**The Playground Scientist**

I always knew there was something different about Milo.

While most of us were busy building block towers just to knock them down, Milo built bridges. Not just any bridges—ones with support beams and counterweights, like he’d seen on some show he probably wasn’t supposed to be watching. During recess, while we were playing tag, he was running “experiments” on the monkey bars, timing each kid with a stopwatch he made out of two broken watches and some string. He called it “The Grip Test.”

By fifth grade, he’d already tried more things than the rest of us combined—soccer, chess, violin, painting, coding, even a short stint as the school’s unofficial magician. It wasn’t that he was great at everything—he definitely wasn't—but he was wildly curious. Every week it seemed like he had a new project, a new obsession. And just when we thought he’d finally found *the thing*, he’d drop it and move on to something else.

“Why don’t you just stick to one thing?” I asked him once during lunch, annoyed that he’d suddenly quit art club, leaving me the only one in our duo still sketching fruit bowls after school.

He shrugged. “I dunno. I wanna see what else is out there.”

It didn’t make sense to me then. Everyone else was starting to specialize. Tim was the soccer guy, Ava was the piano girl, and I was… still figuring it out. I kept wondering if I was behind, like I was supposed to pick something already and just stick with it.

But Milo didn’t play by those rules. He didn’t even seem to see the rules.

Fast forward a few years. We’re in high school now. Milo’s still trying everything—robotics, drama, creative writing, tennis, debate. He jumps between clubs like he’s collecting puzzle pieces from different boxes, hoping they’ll all come together somehow. And maybe they will.

The rest of us are trying to polish the one skill we hope gets us somewhere. Meanwhile, Milo’s out there building a strange, lopsided ship from scrap wood and bottle caps, and I have to admit—it floats.

I used to think he was lost. Now I wonder if he’s the only one who actually knows where he’s going.