

Lost in the Neighborhood

It was a hot, sunny day. Kevin wanted to go to the store to get ice cream. He was too young to go by himself, though. His mother was sleeping. His big sister Kelly said she would take him there. She was in first grade, a year older than he was. She was sure she knew the way. The two kids walked out the front door.

“Hold my hand,” Kelly said. So Kevin held her hand. He felt safer that way.

They walked past Mrs. Glover’s place. She lived across from their house. Her laundry was hanging on the clothesline. Mrs. Glover was out in front.

Mrs. Glover waved. The kids kept walking.

Soon they came to the corner. Kelly told Kevin, “We turn here. This is the way to school.”

Kevin nodded. They kept walking.

“Now we turn again,” Kelly said. “We have to stay away from Leon’s pitbull.”

Kevin did not see or hear the dog. But he nodded anyway. The kids turned another corner.

Soon, Kelly stopped. She looked around. After a minute, she said, “I think we are lost.”

Kevin started to cry. But then they both saw something red moving between the buildings. It was Mrs. Glover’s dress! It was flapping in the wind.

“We just went around the block!” Kelly said. “I know how to get home. Let’s go back. Next time, we will wait for a grown up.”

They walked back home. Mrs. Glover was standing at her window. This time, the kids stopped and waved.

The Wise Choice

“You have rescued my horse,” Queen Olivia told the young boy standing before her. “Now you shall have a reward.” Peter nervously ran his fingers through his brown hair. The frightened horse had run past him as he worked in the field that morning. He would have helped it whether it belonged to the queen or not. But he had to admit that getting a reward was nice.

Two of the queen’s pages appeared. One carried a small pillow with a mirror sitting on top. Red jewels sparkled on top of the mirror’s silver frame. The other page carried a wood cage with a clucking chicken inside it.

“Only one reward can be yours,” the queen said. “Choose wisely.” “That’s easy,” Peter said. “I’ll take the chicken.” Some of the people in the court laughed. It was clear they thought he had made a foolish choice.

“And why did you choose the chicken?” the queen asked. “Well, I don’t know much about jewels and things,” Peter answered. “But I do know about chickens. The chicken will provide eggs for my family for a long while.”

Queen Olivia smiled. “Then you did make a wise choice,” she said. “That mirror may look fancy. But the jewels you see are only colored glass, and the frame is painted silver. The chicken is much more valuable.” Peter took the chicken from the page. Then he bowed. “Thank you, your majesty.”

“You are a smart child,” the queen said. “I could use a smart boy to help take care of my horses. Would you like a job?” Peter grinned. “Thank you!” he said. A job at the castle paid well. Now his family would eat well for the rest of their lives—all because he had chosen a chicken!

The Magician

Simon was really excited when he got a magic kit on his birthday. He dreamed of being a great magician some day.

He figured he'd get his start at the school talent show. But when he opened the box, Simon wasn't so excited any more. All the tricks were made of plastic pieces that had to be put together. There were lots of instructions to read. Simon stared at the box for a while. Then he closed it back up.

The next week, his teacher sent out a sign-up sheet for the school talent show. Simon still really wanted to be in the show. He signed his name on the sheet: "The Amazing Simon—a magic act." Everyone got excited when they saw Simon's name on the sheet.

"Can you really do magic?" his friend Megan asked.

"Sure," Simon said. "I have a kit and everything." Simon wasn't worried. There were four weeks until the talent show. He figured that would be plenty of time to learn some tricks.

The next night, Simon opened the box again. He picked the easiest trick. It was a thin plastic box. You put a quarter in it and closed it. When you opened the box, the quarter was gone. Simon showed the trick to his grandma. That's great, Simon!" she said. "You're a real magician!" A real magician! Simon felt really proud. He would do just fine in the talent show, he knew it.

But the weeks went by, and Simon didn't learn any more tricks. Everything else in the box looked so hard. One night Simon and his family were eating dinner. His grandma looked at the calendar on the wall. "Tomorrow night is the talent show, Simon!" his grandma said. "I can't wait to see you on stage!"

Simon got a bad feeling in his stomach. He put down his fork. "Uh, grandma, I think I have a problem," he said.

Caught in a Lie

Angela tapped her pencil on her desk. Everyone in class was working on a math sheet, but she had already finished hers. Angela was good at math. Her friend Olivia sat in the next row. Olivia was finished, too. She was leaning over and whispering to another girl, Kelly.

Angela frowned. She and Olivia had been best friends ever since they were babies. They told each other everything. She and Olivia both agreed they didn't like Kelly. She was mean to some people and cared too much about how she dressed. So why was Olivia talking to her?

The bell rang. The teacher, Ms. Hunter, looked up from her desk. "Turn in your papers, class, and have a nice day!"

Angela jumped out of her seat. She grabbed her backpack and tapped Olivia on the shoulder. "Hey, my brother's taking me to see a movie later," she said. "Do you want to come with us?"

Olivia looked down at her sneakers. "Um, I can't," she said. "My mom wants to take me clothes shopping tonight."

Angela was disappointed. "That stinks! Maybe we can go next week, then."

"Sure, maybe," Olivia said.

Angela's older brother, Ryan, picked her up from school in his car. He watched her after school sometimes while their parents worked. Ryan took Angela for some take-out Mexican food. Then they went to the movie theater.

"I want to see that movie about the talking dog," Angela said, as they walked into the lobby.

"Can't we see the one about the car race?" Ryan asked. Then he noticed something. "Hey, there's Olivia!"

Ryan pointed to the popcorn counter. He was right. Olivia was there—standing next to Kelly! Angela was stunned. Why did Olivia lie to her?