

Rain Barrel

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It hadn't rained for months. I forgot what rain was. We were suffering three consecutive years of drought. This was the early 1930s. I remember the Dust Bowl. We even lived through a terrifying sandstorm.

Anyway, one summer afternoon we had a freak shower. It was beautiful. When the rain stopped (all too soon), the air was clean and fresh. Life was worth living. There was hope; the rainbow was there to prove it. You should have seen me after I explored every puddle with my tender toes and made farm fresh mud pies with my five-year-old hands.

I knew better than to go into the house with my messy makeup. But I thought I was very resourceful when I spotted a rain barrel on the southeast corner of the house. It was just about half full, so I had to figure out a way to get to that water. What I needed was some height. I quickly found an old galvanized pail, turned it upside down next to the rain barrel and triumphantly mounted my improvised pedestal. When I bent over to reach the water, the pail flipped out from under my muddy feet and I went hands and headfirst into the wooden barrel.

It did occur to me that, very unexpectedly, I had gotten into far more fresh water than I needed or wanted, and with the wrong half of me under water. I do recall I was holding my breath. I did not know that, before long, I would need additional air. So, there was no panic; just a quiet curiosity, wondering what would happen next and how I would get out of the submerged situation. I felt things weren't all that bad, because only half of me was under water. I would have preferred the other half, but life on the prairie doesn't always give you multiple choices.

As I was contemplating my next underwater maneuver, someone happened to be passing by and saw two muddy feet sticking out of the barrel. Next thing I know, the barrel is on its side. (What a waste of precious water!) Even though he was my eight-year-old brother, Andrew had neither the strength nor the time to try to pull my straight up out of the barrel. (What's more, I was a bit chubby.) Thanks to him (What are big brothers for!) I lived to tell you this story all by myself.