

4. Jewels and Toads: A French Folktale

Once upon a time, a woman had two daughters. Mila, the older one, was mean and selfish, like her mother. The younger girl, Emma, was gentle and kind. The mother loved her older daughter more, so she treated Mila well. She made Emma work hard and walk a mile to the well to get fresh water.

One day, Emma saw a poor, ragged woman at the well. The woman begged the child for a drink. Emma gave the woman some water to drink. The ragged woman was weak so Emma carefully held the pitcher for her.

"You are so kind," said the woman. "I will give you a gift. From now on, every time you speak, a jewel will fall from your mouth."

When Emma returned home, her mother scolded her for being gone for so long. "I am so sorry, mother," said Emma. When Emma spoke, a diamond came out of her mouth.

Her mother was surprised, but she quickly caught the jewel. "How does this happen, my dear, sweet, favorite

child?" she asked.

Emma told her mother about the woman at the well. The next morning, the mother sent Mila to get water. She was sure the old woman would give Mila the same gift.

The poor, ragged woman was at the well. She asked Mila for a drink. "No. You're just an ugly, old beggar woman. Just give me the same gift you gave my sister," Mila demanded.

"I'll give you a gift," the woman muttered.

When Mila spoke, a toad tumbled out of her mouth. Her mother was very surprised, and she didn't catch the toad. "You have caused this," the mother screamed at Emma. "You must leave this house at once and never come back."

Emma left the house and went into the woods. There, she saw the king's son. "Why are you all alone in these woods?" the prince asked.

When Emma told him what happened, jewels fell from her mouth. The prince took her home to meet his family. They were soon married and lived happily ever after.