Gracie

This is a story about a very special little girl named Gracie.

A little girl who had to be very brave and very resilient on her journey through childhood cancer.

A story about believing in ourselves and that we are who we are, for a very good reason.

A story about the power of empathy and ‘gifting’ and the creation of

The Gracie’s Gift Foundation.

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From the day Gracie was born she was very much heard. “She’s a bit loud isn’t she” people would say “Get her a dummy” people would say.

As Gracie grew so did her energy. “Where does she get her energy from” her bemused Dad would ask. Every day she found new adventures and new ways to have fun “She has the energy of ten children does Gracie” her exhausted Mum would say.

Never sitting for long, (except to eat or draw,) Gracie danced, sang, jumped and ran. “She’s like a whirlwind” her Mum’s visiting friends would say.

Gracie would make up endless imaginary games with her enormous collection of soft teddy friends. Whenever a game was finished she quickly moved onto another adventure. Her mummy would spend most of the day following her around the house picking up teddy’s and toys and putting them back in their correct place, (instead of Gracie efforts at tidying up, where she had swept them under the couch or under her bed.) Gracie drew endlessly and her pictures grew more and more amazing and imaginative. “She is gifted at drawing” people would say. “Yes she is” Gracie’s mum and dad would reply, thankful for the peace and quiet it also bought.

When Gracie started school at the age of 5 she quickly made friends with all the children in her prep class. School was awesome for Gracie as twice a day she got to play on the 3 playgrounds and run on the big green oval in her school grounds. When her Mum came to collect her at the end of school day Gracie would refuse to go home, she wanted to play on the playground some more. “Aren’t you tired Gracie?” her mum would ask as she watched all the other children shrug on their backpacks and quietly leave for home.

Half way through her prep year Gracie caught a bug that she just couldn’t fight off. Her mum and dad took her to the hospital as they was worried about her. The doctors said that Gracie had Leukaemia. “What’s Leukaemia” Gracie asked. “It’s a blood cancer” the doctors told her “what it means is that your white blood cells are being naughty to your red blood cells.” “You will need to come to hospital every week for some chemo medicine and take medicine at home every day so you can get better”.

Many weeks followed of endless tests and medicines. Gracie’s life completely changed. Every day used to be full of school, but now many days were full with visits to hospital and resting. Gracie won many bravery awards at hospital and amazed her Mum and Dad with her energy and resilience. She seemed to take it all in her stride and continued to find fun and have adventures whenever she could fit them in.

The chemo medicine that Gracie needed to take made a few changes to the way she looked. She sometimes looked paler or plumper and sometimes she looked thinner. Gracie would look in the mirror as her hair started to fall and smile, “Oh well, I still have more hair than Daddy and mine will grow back!”. Taking the chemo medicine also meant that Gracie could not fight off little bugs like colds and coughs like the other kids at school. If Gracie caught a bug it meant she had to go and stay in hospital for up to a week to have medicine to help her fight it off. Gracie found stays in hospital rather boring. Without her array soft teddy friends and her desk filled to the brim with paper and pens at home Gracie would get bored. She couldn’t find any adventures to have or much to play with.

So Gracie’s mum would pack a box filled full of surprises for when Gracie had to stay in hospital. “It’s a box full of fun,” Gracie’s Mum would say. There would be something to draw on, something to make, something to nibble on, something to play with and something to cuddle. This made hospital stays much more fun and it always gave Gracie something to look forward to, even though she was in hospital and away from her home and her friends.

One day Gracie and her Mum were sitting in Gracie’s hospital bed playing with the contents of a ‘box full of fun’ when Gracie said “Mum, why don’t we give shoeboxes to all the kids in the Kookaburra Ward”. Gracie’s wonderful prep teacher Miss Wallace loved the idea too and asked all the kids and their families in Gracie’s school to fill up a shoebox full of fun, and so many did! On collection day Gracie and her Mummy proudly counted over 90 boxes from the school which were delivered to the children’s hospital. They were the first of many. Every time Gracie and her Mummy were on the Oncology Ward they would proudly push their trolley into each child’s room and deliver a ‘box full of fun.’ These wonderful boxes were always received with delight by a sick child and a relieved parent, happy that their child finally had something fun to do.

One day Gracie caught a very big bug and had to stay in hospital for many weeks. “She is very sick I am afraid, we are not sure she has the energy to fight off this bug and weather this storm, we are not sure she will get better” the doctors gravely told Gracie’s Mum and Dad. “Well you don’t know our Gracie” Gracie’s Mum and Dad replied. “She has the energy of ten children, she can and will fight off this bug and the Leukaemia, she has too many adventures and fun things yet to do”

And she did fight off that big bug!

When Gracie was much better and sitting up in her hospital bed drawing, as she so often did, Gracie said “Mummy, I want to be like other children now, I don’t want Leukaemia anymore”. “Not much longer my darling,” her mum replied and Gracie turned her head and continued to draw not giving it another thought.

And it wasn’t much longer, not much longer at all.

A few weeks later Gracie was sitting in her bed at home in her snazzy pink pyjamas with her favourite bedtime story ready to read on her lap. Her Mum was exhausted and plonked herself on the bed next to her. Gracie’s Mum had just finished tidying up the many games and adventures that Gracie had been having fun with that day when Gracie said, “Mum, can we talk about something.” Gracie’s Mum replied, “Yes darling of course, what is it?” “Well, I have been thinking,” said Gracie, “and I really think we should get a puppy now. I won’t be away from home in hospital anymore as I don’t have Leukaemia anymore, so I could look after it really well now.” Gracie’s Mum immediately thought of all the misadventures a puppy would get up to and all the extra tidying up she would have to do, so she tried to think really hard of a good reason why Gracie should in fact not have a puppy, but when Gracie’s Mum closed her eyes and imagined, all she could see was Gracie playing happily with her puppy, (a real life soft toy after all). And so Gracie’s mum could not think of any reason at all, but that is another story……

*The adventures of Gracie & Dog coming soon……*

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