

The Lost Gem

Bradley, the snail, enjoyed strolling through the tall grass on warm, sunny days. He especially loved finding knickknacks that he would use to decorate his home.

One fine spring morning, while on his daily stroll, Bradley was humming a merry tune when he saw something sparkle. "Hmmm, I wonder what it might be."

There at the base of a large mushroom lay a beautiful blue gem. Bradley picked it up. When it caught the sunlight, it glistened and sparkled. "How marvelous!" he exclaimed. "This would look lovely in my house."

Carefully, Bradley took the gem and went on his way.

Later that day, Bradley studied the gem more carefully. He smiled happily when he saw how magnificent the gem was.

"All my friends should see this!" he said proudly.



So the following day he called on his neighbors and friends, inviting them to see his newfound treasure.

Before long, dozens of snails and insects crowded into his house to gaze admiringly at the dazzling gem. Over the next couple of days, Bradley's gem was the talk of the neighborhood; no one had ever seen anything so beautiful. Bradley would carefully polish it each night to make sure it would sparkle "as brightly as the sun's rays."

One chilly evening there was a knock on Bradley's door. It was a traveling spider.

"My name is Spindle, sir," the spider began, "and I was wondering if you'd have a place for me to spend the night."

Bradley invited Spindle in and offered him something to eat.

After a warm meal, Bradley asked, "Tell me, Spindle, what brings you on this journey? You seem so far from home."



"Many months ago," Spindle said, "I went to visit my family in a distant valley. A close friend of mine had given me a magnificent gem as a token of our friendship before he moved away. Because I was going to be traveling for quite a distance, I couldn't carry anything other than my food and basic needs, so I left the gem at home.

"Sadly, when I returned some time later, I could no longer find the gem. I searched my home, high and low, but it was gone. I have been searching for it ever since, and I don't know where to look next."

"Oh dear!" Bradley exclaimed. "I couldn't imagine what I'd do if my gem were to go missing."

"You have a gem too?" Spindle asked.

A look of pride came over Bradley's face. "Ah yes, my lovely gem! I must show it to you."

Bradley took the gem off the mantelpiece and showed it to Spindle.

"That's *it*!" Spindle cried. "I have found my lost gem!"



Bradley's face reddened with anger. He quickly covered the gem with his hand.

"How dare you claim my gem to be yours!"

"But it's just like the one I lost," Spindle said tearfully. "I've been looking everywhere for it. But then"—he paused sadly—"maybe it's not mine after all."

Bradley said a hurried goodnight to Spindle. He still held the gem tightly and told the spider he could sleep next to the fire.

I found this gem! Bradley fumed, and no one is going to take it away from me! But as he lay down on his bed, he couldn't sleep. What if this is Spindle's gem? It would be wrong for me to keep it. But the gem is so pretty, he argued with himself. And I've spent so much time polishing it and making it look nice. ... It's only fair for me to keep it.

No matter how hard Bradley tried, he couldn't get the picture of Spindle's sad face out of his mind. Finally, Bradley got out of bed and headed to where Spindle was curled up near the fire.



"Spindle. Spindle," he whispered softly.

"Yes. What's the matter?" Spindle asked.

"You're right," Bradley said. "I believe this is your gem! You see, a while back I found it while I was out for a stroll. I was so happy to find it, and it's been the talk of the neighborhood for some time. But"—Bradley shook his head—"to not give this back to you would be wrong."

"Do you really mean that?" Spindle asked excitedly.

"Yes, I do. I have been very blessed in so many ways. God has given me so many things. I know that He will bless me for doing the right thing, and the right thing is returning this gem to you. I may not have a gem, but I have so many other good things that I can enjoy. And maybe one day God will give me another gem as beautiful as this one."

"That is so kind of you!" exclaimed Spindle. "I don't know how to thank you. You have made me so happy!"

Bradley felt happy too. He gave Spindle a gentle pat, and smiled: "It truly is more blessed to give than to receive."

