

OUR  
WORLD

# THE MIRROR

A Folktale from Korea

Retold by Nick Harris



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Tae Hyun, a farmer, is shopping for a present for his wife, Sun Hee.

"I want something very special," he tells a shopkeeper.

"Buy her this mirror," says the shopkeeper. "You can see yourself in it."



At this time in Korea, people did not have mirrors.  
"Is that me?" asks Tae Hyun. "I thought I was taller."  
Then he says, "No one in my village has one of these.  
This is going to be a great present!"





At home, Tae Hyun puts the mirror on the wall.  
"Sun Hee is going to love this present!" he says.  
"The mirror will show her that she is cuter than  
all the other wives in the village."  
Tae Hyun goes out to find his wife.



But Sun Hee comes home before Tae Hyun can find her. Tae Hyun's mother is with her.

Sun Hee looks in the mirror. She sees herself for the first time. She thinks it is someone else!

"My husband has a new wife!" she says. "She is younger and prettier than me!"



Tae Hyun's mother looks in the mirror. She sees herself for the first time, too.

"It is not a new wife!" says Tae Hyun's mother.  
"It is an old woman, like me! But she is even older than me! Your husband has a new mother!"





Tae Hyun's father hears Sun Hee and his wife crying.  
He comes in to see what is wrong.

"Tae Hyun has a new, younger, and prettier wife!"  
says Sun Hee.

"No. He has a new, older mother!" says Tae Hyun's  
mother.



Tae Hyun's father looks in the mirror. He does not recognize himself either.

"It isn't an old woman or a young wife," he says. "It is an old man, like me. But he looks stronger than me!"





"Why does Tae Hyun want a new father?"  
he asks. "Aren't I strong enough to help him on  
the farm?"

"I didn't see an old man!" says Sun Hee.  
"I saw a younger and prettier woman."

"I saw an older woman!" says Tae Hyun's  
mother.



Tae Hyun and Sun Hee's son  
comes in. "What is wrong?"  
he asks.

"Look!" everyone says.  
The boy looks in the mirror.  
"Who's that boy?" asks the  
son. "He's wearing my hat! Give  
me back my hat!"



Finally, Tae Hyun hears his family. He runs into the house. They tell him about the new people they saw in the mirror.

"Those aren't new people!" he says. "You saw yourselves! Look!"

"Ahh!" they all say with a smile. "We are very good looking!"

