

## The Story of Two Brothers

Once upon a time, there were two brothers. One was rich and one was poor. They disagreed about pretty much everything. One day, one of their neighbours asked them, 'Do you think it pays to be an honest man?' The poor man thought that it was right to be honest, but his rich brother believed that the only way to get on was with lies and deceit.

The brothers decided to have a bet to see who was right. Whoever won the bet would get everything that the other owned. So, they set off in search of an answer.

The first person they met was a farm labourer. He told them that he had worked hard for his master, but had been cheated by him and now had nothing. That was one point for the rich brother.

Next, they met a wealthy lady. She told them that she had become rich by telling little lies here and there, which she felt had done no harm. That was a second point for the rich brother.

Further on in their journey, they met a priest who said, 'The ways of the world are wicked. Where can you find honesty in this dark age? Honesty certainly does not pay.'

'I think I've won our bet,' said the rich brother. 'Now you must give me all that you have.'

The poor brother did not have much to give, but because he was honest and kept to his word, he fulfilled his promise and went out into the world empty-handed. He had no home or money and he soon became cold and hungry. He decided to go into a nearby forest to find shelter and something to eat. While he was sheltering beneath a tree, he overheard voices. They belonged to three little elves who had been doing some wicked things.

One was boasting that she had told a farmer that the only way he would get his labourers to work for him was to beat them.

The second elf boasted that he had blocked the river upstream with stones. The villagers who were served by the river could not work out why they no longer had a water supply. The elf told them that if they paid him handsomely, he could restore the water by magic.

The third elf told the queen that her daughter had promised to marry the son of her worst enemy in the next kingdom. This led the queen to imprison the princess in a high tower and declare war on her neighbour. The elf told the queen that if she gave him 20 sacks of gold, he would cast a spell on the princess so that she no longer wanted to marry the queen's enemy.

The elves danced around feeling very proud of themselves and of the mischief that they had caused. However, the honest brother was shocked by their dishonest ways and felt determined to help the people whom they had tricked.

First, he went to the farmer whose labourers were unhappy and not working well for him. The honest brother told the farmer that if he treated them kindly, they would work much harder for him. This he did and soon the labourers worked twice as hard, receiving more pay as the farmer became richer and shared his wealth with them.

Next, the honest brother went into the village and explained that the river was blocked with stones upstream. He asked the villagers for help to move the stones. He set out with a group of them, found where the blockage was and worked for many hours to help remove the stones. Soon, the water began to flow again into the village. The people were very grateful to him.

Last, the honest brother went to see the queen. He told her that her daughter was innocent and that she should not make war with her neighbour. 'You are an honest man,' said the queen. 'You have shown this in the way you have helped my people, so I believe you.'

The queen's daughter was released from the tower, she made peace with her neighbour and the honest brother was made a hero by the villagers.

The queen invited him to live at the palace and not long afterwards, the honest brother and the princess were married. When the dishonest brother heard of this, he went to visit his brother to see if he could share in his good fortune. The honest brother told him truthfully how he had overheard the elves boasting about their mischief. The dishonest brother decided that he would go into the forest, find the elves, hear their plans and become a rich hero like his brother.

Off he went, and he soon found the tree. The dishonest brother could hear the elves talking, but instead of hiding, he approached them. As soon as the elves saw him, they could sense that he was dishonest. They were full of mischief, so they told the dishonest brother that if he gave them all his money, they would take him to a cave where he would find gold and jewels beyond his wildest dreams.

The dishonest brother handed over his riches and the elves took him to the cave. There, he found a lot of bulging sacks. He eagerly opened each in turn, only to find that they were filled not with gold and jewels, but with common stones. He was left with nothing.

He went back to see his brother, who had now become king. 'Well,' said his brother, 'I think you have discovered for yourself whether it pays to be honest or dishonest.' The dishonest brother was sorry for what he had done. He went on to live a modest life in the village, eventually becoming an honest man.