

The Mirror of Truth

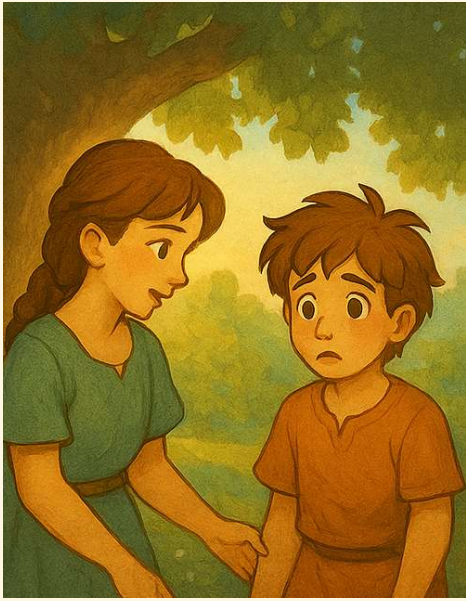
Once upon a time, in a peaceful valley surrounded by silver mountains, there was a tiny village called Elmwood. The villagers were kind and hardworking, and they had one special rule: always tell the truth.



At the center of the village stood the Mirror of Truth, an ancient magical mirror that could see into a person's heart. Every year, the villagers held a festival where each child would stand in front of the mirror and make a promise. If the child had been honest all year, the mirror would shine bright gold. But if they had been dishonest, it would turn cloudy and gray.



In this village lived a boy named Leo, who was clever, curious, and a bit mischievous. Leo hated getting into trouble, so sometimes, he told little lies to avoid being scolded. He once broke his neighbor's flowerpot and blamed it on the wind. Another time, he took cookies from the bakery and said a bird flew in and snatched them.



As the Mirror Festival approached, Leo grew nervous. He knew the mirror would show his lies, and everyone would see.

His best friend, Mila, noticed he was worried. “Why don’t you just tell the truth?” she asked kindly.

Leo shook his head. “Everyone will be mad at me. I’ll be the only one the mirror doesn’t shine for.”

Mila looked at him seriously. “But hiding the truth only makes it worse. The mirror doesn’t just show what you did—it shows who you choose to be.”

The day of the festival came. One by one, children stepped in front of the mirror. It shone gold for Mila and many others. When it was Leo’s turn, his heart pounded.

He stepped forward, and the mirror shimmered—but not golden. Instead, it was cloudy, swirling like a storm.

Leo turned to the crowd. His voice shook, but he spoke clearly: “I have lied. I broke a pot. I stole cookies. I was afraid. But I don’t want to lie anymore.”



The crowd was silent. Then an old woman stepped forward—it was the baker. “Thank you for telling the truth, Leo,” she said, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder.

Suddenly, the mirror flickered—and began to glow faintly gold. It wasn’t as bright as the others, but it shimmered with warmth.

From that day on, Leo worked to earn back the trust he had lost. He fixed the flowerpot and helped the baker every morning. He never lied again.

And the next year, when he stood before the Mirror of Truth, it gleamed brighter than ever.