silent, slamming lockers. But when I say how I feel, people say I'm being dramatic. Or too sensitive. So I thought if I acted out, it would mean something."

Mario stepped forward.

"It does mean something. You matter, Nik. But the way you're going about it... it's like you're punishing us for not guessing what you're feeling."

Nik nodded slowly.

"I know. I'm sorry. I just didn't know how else to say 'I feel invisible.'"

Jane pulled out her notebook. She scribbled something and showed it to Nik.

"You're not invisible. You're valued. But we can't read minds. Next time, just say: I need to be seen."

Nik smiled weakly.

"Deal. But only if you promise not to write it on a giant poster and stick it in the school hallway."

"No promises," Jane grinned.

Later that evening, Nik sat at the dinner table.

His mom was typing. His dad was on a call.





He cleared his throat.

"I have something to say. And I want you to listen. Not with one ear. Fully."

His mom stopped typing. His dad muted himself.

"I've been feeling... not heard. Like I'm background noise in my own home. And it's making me act weird with my friends. I don't want to be that kid. But I also don't want to pretend I'm okay when I'm not."

His mom reached for his hand.

"We didn't know," she whispered. "But thank you for telling us."

His dad added, "We'll do better. Starting now."

Nik didn't disappear that week. Or the week after.

He showed up. Even when he was quiet, he stayed.

And every time someone said no, or missed his joke, or forgot to wave back — he reminded himself: They see me. I just need to speak, not storm.

THE END

THE SEE-ME SIGNAL

What you need:

Small pieces of coloured paper or sticky notes, a pen or marker, and a small box, jar, or envelope.

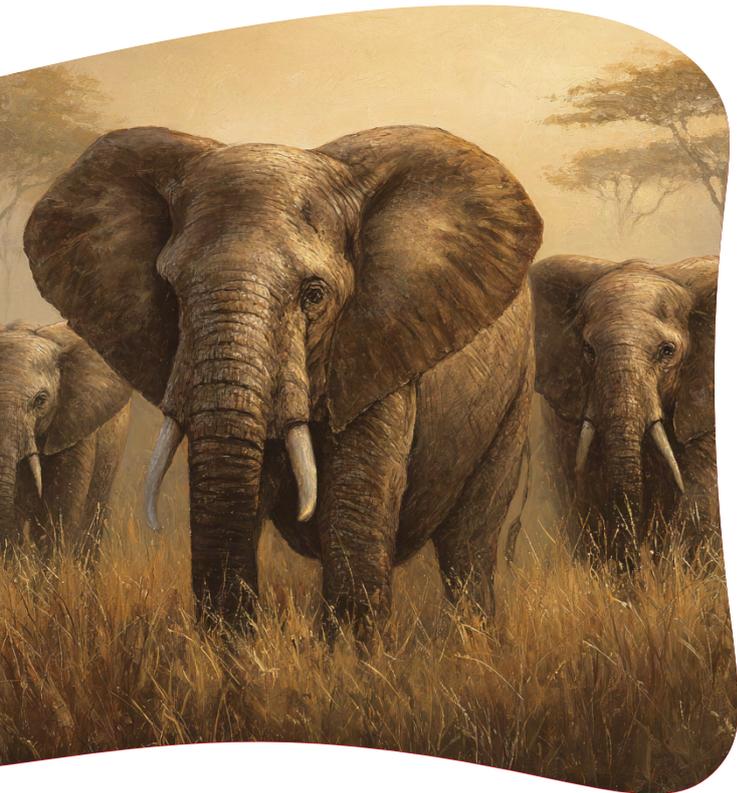
HOW TO DO:

- 1 Create a small “See-Me Box” — decorate it however you like, with your name or drawings that make you feel recognised.
- 2 Cut or tear 10–12 small slips of paper. On each one, write or draw a signal that means “I need to be seen or heard.”
 - o Example: Can we talk? / I feel left out. / Please listen fully. / I’m upset but don’t know why.
- 3 Place the slips inside the box.
- 4 Share the box with your family or a trusted friend. Tell them that whenever you drop a note inside (or hand one over), it’s your quiet way of saying, “I need a moment of connection.”

- 5 You can also make a “See-You Box” for someone else — where you write quick notes when they do something kind, thoughtful, or simply show up for you.

Reflection/Purpose: This activity helps children give shape to invisible emotions. By creating a clear, non-dramatic way to express “I need to be noticed,” they learn communication over withdrawal, honesty over sulking, and self-awareness over silence. It turns attention-seeking into connection-building — teaching that to be seen, sometimes you just need to signal.

FIVE FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT THE POWER OF LISTENING (IN US AND IN NATURE)



1. YOUR BRAIN LISTENS WITH MORE THAN EARS

When someone truly listens, your brain releases a chemical called oxytocin. It helps you feel safe and understood. That's why a calm listener can sometimes help more than a hundred rushed words. Listening doesn't just hear sound; it hears emotion.

2. ELEPHANTS CAN HEAR STORMS 150 KILOMETRES AWAY

Elephants pick up vibrations through the ground using their feet and trunk. These deep, low-frequency rumbles can warn them of distant rain or danger. In elephant herds, listening isn't just survival — it's how they stay connected across vast spaces.

3. DOLPHINS LISTEN WITH THEIR WHOLE BODY

Dolphins don't rely only on ears — they use echolocation, sending out clicks and listening for echoes that bounce back. This helps them “see” underwater with sound, recognising friends and even sensing if another dolphin is hurt or stressed.

4. LISTENING BUILDS BRIDGES, NOT JUST CONVERSATIONS

In every species, from humans to whales, listening creates connection. For people, it's how friendships grow, families heal, and teams stay strong. When we stop to really hear someone, we tell them, “You matter.”



5. OWLS HEAR IN 3D

An owl's ears are not placed evenly — one is slightly higher than the other. This tiny difference lets them locate the exact spot a sound comes from, even in total darkness. Listening, for them, is a kind of night vision.



THE QUIET BENCH

Rafael had stopped sitting with his friends at break.

He said he preferred the bench near the old mango tree — “better shade,” he joked. But the truth was quieter.



He felt invisible.

At home, his parents were always busy — his father on construction calls, his mother at the hospital. Even at school, everyone seemed to talk louder than him. When he did speak, his words felt like small pebbles dropped into a roaring river. No one noticed the splash.

So Rafael stopped trying.
No more jokes. No more stories. Just silence.

But silence, he realised, wasn't peace. It was heavy.

One afternoon, his friend Luiza spotted him on the bench and waved. He pretended not to see.
She came anyway.

“Are you hiding or thinking?” she asked.

He shrugged. “Maybe both.”

Luiza sat beside him, swinging her legs. “You know, it's hard to hear someone who doesn't talk.”

He frowned. “I talked before.”

“Maybe,” she said, “but now you whisper so softly that even the wind has to lean in.”

Rafael looked down. A tiny smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. “Maybe the wind just forgot how to listen.”

Luiza tilted her head. “Then let’s teach it again.”

And then...

- What did Luiza do next to help Rafael feel seen and heard again?
- Did Rafael finally tell her how he’d been feeling inside?
- What might happen when his other friends notice he’s back at the bench — will they sit too?
- How could Rafael find his own way to “teach the wind to listen”?
- What could change at home once Rafael starts using words again instead of silence

Your turn to finish the story

See you next Monday with another interesting story!

Got feedback or a suggestion? We would love to hear it!
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