

The Girl Who Kept Storms in Jars

Mar knew how to keep a storm inside a jar.

She discovered this the day her best friend changed schools. Instead of crying, she took a deep breath, imagined her sadness as a gray rain, and locked it in a jam jar.

Then she kept the anger from an unfair exam in a juice bottle. Her fear of sleeping away from home went into a blue jar. The shame of falling in front of everyone stayed in a jar so small it fit in her pocket.

She hid them in the attic.

“What a quiet girl,” the adults would say.

Mar would smile. No one could hear the thunder rumbling above the roof.

Over time, the attic filled up. Some jars contained only fog. Others trembled every time someone opened the door.

One afternoon, her little brother accidentally broke the model Mar had spent weeks building.

She sensed a huge storm brewing. She looked for a container, but they were all full. She tried a pitcher, a lunchbox, and even an empty fishbowl.

The storm wouldn’t fit.

Mar ran upstairs to the attic. The jars began to rattle. Sadness rattled the glass. Anger sparked lightning. Fear swirled like a whirlpool.

A cork flew off.

Then another.

In a few seconds, the attic was filled with wind, rain, and lightning. Mar huddled behind a trunk.

Her grandmother heard the noise and came upstairs.

“Go away!” Mar shouted. “It’s dangerous!”

Her grandmother sat down on the floor. She didn’t try to cover the jars.

“What storm is that?” she asked.

“Iris’s storm. She left.”

No sooner had she said it than the rain eased.

“And that lightning bolt?”

“The one from the unfair exam.”

The lightning bolt turned into a tiny spark.

They spent an hour naming each storm. Shame became a fine mist. Fear kept blowing, but it couldn’t knock anything down anymore. Some storms needed words; others, a hug or a while of crying.

When they finished, the attic wasn’t dry or perfectly tidy. But they could breathe again.

“What should I do with the jars?” Mar asked.

“You can keep them,” Grandma said, “but you don’t have to close them on your own.”

From then on, Mar still collected storms. Now she wrote the name and the date, leaving the stoppers a little loose.

Some afternoons she went up to the attic with Grandma. They opened a window, uncorked a jar, and let it rain for as long as it needed.

Afterward, between the clouds, there was always a glimpse of the sky.