



7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

THE THINGS GRANDPA LEFT BEHIND

A Story by Arkedelic

Parents' Guide

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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

VALUES FROM THE STORY



1. How do I support my child through loss or sadness, especially when they don't understand why it happened?

Context in the story: Mario is grieving the sudden death of his grandfather. He doesn't speak about it at first, choosing silence, action, and quiet routines instead. Through gentle moments with his friends and the memories Grandpa left behind, Mario slowly begins to open up and find a new way of remembering and honouring his loss.

Real-world Connection: Children may not always express grief the way adults expect. They might act out, withdraw, focus obsessively on small routines, or go completely silent. They may also fear forgetting a loved one or feel guilty for moving on. Helping a child process loss means giving them space, listening without rushing, and offering safe ways to remember. It's not about 'getting over' grief, but learning how to carry love forward.

How parents can use the story: This story offers a gentle, layered way to talk about death and grief with your child. You can begin by asking what they think Mario was feeling, or what part of Grandpa's memory they liked best. Share stories about people you've lost too. Show that it's okay to feel sad, to not have answers, and to remember someone in your own quiet way. Encourage your child to create something small — a drawing, a list, a habit — that helps them keep memories alive. Most of all, remind them: love doesn't end when someone is gone. It lives in how we remember, how we speak, and how we carry forward the little things that mattered.



2. How can I help my child talk about their fears — and feel safe facing them?

Context in the story: Mario avoids talking about his emotions. His fear isn't just about losing Grandpa — it's the fear of forgetting, of breaking down, of not being able to hold on. He hides behind routines and fixing things. Only when he's gently given space, and not pushed, does he begin to open up.

Real-world connection: Many children don't have the language for complex emotions like grief or fear. When they go quiet, it's easy to mistake it for disinterest or resistance. But underneath might be a fear of being misunderstood or of feeling too much. Creating a safe, low-pressure space where they feel heard, without needing to be "fixed," helps children trust that it's okay to talk.

How parents can use the story: Use Mario's journey as a bridge. Ask your child if they've ever been afraid to talk, even when they wanted to. Instead of jumping in with advice, let them express themselves in their own way, through a story, drawing, or even through silence. Show them that being scared or confused is normal, and that they won't be judged for it. Repeat often that talking doesn't have to be loud or perfect, even small sentences, memories, or gestures matter. Let them know: when they're ready, you're there, and you always will be.





3. How do I help my child notice and appreciate what others do for them — even in small ways?

Context in the story: Mario only truly begins to heal when he starts noticing the small acts of love Grandpa left behind — how he fixed things, told silly jokes, folded notes. Later, the Squad echoes this with small, thoughtful gestures — a shoelace tied, a note left — and Mario begins to notice them too.

Real-world Connection: Children often associate care with big gestures — gifts, praise, attention. But real love often lives in the unnoticed: a lunch packed just right, a shirt folded just so, a friend who quietly walks beside them. When children learn to see and appreciate these little signs of care, their relationships become richer and more rooted in empathy.

How parents can use the story: After reading, ask your child: what were some of the small things Grandpa did that mattered to Mario? What do we do in our home that's like that? Who in your life has shown you love in little ways? Guide them to observe kindness, not just the dramatic kind, but the quiet, steady sort. Model this by noticing small gestures from others too, and voicing your appreciation. Over time, your child will begin to see that care isn't always loud — it's often gentle, daily, and deeply meaningful.

Assessment Questions for “The Things Grandpa Left Behind”

1. Parent Prompt:

How did Mario remember his grandpa even though he was no longer there?

Purpose:

To help children see how memories can be kept alive through everyday actions and objects.

Follow-Up:

Can you think of something small you do or keep that reminds you of someone special?



2. Parent Prompt:

Why do you think Mario kept fixing things after his grandpa passed away?

Purpose:

To explore how doing small, helpful actions can be a way to deal with sadness.

Follow-Up:

What's one small thing you could fix or help with if you wanted to cheer yourself or someone else up?

3. Parent Prompt:

What happened when Mario started talking about the things his grandpa used to do?

Purpose:

To help children understand that talking about memories can make them stronger.

Follow-Up:

Who could you tell a happy memory to, so that it stays alive?

4. Parent Prompt:

How did the Squad show they cared for Mario when he didn't want to talk?

Purpose:

To show how friends can help without needing to "solve" a problem.

Follow-Up:

If a friend was feeling sad, what's one gentle thing you could do to show you care?

5. Parent Prompt:

What did Mario realise when he found and played his grandpa's old cassette recorder?

Purpose:

To help children see that it's possible to keep someone's memory while still living fully.

Follow-Up:

What is one way you can keep a memory alive while still enjoying new moments?

See you next Monday with another interesting story!

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