



7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

WHAT'S THE MAGIC WORD?

A Story by Arkedelic

Parents' Guide

STORYWALKER CONCEPTS

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WHAT'S THE MAGIC WORD?

The Sunshine Squad's morning carpool met at Sam's house. It made sense — Sam's Grandma was the only one up early enough to chase five kids through toast, toothpaste, and tangle-free ponytails.

But today, Sam had woken up grumpy.

“No ponytail,” she declared, clutching her brush like a weapon. “It pulls.”

Grandma tied it anyway. “It pulls because you sleep like a starfish.”

“I'm not brushing!” Sam yelled, stomping towards the kitchen.

“You are,” Grandma said calmly. “We do our morning jobs. No drama.”

Sam made a show of dragging her feet. “The toothpaste tastes like frog spit!”

From the dining table, Mario looked up from the bread basket. “You said that yesterday.”



“Well, it still does.”

Sid smirked. “And frogs everywhere are offended.”

The Squad ate in a weird sort of silence. Grandma handed out water bottles. Sam took hers and grumbled, “Finally.”

“Magic word?” Grandma prompted.

Sam made a face. “I said it yesterday.”

“You didn’t,” said Jane.

“I meant it in my head.”

Nik rolled his eyes. “Wow, telepathic manners. Impressive.”



Sam ignored them and reached for Mario’s toast.

“Mine,” he said. “You didn’t ask.”

“You KNOW I want it,” she snapped. “Why is everyone being so difficult today?”

Jane raised an eyebrow. “Pot, meet kettle.”

The elevator ride down was quiet until Mira, Sam’s little cousin, piped up.

“I can be like Sam! Watch!” She scrunched up her face and shouted, “I WANT JUICE! NOW!”

Everyone stared.

Then she added sweetly, “No please. No thank you. Just like Sam!”

Sam flushed bright red.

A neighbour in the elevator chuckled. “Future CEO, that one.”

But Grandma looked serious.

Sam didn’t meet her eyes.

In the car, Mario leaned forward. “Y’know, we all lose it sometimes. But what we say at home stays in the walls.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Sam muttered.

“It means,” Mario said, “if you snap at your socks at home, fine. But when people start seeing you that way outside... it’s different.”

“Like in the elevator,” Jane added. “That lady didn’t even know you, but now she thinks you’re rude.”

Sam crossed her arms.

“And Mira thinks it’s okay to talk like that,” Nik added gently.

At school, Sam didn’t say much. But during art, she reached over and passed Nik the blue crayon.

“Thanks,” he said.

She hesitated. Then: “You’re welcome.”

He blinked. “Who are you and what have you done with Snappy Sam?”





She rolled her eyes, but smiled.

Back home, Sam paused before heading upstairs.

She walked over to Grandma. “Sorry for this morning.”

“For the toast or the toothpaste?” Grandma teased.

Sam laughed. “All of it. I was just... tired. And annoyed. But I didn’t have to take it out on everyone.”

Grandma nodded. “We all get tired. But even grumpy people can say please.”

Sam turned to Mira. “Can I braid your doll’s hair?”

“Only if you say please,” Mira giggled.

Sam bent low. “Pretty please with sugar on top?”

Mira handed her the doll. “Now that’s the magic word.”

THE END

**VALUES FROM
THE STORY****1. How do I deal with backtalk or defiance in a way that builds respect, not just fear?**

Context in the story: Sam begins the morning with snappy, demanding behaviour — rejecting help, brushing aside gratitude, and refusing to use polite words. She defies routine instructions with sarcasm and entitlement. However, the turning point comes when her younger cousin Mira copies her tone in public, and when Mario points out the effect her words have beyond home. Sam’s realisation and later apology are not fear-driven but anchored in empathy and reflection.

Real-world connection: Children may show defiance not out of disrespect but due to fatigue, stress, or emotional overload. However, unless addressed gently but clearly, such behaviour can become a pattern. Respect isn’t built by punishment or lecturing alone — it emerges when children understand the ripple effects of their words on others and feel safe enough to course-correct.

How parents can use the story: This story offers a relatable way to show children how everyday defiance can affect others — especially younger ones who may imitate their behaviour. Parents can reflect with their child: “What happened here that helped Sam change?” or “Have you ever felt like Sam in the morning rush?” The story encourages a compassionate tone: calling out the behaviour without attacking the child’s intent. It also shows how ownership and empathy — not fear — lead to real change.



2. How can I help my child follow daily routines and little tasks without much fuss?

Context in the story: Sam resists basic morning routines — brushing her teeth, accepting her hairstyle, taking her water bottle — turning each into a battle. She uses exaggeration and defiance (“tastes like frog spit!”) as a shield against routine expectations. The gentle firmness of Grandma and the quiet reflection later with the Squad nudge her toward self-awareness, helping her complete small tasks with more cooperation.

Real-world connection: Morning routines are often flashpoints for resistance, especially when children feel rushed or emotionally dysregulated. The fuss isn't always about the task — it's about the need to assert control or express discomfort. But routines, done without drama, can ground children and reduce overall stress.

How parents can use the story: Instead of forcing compliance, this story invites a more observational approach. Parents can say, “Sometimes it’s not the task that’s hard, but how we feel when we’re doing it.” Ask your child what parts of their routine they dislike and why — is it the taste, the texture, the feeling of being rushed? Involving them in problem-solving (choosing a different toothpaste, setting a timer for tasks) builds ownership while reducing power struggles. The story shows that when children feel heard, they're more likely to cooperate without fuss.





3. How can I help my child understand private vs public behaviour?

Context in the story: Sam's rude tone, when repeated in the elevator, draws attention from an unfamiliar adult. This is a moment of discomfort — a mirror — where Sam realises that what feels normal at home may be judged harshly outside. Mario gently points this out, drawing the line between personal messiness and public image. Sam's quiet shift afterwards signals that she's begun to recognise the difference.

Real-world connection: Children often mimic home behaviour in public without realising that different settings come with different expectations. But they're rarely taught this distinction in ways that stick. Calling out such moments as shameful doesn't help — but noticing, naming, and discussing them with context and curiosity can.

How parents can use the story: The story is an excellent springboard to talk about where certain behaviours are okay and where they're not — without labelling the child as “bad.” Parents might ask: “What did Sam realise in the elevator?” or “Can you think of things we do at home that wouldn't be okay outside?” These conversations build social awareness. Role-playing or even co-creating a fun ‘home vs public’ behaviour game can make the learning memorable without moralising.

Assessment Questions for “WHAT’S THE MAGIC WORD?”

Q1. Why did Grandma and the others feel uncomfortable when Sam spoke rudely in the elevator?

Purpose: To help children understand that how we speak at home often shapes how others see us outside.

Follow-up: Have you ever said something at home that you wouldn’t want others to hear in public?



Q2. How did Mira show Sam what her words sounded like to others?

Purpose: To show that younger kids often copy what they see and hear from older ones.

Follow-up: Has a younger friend or sibling ever copied something you said or did — and made you realise how it looked?

Q3. What made Grandma remind Sam about the “magic word” during breakfast?

Purpose: To teach that politeness starts with attitude — not just saying “please” or “thank you.”

Follow-up: Can you tell when someone says “thank you” or “sorry” but doesn’t really mean it?

Q4. What did Sam do at the end of the day that showed she understood her mistake?

Purpose: To help children see that apologies are more than words — they are actions that rebuild trust.

Follow-up What’s one small thing you can do to make things right after a bad morning?

Q5. Question:

Why did Grandma say, “Even grumpy people can say please”?

Purpose:

To remind children that “magic words” only work when spoken with kindness and honesty.

Follow-up

What do you think makes a word truly magical — the sound or the feeling behind it?

See you next Monday
with another interesting story!



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