

# The Carpenter and the River

**I**n a village nestled between two steep hills, a wide river cut through the land, separating the village from the nearby towns. Though the river was usually calm, every few years, heavy rains would come, causing it to overflow and flood the surrounding fields. The floods were unpredictable, and though the villagers had learned to endure them, many homes and crops were lost over the years.

In this village lived Bram, a skilled carpenter known for his fine craftsmanship. His work was sought after by the wealthiest villagers, who often commissioned him to build beautiful, ornate furniture and large houses. But despite the demand for his talents, Bram spent much of his time on a task that others thought was beneath him. He would build simple, sturdy rafts and leave them by the riverbank. They weren't fancy or adorned like his other work, just plain wooden planks mortised together — strong enough to help villagers cross the river when it swelled.

Many of the wealthier villagers, who saw Bram as wasting his talents, would shake their heads. “Why does he spend so much time on those ugly rafts when he could be making fine tables and chairs for the important families?” they would say. “He should be making things that last, not these temporary, rough creations.”

Bram's answer was always the same. “The river isn't always calm. When it rises, we'll need a way to cross.”

One year, the rains came earlier than expected. The river, usually so quiet, turned into a roaring torrent within days. It surged beyond its banks, sweeping through the village and destroying many homes. Bridges were washed away, roads became impassable, and the fields were buried under water. The villagers scrambled to save their belongings and flee the rising waters, but many found themselves trapped, cut off from safety by the swollen river.

Bram, seeing the river rise, hurried to the riverbank where he had left his rafts. He climbed onto one and began ferrying people across the dangerous waters. Time and again, Bram returned to rescue those stranded on the far side of the river, risking his own life to save others. Other able-bodied villagers used his other rafts to help with the rescues. His rafts, once considered simple and insignificant, were the only means of escape for many villagers.

The same people who had mocked his efforts now found themselves relying on his rafts to save their lives. The wealthy families, who had once dismissed his humble work, were some of the first to be carried across the river on Bram's rafts, clutching what little they could salvage from their grand homes. They realized, too late, that their fine tables and chairs, their large houses and intricate decorations, were no match for the force of the river. It was Bram's simple rafts, made with care and foresight, that were their salvation.

When the floodwaters finally receded, the village was left in ruins. Many of the homes and crops had been destroyed, but thanks to Bram's rafts, no lives had been lost. The villagers gathered to thank him for his courage and for his wisdom in preparing for the flood.

“Your rafts saved us,” said one of the wealthiest villagers, a man who had once criticized Bram for his humble work. “We owe you everything. We were foolish not to see the value in what you were doing.”

Bram smiled and shook his head. “I’m just a carpenter,” he said. “I build what’s needed. The river doesn’t care for fine furniture or grand houses, but it does care that you have a way to cross when it rises.”

As the village rebuilt, Bram’s rafts became a symbol of quiet wisdom and foresight. The people learned to value not just the beautiful, but the simple and practical, understanding that the most important things are often those that go unnoticed — until they are needed most.

— *William Zeitler*  
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