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# MORPHEUS' MIRROR

A short story for  
learning to learn



# Morpheus' Mirror

- **Theme:** Understanding emotions and their expressions.
- **Reading time:** 20 minutes
- **Level:** 8-12 years old

## SUMMARY

On holiday at his grandmother's, Tom acquires a strange medallion that plunges him into the world of dreams. There he meets the gods Morpheus and Hypnos, who ask him to search for Morpheus's broken mirror. This mirror has the power to harmonise dreams and emotions.

Guided by Nyx, the goddess of the night, and the two other gods, Tom has to confront his emotions and use his observation skills.

## KEY WORDS

Emotions, listen, react, regulate, observe, understand

## Chapter 1: The Mysterious Medallion

On a rainy summer afternoon, **Tom** explores his grandmother's attic, where he spends his holidays. He likes to dive into his grandmother's treasures. He finds it much more entertaining than playing with the neighbour's kids. Among the trunks, boxes and mountains of cardboard, one object catches his attention: a gilded medallion decorated with engravings representing the phases of the moon. He slips it into his pocket, and perhaps his grandmother will agree to lend it to him when he shows her the finding.

## Chapter 2: The Call of the Gods

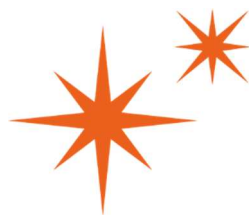
Tom opens his eyes. That's odd, he can swear a minute ago he was still in his grandmother's attic. But now, the faded wallpaper in his bedroom is replaced by a huge forest of silver trees. A shiver runs down his spine. Where is he?

A man with glistening skin slowly approaches.

'Who... who are you?' Tom stutters.

'I am **Hypnos, the god of sleep**. Welcome to the realm of dreams.'

The realm of dreams? Tom looks down at the medallion that he still holds in his palm. So that was it! That damn jewel has led him into a dream... or rather a nightmare.



A second figure appears. It seems taller, more imposing. 'At last! It's about time!' the man exclaims. 'I'm **Morpheus, the god of dreams**, he growls. We have a problem. A big problem.'

He makes a gesture, and an image suddenly floats through the air: a broken mirror, its pieces scattered across the immensity of the realm.

‘This mirror harmonises human dreams and **emotions**. Without it, dreams become chaotic, uncontrollable... and sometimes frightening,’ explains Morpheus.

‘It's no coincidence that you're here’, adds Hypnos gently. ‘Have you felt overwhelmed with your emotions lately? As if you could not control them, nor understand them?’

‘Almost every day’, Tom says timidly.

‘This medallion only appears to those who are lost with their feelings. We will help you, but first we have a favour to ask.’

Tom looks at them perplexed.

‘You need to find the pieces of the mirror. But be careful... Here, your emotions can play tricks on you...’

Going on a quest in a world where his own emotions can turn against him? Tom is not sure he likes the idea. But can you say no to two gods?

### Chapter 3: The Realm of the Night

Tom barely has time to understand what is happening to him. The ground disappears beneath his feet and the landscape twirls around him. He closes his eyes to not feel the dizziness. When he opens them, he finds himself in total darkness. The air is thick, almost suffocating.



‘Welcome to my domain, dream traveller.’

The voice comes from a silhouette slowly standing out of the darkness: a woman draped in a long dark blue cloak studded with stars.

As she comes closer, voices rise up from the depths of the cave. Whispering, sometimes shouting. Tom shudders: these voices are his own thoughts.

The murmurs intensify. He hears painful memories, fears he thought he'd forgotten. His heart races. He wants to flee, cover his ears.

**I have no form, yet I cover the world.  
I bring silence yet awaken thoughts.  
Some find peace in my presence, others, only their fears.  
Who am I?**

‘Are you, **Nyx, the goddess of the night?**’

‘You guessed right. People often run from me, but tell me, Tom... **Do you know why some emotions stay while others fade?**’

‘It's... It's because you hold on to them, isn't it?’

‘Yes. Some emotions pass quickly, like a cloud crossing the sky. Others hang on, refusing to fade. Let me tell you why:

- They are the emotions you replay in your mind, like a story retold over and over.
- They are tied to important moments, to lessons, to things your heart won't let go of.
- And sometimes, they stay because you push them away, rather than letting yourself understand them.’



Nyx makes a gesture, and suddenly the voices slow down. Tom can still hear them, but they are further away.

‘They are like waves: they rise, they fall. No emotion lasts forever. If you take a step back, you can **understand** them better and, above all, choose which ones to carry forward... and which ones to let the tide take away.’

The silence returns. Tom feels his heart slow down.

Nyx reaches into her coat and pulls out a shard of mirror. ‘Your emotions are part of you, but they don't define you. This fragment represents your ability to recognise them and soothe them.’

She hands the piece to Tom. He takes it carefully and, for a moment, thinks he can see his own reflection in it.

‘Continue your quest. Other truths await you.’

And without warning, the floor disappears once more beneath his feet.

## Chapter 4: The Fury Mountain

Tom lands on top of a volcanic mountain. The air is hot, the earth shakes and geysers of lava roar up, as if the mountain was angry.

Nyx appears at his side.

‘This mountain **reacts** like you do when you get angry,’ she explains. ‘It explodes, roars, threatens to burn everything in its path. But if it learns to channel its fire, it becomes a source of strength, instead of a danger.’



A violent jolt almost knocks Tom off his feet. He remembers the time he was falsely accused of breaking a vase at his grandmother's house. His anger had built up so quickly that he'd shouted and lashed out, unable to defend himself calmly.

‘Anger is a signal,’ continues Nyx. ‘It shows you that your need is not met, that an injustice affects you. But if you let it explode without understanding its source, it can destroy everything, like this volcano.’

‘What can I do to not explode?’ Tom asks.

Nyx hands him a piece of mirror and gives him some advice:



1. First, observe your emotions.
2. When you feel anger rising, stop for a moment and ask yourself:  
**Why am I angry? What hurt me?**
3. Then breathe. Take in air as if you were blowing on that volcano to calm it down.

Tom inhales slowly, exhales deeply. He feels his chest loosen.

The mountain calms down, the geysers recede, and the lava slows down.

‘You see?’ concludes Nyx with a slight smile. ‘Anger is not your enemy. Learn to **listen** to it, without letting it control you.’

She hands Tom a piece of mirror.

## Chapter 5: The Memories’ Lake

The road from the volcano leads Tom to a silvery shore. In front of him, an immense lake stretches as far as the eye can see. On closer inspection, Tom sees something else: hazy images floating on the surface. Memories.

He gets closer and sees a scene he knows well. His heart sinks. It's the day he had an argument with his best friend. He remembers the hurtful words exchanged and the feeling of emptiness that followed.

A soft voice rises behind him. Morpheus, the god of dreams, is sitting on a rock, watching the lake.

‘This lake is filled with tears of those who, like you, have felt sadness, he explains. You think it weighs you down. But it talks to you.’

‘Talk... about what?’ Tom says, sceptical.

‘Sadness shows you what's important to you. Feeling sad doesn't mean to be weak. If this argument made you feel sad, it's because your friendship matters.’



Tom stares at the water. He remembers other happy times with his friend: the laughter, the games. Not everything can be erased by an argument. Morpheus gives him a piece of advice:



1. Ask yourself: **Why am I sad? What is this emotion telling me?**
2. Then find out what can help you move on.
3. Sometimes talking, writing or simply accepting what you're feeling is enough to lighten your heart.

Tom takes a deep breath. He feels something inside him calm down.

The lake shudders and, slowly, a light appears beneath the surface. A piece of mirror slowly emerges, floating towards him.

‘You've earned it,’ says Morpheus. ‘By understanding your sadness, you have learned to welcome it instead of running away from it.’

Tom gently takes the piece of mirror. His reflection appears for a moment, more serene. The lake recovers its stillness.

## Chapter 6: The Garden of Splinters

On the other side of the lake, Tom discovers a garden filled with flowers. Everywhere, laughter rings out. The air is soft, and a strange feeling overcomes him: everything here exudes joy.

He watches the children playing further away. Their happiness is contagious, but something inside him prevents him from fully immersing himself in it.

‘Why are you standing back, Tom?’ asks Hypnos, ‘who is suddenly standing next to him.’

‘I don't know... Maybe... if I enjoy it too much, it'll disappear too quickly?’

Hypnos smiles and grabs a flower that slowly opens, releasing a sweet fragrance. ‘Joy is like this flower. It doesn't last forever, but that doesn't mean it's any less precious. If you spend your time worrying about the moment being over, you'll forget to appreciate it.’

Tom remembers moments when he felt pure joy: a birthday, a victory, an afternoon of laughter with his friends. Yet each time, he worried that those moments would fade too quickly, so that he wouldn't always enjoy them to the full.

Hypnos continues, ‘joy, like all your emotions, guides you. It sheds light on what's important to you. Learn to recognise it and surrender to it, even if it doesn't always last. Because it leaves a trace in your memory.’

Tom takes a deep breath. He lets the moment wash over him: the smell of the flowers, the warmth of the sun, the music of the wind. Little by little, he feels lighter, more alive.



He catches sight of a brilliant sliver among the petals of a lily. The last piece of the mirror! He reaches out and picks it up. Immediately, a gentle energy comes over him. He feels himself for the first time in a very long time.

‘It's time,’ mutters Hypnos.

## **Chapter 7: Back to Reality?**

With a snap of fingers, the garden disappears. Tom lands at the heart of the realm of dreams, where it all began. Before him, Morpheus and Hypnos await him.

Carefully, Tom puts the pieces of the mirror together. A soft light emanates from the mirror, illuminating his reflection.

Morpheus puts a hand on his shoulder. ‘That mirror was never broken, Tom. It was simply fragmented, like you with your emotions. This journey taught you to listen to your feelings and accept them.’

‘Was it all a dream?’ Tom asks.

‘Dreams often have more truth than we think,’ Morpheus replies with a faint smile.

The light gets brighter, and Tom closes his eyes...

When he opens them again, he's in his grandmother's attic. He clutches the locket gently, a smile on his face appears.

## Today, I learnt...

Tom's story shows that our emotions are like guides:

- They give us information about what we are experiencing.
- Anger, sadness, fear and joy, all have a role to play.
- Rather than letting them take control or ignoring them, we need to learn to **regulate** them.

Regulating your emotions, means to control them. There are several stages:

1. **Recognising** what you're feeling.
2. **Understanding** why you're feeling it.
3. Choosing how to **react** to it.



## MASTER YOUR MIND

### Question 1

At the start of his quest, Tom is overwhelmed by voices whispering his doubts and worries. He realises that these thoughts are affected by his emotions. He learns to observe them rather than letting them paralyse him.

If you're having negative thoughts, what can you do?

1. Trust them immediately and let your emotions take over.
2. Take a moment to ask myself: "Are these thoughts true? Where do they come from?"
3. Try to take my mind off it by doing something else.



Our thoughts don't always tell the truth.

**Have you ever taken a step back from a negative thought? Did it help you to see the situation differently?**

## Question 2

When Tom is faced with a lake reflecting a sad memory, he decides to think on what made him so sad, to better understand how he feels.

**If you were in his shoes, how would you react?**

1. I'd try to forget that memory and think about something else.
2. I would ask myself why this memory has affected me so much and what I can learn from this sadness.
3. I'd be looking for someone to talk to about how I feel.

## Question 3

When Tom finds himself in the volcano, he understands that his anger can grow and explode if he is not careful.

**When you feel angry, how do you react?**

1. I express what I feel immediately, without thinking.
2. I take a moment to breathe and understand why I'm angry.
3. I try not to think about it and forget about it.



Anger can be very strong, but it doesn't have to be negative.

**Have you ever tried to identify what triggers your anger? Did this help you to manage it better?**

## Final reflection

**Now that you have read Tom's story, what piece of advice would you keep from it?**

## TOOLBOX

**These tools and exercises can help you in the way you learn.**

**We all learn in different ways.**

**Choose the tool that best suits your needs.**

You can download the tools on the website of the project.

### 1/ My emotions tracker

**Objective: Monitor and regulate emotions**

The emotions tracker helps you to observe which emotions you feel at different stages of the day.

In this way, you will better understand your feelings.

### 2/ My emotions thermometer

**Objective: Monitor and regulate emotions**

The emotion thermometer enables you to track your emotions and better understand them. Fill the barometer every time you experience a strong emotion.

### 3/ Emotion detective exercise

**Objective: Identify the emotions**

This simple exercise will help you better identify and name the different emotions.



CogniQuest is a project created by organisations and schools from Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece and Poland.

Together, they have developed tools to help you think about your thinking. This is called metacognition - a fancy word that means “learning how to learn”.

Through these tales, you’ll discover different ways to solve problems, stay focused, and reflect on how you learn best.

Explore the whole CogniQuest collections on the website of the project:

[www.cogniquet.eu](http://www.cogniquet.eu)



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