

Dmitri's Watch

“Son, don’t forget it’s your responsibility to take out the garbage,” Dmitri’s father said. Dmitri was busy staring at his new watch, a gift from his grandfather. It was the nicest thing he had ever owned.

“I will in a minute.” Dmitri had given this answer several times already, but his father let it pass.

He sat next to his son on the couch. “That was very generous of your grandpa. You’ll have to take good care of it.”

Dmitri nodded and said, “I always take care of my things.”

“You may think you do,” cautioned his father, “but I’ve noticed you’re careless sometimes. Doing your chores without being coaxed is part of taking care of this house and contributing to the family that you care about, and you have got to be more thoughtful about picking things up and following through on your responsibilities.”

The next morning, Dmitri was getting ready for school when he noticed that his grandfather's watch was not on his nightstand. His pulse quickened, and his palms began to sweat. He threw clothes off the top of his dresser. He knelt on the floor and looked under his bed. He even checked the bathroom, but the watch was nowhere.

Dmitri was quiet during breakfast. He couldn't tell his father that he had lost the watch less than twenty-four hours after receiving it because that would only prove that Dmitri might not be capable of taking care of his things.

During every school break, Dmitri tried to think of where he could have left the watch. It wasn't in his room, and if it had been anywhere else, wouldn't his parents have said something? Was it even worth checking? *That's it!* Dmitri thought. Hadn't he spent an hour on the couch reading last night? Maybe it had fallen between the cushions.

Dmitri rushed home after school, ripped the cushions off the couch, and searched every inch.

“Looking for something, son?” Dmitri’s dad stood next to him, arms crossed in front of his chest.

Dmitri sighed and admitted that he lost his watch.

“How did that happen?”

“I don’t know. I put it on my nightstand, but when I woke up it was gone.”

“You’re sure?” his dad asked.

“I’m sure.”

“Sometimes the best thing you can do is ask for help.” His dad went to his bedroom and returned with a garbage bag.

“Dad,” Dmitri said, “I told you I’d take out the trash later. This is more important.”

His father dumped the contents of the garbage bag onto the floor. There was a paperback novel, a baseball cap, a sweatshirt, a handheld video game, a soccer ball, and a shiny watch.

“You didn’t leave it on your nightstand, Dmitri. It was on the kitchen table when I got up this morning. In fact, all of these items are things you neglected to put away.”

Dmitri hung his head. “Guess I need to take better care of my things.”

“I think that’s a great idea, son.”

“And maybe I should take out the garbage when I say I will.”

Questions

1. In what way is Dmitri different from his father?
2. Why does Dmitri's father store his son's belongings in a garbage bag?
3. What does this sentence from the story reveal about Dmitri? "His pulse quickened, and his palms began to sweat."
4. What is the theme of the story? Use details from the story to support your answer.

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. cautioned
2. coaxed
3. quickened
4. capable
5. contents

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "You may think you do," **cautioned** his father, "but I've noticed you're careless sometimes."

a. spoke loudly b. chuckled or laughed c. agreed d. warned; advise strongly

2) "Doing your chores without being **coaxed** is part of taking care of this house"

a. taught; instructed b. urged gently; persuaded c. confused; flustered d. unhappy or grouchy

3) "His pulse **quicken**ed, and his palms began to sweat."

a. slowed down b. became louder c. increased in speed d. became irregular or uneven

4) "that would only prove that Dmitri might not be **capable** of taking care of his things"

a. able or adequate b. interested or eager c. aware; knowledgeable d. curious

5) "His father dumped the **contents** of the garbage bag onto the floor."

a. straps; handles b. broken pieces c. items or objects in a container d. liquids