The Honest Woodcutter

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A poor woodcutter was chopping wood by a river when his iron axe slipped from his hand and sank into the deep water. He sat on the bank and cried because it was his only axe.

A water spirit rose from the river and held up a golden axe. "Is this yours?" "No," said the woodcutter. The spirit held up a silver axe. "No, that is not mine either," he said. Then the spirit showed him a plain iron axe. "Yes, that is mine!" he cried.

The spirit was so pleased by his honesty that he gave the woodcutter all three axes. When another woodcutter heard the story, he threw his axe into the river and lied about it, but the spirit gave him nothing, not even his own axe back.

Moral: Honesty is the best policy, and greed leaves us with nothing.

Talk About It

1. Why did the spirit give all three axes to the first woodcutter?
2. What went wrong for the second woodcutter?
3. Is it ever hard to tell the truth? Why?

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