

The Magic Barrel

Steven lived with his wife, Mia, and his old grandfather. They were poor, but very happy. They had food from their garden and clothing that Mia made.

One day, while planting in his yard, Steven found a small clay barrel.

“Mia!” he shouted to his wife. “Come see what I found.”

Mia raced out to her husband. “It’s just an old barrel. What use will it have?”

Steven held it high. “If we clean it, we will be able to use it for storage or as a planter. You should never waste or throw away something that can be used.”

They went into the house and Mia soaked the barrel in the sink. Then she took a brush and began to clean the inside. Suddenly, the barrel filled with brushes.

Mia jumped behind the table.

“What is it?” said Steven from the other side of the room. “What’s wrong?”

Mia held onto the edge of the table. “The barrel. It was empty, but now it’s full of brushes. Just like the one I was cleaning it with.”

Steven leapt to the sink. Inside the barrel were brushes. “There must be a hundred brushes in there.” He took out a handful, but the barrel filled right back up. No matter how many brushes he took out, the barrel filled up again.

“What will we do?” said Mia. “It won’t empty. We can’t use it for anything. And what will we do with all these brushes?”

Just then Steven’s grandfather came into the kitchen. “What do you have there?” He took a closer look. “Could it be? Is it my barrel?”

Steven lifted the barrel out of the sink. “It’s an old barrel I found in the yard.”

Grandfather touched the barrel. “That’s the barrel. Your grandmother hid it on me many years ago. She said it only caused trouble.”

“How could a barrel cause trouble?” said Steven.

“Ah,” said Grandfather. “Whatever you put in the barrel, the barrel makes more of it. It started with shovels. When I realized I could have as many shovels as I wanted, I put your grandmother’s jeweled necklace in it.”

Steven tilted his head. "How would that cause trouble?"

Grandfather stepped away from the barrel. "The barrel filled with jeweled necklaces. I began to sell them, and we became very wealthy. Then robbers came and took everything we had. We were afraid after that. Grandmother said it was better to be poor and happy."

Mia sighed. "Ah, so she hid the barrel."

"Yes, she did," said Grandfather. "I never could find it. And it's just as well. We didn't have much, but we had a good life."

Steven looked at the barrel. "We don't need that kind of trouble." He took it and put it back in the ground where he found it.

Questions

1. Why did Steven want to keep the barrel in the beginning?
2. What trouble did the barrel cause Grandfather?
3. What would you want to put in the barrel?
4. Would you have buried the barrel? Why or why not?