Boy on the Train

Every month, Martín's parents took a trip to visit Grandma and came back on the same train the next day. One day, Martín said to them: "I'm a big boy now. Can I go visit Grandma by myself?" His parents thought about it and finally said yes. They went with him to the train station. As the train got ready to leave, they hugged him, gave him lots of advice, and stood by the window. Martín replied: "I know, I know! You've told me this a thousand times!" Just before the train left, his dad leaned in close and whispered: "If you feel scared or unsure, this is for you," and slipped something into Martín's pocket.

Now Martín was on the train alone for the first time, just like he wanted. He looked out the window, watching the world go by. But soon, people started pushing past him. Some were loud, others got on and off quickly. The train conductor made a comment about him being alone. A woman looked at him with sad eyes.

Martín started to feel nervous. Each minute, he felt more scared and alone. He lowered his head and felt like crying. Then he remembered what his dad had put in his pocket. With shaky hands, he reached in and pulled out a small piece of paper. It said: "Son, I'm in the last car of the train."

That's what life is like. We have to let our kids try new things and go out into the world. But as parents, we always want to be close — just in case they get scared or face something hard. As long as we're alive, we'll always be in the "last car," watching over them, ready to help when they need us.

The source of this story is uncertain. It has possible Spanish origins and has also been attributed to "Anonymous" or some named sources. In addition to being a train story that I loved from the moment I first read it, it does have a personal connection. My grandmother lived in Iowa and traveled to Milwaukee by train to visit. There were memorable moments at the Milwaukee Road station. Then, when I was 15, I traveled alone by train overnight to visit relatives in Manson, Iowa. Nice connections!