

STORY
WALKER
365

7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

THE DISAPPEARING ACT

A Story by Arkedelic

Parents' Guide

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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

VALUES FROM THE STORY



1. How do I manage when my child throws tantrums for attention, not just when upset?

Context in the story: Nik starts acting out by walking away mid-conversation, skipping hangouts, slamming lockers, and offering moody replies — not from actual anger, but as a way of seeking attention and connection. When Mario finally confronts him, Nik admits he felt invisible at home and wanted someone to notice him.

Real-world connection: Many children, especially when emotionally overwhelmed or feeling neglected, may use silent treatment, exaggerated gestures, or sudden emotional exits to draw attention. These behaviours are not always about rebellion but often signal unmet emotional needs.

How parents can use the story: This story helps parents recognise that attention-seeking behaviours might mask deeper emotional struggles — such as feeling unseen, unheard, or unimportant. Instead of reacting with discipline alone, parents can use these moments to invite gentle conversation and reassurance. Nik's story shows that the antidote isn't just giving in or ignoring the behaviour, but helping children find better, healthier ways to say, "I need to be seen." By opening communication channels at home, even just pausing to truly listen, parents can teach kids that being honest about their needs is better than acting out.



2. How can I make sure my child doesn't feel unloved or overlooked — even with both parents working full-time?

Context in the story: Nik reveals that his parents are always working — his mom on calls, his dad travelling — and that he often feels like background noise at home. This unspoken loneliness fuels his behaviour with friends. Only when he finally expresses this do his parents pause, listen, and respond.

Real-world connection: Children of working parents can feel emotionally invisible even in secure households. They may not always verbalize this, but it emerges in behaviour, mood swings, or school dynamics.

How parents can use the story: This story is a reminder that presence isn't just physical, it's emotional too. Working parents don't need to quit their jobs to make their child feel loved; small but intentional moments of full attention can make a huge difference. Nik's experience shows that what children often need most is someone to pause, look up, and listen — fully. Parents can build rituals of connection — check-ins, weekend chats, bedtime reflections — so their child feels seen, even on busy days. When kids know their feelings matter, they're less likely to seek attention through disruptive behaviour.





3. How can I help my child understand ‘no’ without tantrums, sulking, or silent treatment?

Context in the story: Nik reacts to feeling ignored and unseen by withdrawing emotionally and physically. He doesn’t use words but expects his friends to interpret his actions. When Mario says “no” to the drama and calls it out, it opens up an honest dialogue that helps Nik reframe his approach.

Real-world connection: Children often respond to rejection, correction, or unmet needs with sulking or withdrawal, because it feels easier than admitting vulnerability. Over time, this creates communication blocks and misunderstanding.

How parents can use the story: The story models how peer confrontation, done with care and honesty, can lead to self-awareness. Parents can draw from this to encourage children to reflect on how they respond when something doesn’t go their way. Instead of guilt-tripping, they can ask questions like, “What were you hoping someone would notice?” or “Can you try saying it next time instead of walking away?” Teaching kids that ‘no’ is part of life — and that sulking doesn’t help them feel more heard — helps build emotional maturity and resilience.

Assessment Questions for “The Disappearing Act”



1. Why did Nik start skipping hangouts and going silent with his friends?

Purpose: To help children understand that attention-seeking often hides a deeper need to be valued or seen.

Follow-up: Have you ever wished someone would notice you without you having to say it?

2. What happened when Nik finally told his friends and parents how he was really feeling?

Purpose: To help children see that communication is stronger than withdrawal or drama.

Follow-up: How does it feel when you share what’s bothering you instead of staying quiet?

3. How did Nik's parents and friends show they were truly listening to him?

Purpose: To show that listening carefully can make people feel respected and loved.

Follow-up: What's one way someone has shown you they were really paying attention to you?

4. What was Nik really trying to say through his angry or distant behaviour?

Purpose: To help children recognise that moods or tantrums often come from feelings, not just actions.

Follow-up: When you feel upset or ignored, how do you usually show it — with words or actions?

5. What did Nik learn about friendship by the end of the story?

Purpose: To remind children that relationships grow stronger through honesty, not guessing games.

Follow-up: What could you do next time you feel left out or unheard to stay connected instead of pulling away?

See you next Monday with another interesting story!

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