

STORY
WALKER
365

7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

THE YEAR I LET GO

A Story by Arkedelic



STENZONCO

THE YEAR I LET GO

1

Story

3-6

2

Activity

7-8

3

Interesting Facts

9-11

4

Complete the Story

12-13

Copyright Protected: All content and materials presented are the exclusive property of StoryWalker365 protected under copyright and trademark laws. Unauthorised reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is prohibited. This content is for personal use only. For permission requests, contact us at voice@storywalker.com.

THE YEAR I LET GO

Nik stared at the small blank slip of paper in his hand.

He had written nothing on it. Not yet.

All around him, the Squad huddled in sleeping bags on the rooftop — stars above, sparklers crackling, hot chocolate steaming in mugs. It was their “New Year sleepover,” a Sunshine Squad tradition. Sid had brought speakers. Mario had brought marshmallows. Jane had brought her clipboard of rituals.

“This year,” Jane declared, “we’re doing something new. Everyone writes one thing from this past year they want to leave behind — something that hurt, or felt heavy, or is just time to let go of. Then we toss it into the fire tin. Gone.”

“Ooooooh, very drama,” said Sam. “I love it.”

Jane passed around slips of paper and a green marker.

Mario went first. “I’m burning the time I broke my mom’s favourite bowl and blamed the dog.”
Poof! Into the tin.

Sid followed. “My old diary. It’s so full of weird angry poems about homework.”



Laughter. Poof.

Sam held up hers. “My obsession with becoming the tallest in class. I give up. Nik has won.”

Even more laughter. Poof.

Jane’s was quiet. “All the times I forced myself to smile when I really needed to talk.”

Poof.

Nik’s hand stayed closed.

He had so many things.

The notebook he lost in June — one Mario lent him with all his science notes. Nik never admitted he’d left it on the school bus.

The cricket tryout. He had frozen. Couldn’t swing. Couldn’t move. People said it was nerves. But it had never stopped replaying in his head.



And Aarav.

His best friend since second grade. They’d been everything — partners in all class projects, neighbours, even co-founders of the now-dead “Dino Dudes Club.” But ever since Aarav moved schools, things had changed. He was busy, distracted, making new friends. Nik had held on, texting, joking, sending memes, pretending it was all still the same.

But it wasn’t.

Later that night, Jane found him sitting alone by the ledge.

“Still thinking?” she asked.

Nik nodded. “Everyone’s tossing away silly things. I don’t know how to write mine down.”

“You don’t have to tell me,” Jane said, “but can I ask something?”

Nik shrugged. “Sure.”

“What are you holding onto — because it’s still important? And what are you holding on to just because you’re afraid of what comes next?”

Nik looked at the stars. “I don’t want to forget Aarav. Or pretend we weren’t friends.”

Jane nodded. “You don’t have to forget. But maybe you don’t have to chase it anymore either.”

Nik didn’t speak for a long time. Then quietly, he said, “I keep hoping he’ll message first. I keep checking.”

“And every time he doesn’t,” Jane said softly, “it hurts a little more.”

Nik exhaled. “Yeah.”

They sat together for a while.

Then he pulled out the paper.

And slowly wrote:
“It was real. But it’s okay to let it rest.”

He added one more line underneath:
“It’s not my job to keep what’s already gone.”

He walked over and dropped it into the tin.

Poof

When he came back, he felt lighter, and heavier, all at once.

“You okay?” Sid asked.

“I think so,” Nik said.





He didn't expect magic. He didn't expect Aarav to call tomorrow. But something had shifted. A kind of tightness had eased.

He noticed his breathing.

He noticed the quiet.

And for the first time in months, it didn't feel scary.

Just still.

The next morning, Jane handed out folded slips with new year affirmations.

Nik opened his.

It read:

“Balance isn't about being fine all the time. It's about knowing when to know and rest your heart.”

Nik folded it carefully and slipped it into his pocket.

Some things you don't hold on to.

Some things — you carry forward.

THE END

THE BURN-AND-BREATHE RITUAL

What you need:

Small slips of paper, a pen or pencil, a safe metal bowl or old tin (with adult supervision), and a few pebbles or leaves.

HOW TO DO:

- 1 Sit somewhere quiet and think of three things from this past year that still make your heart feel heavy — a mistake, a memory, or something that no longer fits who you are.
- 2 On each slip, write a short sentence beginning with:
 - “I’m ready to let go of...”
 - “This mattered, but I can rest it now.”
- 3 Take a deep breath and place each slip into the tin. (You can burn them safely with an adult, or simply tear them up and drop them in.)
- 4 For each slip you release, place one pebble or leaf into your pocket — a reminder that you’re not erasing the memory; you’re carrying the lesson lightly.

- 5 End with three slow breaths in silence, saying quietly: “I let go. I make space.”

Reflection/Purpose: This activity teaches that letting go isn't about forgetting — it's about clearing emotional space for what's next. By turning reflection into a small ritual, children experience how endings can be peaceful, not painful. It helps them see that memories can be honoured without being carried forever — just as Nik did on that quiet rooftop, under the stars that stayed the same even as everything else changed.

FIVE FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT NEW BEGINNINGS AROUND THE WORLD



1. THE FIRST RESOLUTIONS WERE MADE 4,000 YEARS

The ancient Babylonians are believed to be the first to celebrate a new year — in March, not January! They promised their gods to return borrowed items and pay their debts, hoping for good fortune. It wasn't called a “resolution,” but it was the same idea — a promise to begin again with honesty.

2. IN SPAIN, THEY EAT 12 GRAPES AT MIDNIGHT.

Each grape represents good luck for one month of the year. People try to eat all twelve before the last bell stops ringing! The fun is in the challenge — and the belief that starting the year sweetly brings sweetness all year long.

3. IN JAPAN, BELLS RING 108 TIMES.

At midnight, Buddhist temples across Japan strike their bells 108 times — one for every human worry or sin. Each chime symbolises letting go of a negative thought or emotion, clearing space for peace and gratitude in the new year.

4. IN DENMARK, PEOPLE SMASH PLATES (KINDLY!).

On New Year's Eve, Danes throw old plates or cups against their friends' doors as a sign of affection and good luck. The more broken pieces at your doorstep, the more friends and loyalty you're believed to have for the coming year!



5. IN ECUADOR, THEY BURN “OLD YEAR” DOLLS.

Families make straw dolls called año viejo — “old year.” At midnight, they set them on fire to say goodbye to regrets, mistakes, and sadness from the past year. The flames symbolise renewal — much like Nik’s tin ritual under the stars.



THE LANTERN BY THE SEA

The beach was almost empty when Kai placed the paper lantern on the sand. The wind lifted it slightly, then set it down again — like it couldn't decide whether to let go or stay.



It was the last night of the year. Families nearby were laughing, lighting sparklers, tossing frisbees. But Kai just stared at the sea.

He still had Jia's old friendship bracelet in his pocket — the one they made during their Primary 3 art camp. They'd been best friends since then, until Jia moved to Melbourne two months ago. They texted less now. The chats were shorter. The laughs felt smaller.

Kai's mum called from a picnic mat. "Ready to light your lantern, Kai?"

He hesitated. "Not yet."

He pulled the bracelet out. The threads were faded, the beads chipped. He remembered how Jia had said, "Don't lose it — it means we'll always be on the same team."

But that was before new schools, new countries, new time zones.

Kai sighed. He didn't want to let go. But holding on hurt too.

He tied the bracelet to the base of the lantern, lit the candle inside, and whispered,
“It's okay if things change. We still mattered.”

The lantern rose slowly, glowing gold against the black sky.
And then...

- What did Kai do after watching the lantern drift out to sea?
- Did he feel lighter, sadder, or both?
- What might Jia be doing at that same moment far away?
- Could this be the start of a new way to remember their friendship?
- What would you place on your lantern if you were letting go of something this year?

Your turn to finish the story

**Explore the complete
Sunshine Squad Series
and other value-driven stories at**

www.storywalker365.com



Tap on the icon to follow us for more fun!

Copyright Protected: All content and materials presented are the exclusive property of StoryWalker365 and protected under copyright and trademark laws. Unauthorised reproduction, distribution, or commercial use is prohibited. This content is for personal use only. For permission requests, contact us at voice@storywalker.com.