**The Mess**

# **Unit 15**

 The view from his bed was becoming smaller and smaller, but he didn’t mind. The reduction of his view meant an increase in his stuff. He really liked stuff. His primary objective currently was to **hoard** as many things as he could so that he could eventually not see anything from his bed except stuff. He needed to gain and keep as much as he could right now. It made him feel both content and safe, and to him, that was reason enough.

“Brian, are you up there in your room again?” Brian’s mom yelled from the kitchen.

Brian just wanted to ignore the question. He knew why his mother was calling him. She was going to start up again about him spending all of his free time in his room among his stuff. He couldn’t understand why she had to **haggle** with him about this all of the time. He had his reasons, so why couldn’t she just let it go?

“Yes, I’m up here. I’m organizing my stuff,” Brian yelled back down the stairs. “I thought that’s what you wanted me to do!”

His mom’s insistence on him cleaning his room always seemed to **coincide** with a visit from one of his relatives. His mom’s sister (his aunt) was coming to visit this weekend. That had to be why his mom was on his butt about cleaning up his room.

“Brian, come down here right now, so I don’t have to keep hollering at you from here. My voice is growing hoarse from the effort.”

Brian stood up, looked around his room, and moved a deflated soccer ball he had found behind the school field house to another spot. After looking around his room one more time, he created a great **clamor**—stomping and sighing loudly--on his way down to the kitchen, so his mom understood that he was irritated.

“Yes, Mother! What do you need that is important enough to drag me away from the job I was doing? The ‘job’ you felt was so necessary to complete immediately?” Brian asked in a huff.

Brian’s mom looked at her son with a concerned look. She could not decipher what his problem was. He had never acted like this before, and the whole hoarding practice just seemed to appear out of the blue. “Do-not-**patronize** me, young man! I am your mother, and I always will be, so lose the attitude right now! If you had a **legitimate** reason for displaying a snit, I could accept it. However, all I have done is ask you to clean your room of all the clutter, and I asked you to come downstairs so I could talk to you without having to yell.”

Neither Brian nor his mother had heard Brian’s dad enter the kitchen from the back porch.

“Whoa, it appears that it’s good that I came in when I did. I think you may need someone to **officiate** this squabble. I came home from my job search expecting—no hoping—for a house full of **mirth** and instead walk into a pit of anger. What exactly is going on here?” Brian’s dad asked.

“I’ll tell you what the problem is…” Brian started.

In the most **authoritative** voice he could muster in order to make it clear to Brian that parents are in charge, Brian’s dad informed Brian that he would have to cede the floor to his mother. She would have the first opportunity to detail the causes of this **feud**. He also explained that if Brian was not agreeable to the arrangement, he could just forfeit his chance to explain altogether.

“So, Brian, are these conditions acceptable?” Brian’s dad asked.

“What choice do I really have? You come in here at the tail-end acting like a **despot**, making demands when it doesn’t even really involve you!” Brian snapped back.

Brian’s mother and father looked at each other with concern on their faces. They both realized that whatever was bothering their son went a lot deeper than him being **indisposed** to cleaning his room. Brian never acted like this, and he certainly never, ever talked to his parents in the manner he was using now. Both realized they would need to be **sagacious** parents to get to the bottom of what was really bothering Brian and making him act out in this totally disrespectful manner.

“Brian, we all need to sit down and discuss what is bothering you. My asking you to clean your room can only be a **partial** reason for your angst. So please just agree to my simple request,” Brian’s mom pleaded.

“Like I said before to Dad, do I really have a choice?”

Brian’s father’s face turned bright red. He was quite exasperated with his son, but he knew he had to control both his anger and his attitude for Brian’s sake.

“Brian, please listen carefully. Your mother and I only have your best interests at heart. You have to admit that you do not normally act this way, and we only want our relationships to return to the **harmonious** family we used to be, by dealing with each other calmly and respectfully. But, for us to accomplish this, you are going to have to lose your **cynical**, negative attitude.”

Brian was beginning to lose his faux bravado. His lips began to tremble and tears began to form in his eyes and trickle down his cheeks. He sniffed several times and peeked quickly at his parents. He knew he was acting badly, but he couldn’t seem to control himself. He was terrified deep inside. His father had never been out of work before. He had heard his parents’ whispers about selling things off and the possibility of going **bankrupt**.

He didn’t know what all of it meant, but he knew just enough to prime his imagination. He liked to think of himself as a hale and **hardy** individual, who can stand up under harsh conditions, but the thought of his family being financially destitute scared him miserably.

“Mom—Dad . . . I’m afraid. I keep thinking that we’re going to be put out on the street and will have to beg for money at the interstate exit ramp like we always see people doing!” Brian sobbed.

His mom wrapped her arms around him tightly and said, “So, that’s what this is all about. I knew it had to be something much deeper. We’re going to be fine, Brian,” his mom assured him.

“Brian, changing jobs is just one of those **rites** we all must and will go through. I have already had several job offers. I’m just trying to select the one best for all of us,” Dad explained.

“But, what about us going bankrupt?”

“I never said anything about us going bankrupt,” his dad exclaimed.

“I heard you whisper it to Mom.”

“Oh my heavens! He must have heard you telling me that the company was filing for bankruptcy and that was why you were looking for another job. I’m afraid this has been one big misunderstanding,” Mom said.

“Brian, so as not to leave you with a **legacy** of misunderstanding that continues from this time forward, I promise to be more transparent about what is happening within our family at all times. You are old enough to have a part in the decisions and discussions,” Dad vowed.

“Boy, am I glad that’s all settled,” Brian smiled.

“Not so fast, Buster! There is still the issue of removing all the clutter from your room!”

“Ah, Mom!” Brian moaned, but this time with a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

--Ronald Powers

**UNIT 15 VOCABULARY**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **WORD** | **DEFINITION in your own words from context clues** | **MEMORY TRIGGER** |
| hoard |  |  |
| haggle |  |  |
| coincide |  |  |
| clamor |  |  |
| patronize |  |  |
| legitimate |  |  |
| officiate |  |  |
| mirth |  |  |
| authoritative |  |  |
| feud |  |  |
| despot |  |  |
| indisposed |  |  |
| sagacious |  |  |
| partial |  |  |
| harmonious |  |  |
| cynical |  |  |
| bankrupt |  |  |
| hardy |  |  |
| rites |  |  |
| legacy |  |  |