

# Long-distance Grandparenting: Collaborative Stories

March 2026

I have three precious grandsons. They live a nine-hour drive away. My experience is different than my friends who have grandkids who live close. Their visits are frequent (picking up from school, caring for kids after school or on no-school days, even living in the same house). My visits are less frequent (5-6 times a year) but more intense (24/7 for the week or two we're together).



I treasure those stretches when I get to rediscover them, find out what new things they've learned, what books or shows or games they're into, and how their response to "What do you want to be when you grow up?" has changed. We grow closer during those times and settle into the familiarity of me being there morning, noon, and night for a while.

How can I nurture that closeness during the times when we're not together?

We do lots of phone calls (my daughter often calls me during their drive to swim lessons, soccer practice, homeschool coop days, etc.), written letters/texts, and videochats (always an adventure when one of the boys commandeers the phone to show me his latest LEGO creation or the spider habitat he created, or how deep the snow is).

I thought I would try a few new ways of interacting long-distance and share some of these with my readers.

The first idea is creating **collaborative stories!**

I wrote the beginning of a story for each of them in a google doc, then shared them with my daughter. The boys came up with the next part of the story, then it was my turn again. I tailored each story's topic, length, and complexity to the age and interests of each kid. The boys sometimes are not super excited about writing activities, but I'm hoping this clear purpose helps them practice their writing and spelling in a fun way. Depending on their age, they type on their own, or dictate to their mom.

My grandsons are currently four, seven, and eight years old. Here are the stories so far, in youngest to oldest sequence. My parts are yellow, and their parts are blue.

## Where's Marshmallow?: A Simon and Nana story

Josie was nine years old. She had a pet guinea pig named Marshmallow, who lived in a cage in the playroom where Josie and her two-year-old brother Hank had lots of toys. One day, Marshmallow went out and hid from her and she tried to find him. She walked past him and the guinea pig jumped out at her! Then, the guinea pig went AH! Josie said "Oh, there's my little guinea pig!"

And then Marshmallow said in a human voice that he was not a guinea pig! He was a human dressed in guinea pig form! And then she said "Ah! How do you know that you're a person? You're just a little guinea pig!"

"I am NOT a guinea pig!" said Marshmallow.

"Ok fine!" said Josie.

The next day, Josie was in the playroom, building a spaceship with her Magnatiles. She couldn't find any of the triangles. They had disappeared! She glanced at Marshmallow's cage and....

# Mistwood: A Benjamin and Nana Story

Rocco lived in the magical land of Mistwood. He loved to explore the nearby forest and seashore where he found enchanting plants and animals. One day, he found a magic lamp! It had a bad genie inside. The bad genie turned him into a rabbit! So he looked for a magic orb to transform himself back into a human. So he went to the beach to search for the orb, but had no luck. He searched around the base of trees of the forest, and in all the hollow logs, but did not find it. He even looked at the top of the giant hill at the edge of the forest. Climbing trees wasn't an option because rabbits can't climb trees.

Rocco plopped down in the clearing with his head resting on his little paws. Would he ever be a human again?

He heard rustling at the edge of the clearing. His friend Archie the unicorn approached, and gently said, "Don't give up, Rocco. Why don't you go ask Great Cuddly Bear if he knows where the orb is? He is very wise."

So the next morning,

# Boy Astronaut: An Isaac and Nana Story

Conrad was excited to become the first child in space, just two days after his twelfth birthday. His mom had worked hard to become an astronaut and a space physiologist. She studies how space travel affects the human body. She had been granted permission to bring Conrad on this mission to the moon, to research the effects on a young person.

The countdown from Mission Control crackled through Conrad's headset. Strapped into the seat next to his mom, Conrad felt both nervous and excited. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.....

PFFFFFFF! And then they landed on the moon after 8.2 seconds. They jumped off the moon into a black hole! The black hole made them go out the other side back into their rocket ship MAGICALLY. 3,2,1 PFFFFFFF! They landed back on the big massive landing pad on Earth. They felt happy to be on Earth. Then they went back to their family and had grilled steak for dinner.

The next day Conrad had cereal for breakfast, did some chores, and then he went to play the Switch but his mom wasn't happy because he didn't make his bed and get dressed. So he went back to bed because he was in trouble.

In the afternoon, Conrad was playing in his backyard treehouse when he heard a faint quack over by the creek. Then he heard it again. He climbed down and followed the sound. He searched the bank and found a baby duckling under a pile of tangled vines.

He slowly lifted the vines, soothing the little animal with soft whispers.

"It's okay. Are you hurt? I'm gonna help you."

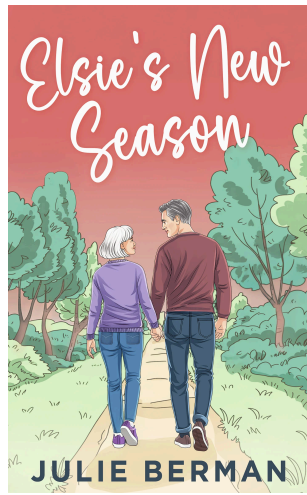
As you can see, creative juices were flowing, with some autobiographical details such as getting in trouble for not doing chores!

Use these story starters or make up your own. Be silly or scary or serious or fantastical. Obviously, you can do this with grandchildren in person, too!

Please give me your long-distance grandparenting ideas! Email me at [info@juliebermanauthor.com](mailto:info@juliebermanauthor.com) or share on my Facebook page post!

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