

Spriha - Level 9
Tysons Corner

The book *Curveball: The Year I Lost My Grip*, by Jordan Sonnenblick is about a boy, Peter Friedman or Pete, who is a freshman in high school and a great baseball player. However, he got an elbow injury, causing him to never be able to pitch again. His best friend, A.J., is a star pitcher and one of the most popular kids in high school. Pete and he had big plans to become all-star high school baseball players, but after his injury, he doesn't know how to tell A.J. that their dreams of becoming famous together are completely ruined. After losing all hope in playing baseball, Pete decides to pursue photography like his grandfather. Pete decides to enroll and is placed in Advanced Photo. He is the only freshman student in the class other than a girl named Angelika, who is an equally skilled photographer. Peter and Angelika hit it off, soon becoming a couple. Meanwhile, his grandfather is acting different and weird. He suddenly quits doing photography and starts to forget important information. Since Pete's grandpa gets Alzheimer's disease, Angelika is jealous, and A.J. is scared to not have his friend by his side, these three people both cause problems and help Pete with his problems.

Pete's grandfather is his mentor teaching him a lot about photography and helping him get through the trouble of getting over the fact that he cannot play baseball anymore. He shows Pete that there are many other hobbies he can find other than baseball. However, he also creates many problems for Pete after he starts acting weirdly. First, he completely lost interest in taking photos and gave all his cameras away to Pete. He also started to blank out sometimes like he wasn't there anymore and would forget important information. Peter's grandpa was a professional wedding photographer and always remembered the names of every bride he took a picture of. However, now he wasn't even able to remember when to brush his teeth and had to place sticky notes all over the house. These things started to worry Pete because he had always been very close to his grandfather and couldn't bear seeing him so weak. Sometimes he would break out crying because of how worried he was and the worst part was that he couldn't tell his parents because his grandpa had told him not to. Later on, his family figured out that his grandfather had Alzheimer's disease. Grampa's decline due to Alzheimer's disease deeply impacts Pete, causing him emotional turmoil as he grapples with the loss of his mentor and beloved grandfather.

Angelika helps Pete in some ways, but also causes some problems. One example of how she helped was whenever Pete would cry about his grandfather and how he was acting weird, she would understand how he felt since her grandma also had Alzheimer's disease. She understood how hard it was and would be Pete's emotional support by talking about her grandmother's experience with Alzheimer's disease. They also both had similar interests. They bond over their shared love for photography, which helps them connect on a deeper level. They are both able to give each other tips and grow all while spending time with each other. However, she also caused a big problem. Angelika tells him how to get things like good lighting or a good angle from a person and Pete shares his advanced cameras and technology with her. Angelika was always being very overprotective. They were both photographers of the sports team and whenever they went to take pictures of the volleyball players, she would always think that Pete liked one of the other girls and wasn't interested in her anymore. This made him mad, thinking that his girlfriend didn't trust him anymore which caused many arguments between them. Whenever they were taking pictures of the girl's sports team, Angelika would always bug Pete asking if he liked the other girls which they soon got into fights about. This made Pete think that everything was going wrong in his life and that the relationship wasn't going to work.

A.J. stands by Peter and supports him. They share a lot of memories and experiences, which reminds Peter of how important resilience and friendship are, even outside of baseball. A.J.'s loyalty and understanding help Peter believe in himself again and find new interests beyond sports. This strengthens their friendship even more. However, when Peter gets injured and can't play anymore, he feels really bad about it, especially when he sees A.J. still doing well in the sport. This makes Peter doubt himself and feel like he's not good enough. On the other hand, A.J. is afraid to try out for the high school team, because, without Peter at his side, he felt very nervous. Through their evolving relationship, Peter learns valuable lessons about the depth of true friendship, resilience in the face of adversity, and the importance of embracing change and growth. Despite the initial strain caused by Peter's injury, A.J. ultimately becomes a catalyst for Peter's personal development and a key figure in strengthening their bond beyond the baseball field.

It highlights how relationships with Grampa, Angelika, and A.J. shape Peter's journey. Grampa's Alzheimer's disease brings emotional turmoil but also teaches Peter resilience. Angelika's support aids Peter emotionally, though her overprotectiveness causes some conflicts. A.J.'s loyalty and understanding strengthen their friendship, showcasing the importance of companionship during tough times. Overall, these characters' impacts on Peter illustrate the complexities of growth and connection in the face of challenges.