

Ellis and The Magic Mirror

Story by

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Chapter 1: Earth Week

Ellis Monroe couldn't wait to get to school! It was *Earth Week* at Harriett Tubman Elementary School, and every day they were going to learn something new about Planet Earth - from the forests and trees of the Amazon to the way people lived thousands of years ago.

Ellis and his little sister Freddye ate their breakfast as fast as they could and ran out the door to meet their friend, Toro Quispe, so that they could walk to school together.

"Hi, Toro," Ellis called to his best friend who was waiting for him at the corner. "Can you believe it's Earth Week?"

"Yeah, I know," Toro said excitedly. "My mom is coming on Thursday to talk about all the different kinds of plants there are and why we need to save them."

"Cool!" Ellis replied. He wasn't quite sure what Toro's Mom did, but he knew she was a doctor like his Dad and travelled all over the world. She also made the best brownies ever.

"My Dad is coming to our class on Friday to talk about all the cool stuff you can find as an archeologist. He's going to bring his whole collection of artifacts. Aren't you, Dad?" Ellis asked.

Before Dr. Monroe could reply, Freddye chimed in.

"But Daddy's coming to *my* class first. Right, Daddy?" Freddye added proudly.

Dr. Monroe chuckled.

"Yes, Freddye. On Friday, I'm coming to your class first, with as many artifacts as the museum will let me carry."

They all agreed that would be awesome.

The crowd of children and parents grew as they crossed the street carefully and walked into the schoolyard.

"Thanks, Dad!" Ellis said. Dr. Monroe gave them all one big hug before letting them run into school.

Once inside, Ellis' teacher, Ms. Lee, let them know that Earth Week wasn't the only special event happening at their school. They had a new student named Buddy Cruster.

Everyone was nice to Buddy as they went through the first day of Earth Week. They included Buddy in their activities as they made paper models of the globe and found all the countries on Ms. Lee's large map of the world.

But though he seemed happy at first, as the day went on, Buddy got more and more grumpy. In fact, Buddy complained about almost everything. He didn't want to learn the names of the different countries. He didn't want to make his own globe. He didn't seem to want to learn, and he didn't want anyone else to either. By the time the bell rang for lunch, Buddy had already been sent to the quiet desk for trying to distract other children from their work.

Ellis thought his behavior was strange, but figured maybe Buddy was just nervous about being in a new school. Ellis was so excited about Earth Week that he felt sure that if he just worked harder to help, Buddy would like it, too.

After lunch, Ellis tried to tell Buddy about all the cool things they would be learning throughout the week, but Buddy just laughed and rolled his eyes. By the end of the day, Ellis felt sad that Buddy wasn't enjoying any of the things he thought were so great and it made him less excited about Earth Week, too.

At the dinner table that night, his parents could tell that Ellis was not as excited about his day as they had expected.

"How was your day?" his Dad asked while they ate dinner together.

"It was okay, I guess."

"Didn't the Earth Week celebration start today?" his mother asked. "You were so excited this morning about all the things you were going to do. What happened?"

"Well... it was pretty cool today and I did have fun, except this new kid in my class kept saying how school was dumb. At first I tried to help him, and then I tried to ignore him, but I guess I just wanted everyone to be as excited about Earth Week as I am."

"I understand," his Dad said, reaching out to comfort him. "Not everyone is going to be excited about the same things that you are, but don't let anyone ruin your good time, okay?"

Ellis nodded, knowing his Dad was right. After a moment, his father added, "Besides, I think I have something that will cheer you up."

"Really! What is it?" Ellis's eyes gleamed with excitement. Slowly, his father reached behind his chair and pulled out a package wrapped in a soft brown cloth. His sister Freddy moved closer to get a better look while Ellis watched his father place the package on the kitchen table and carefully pull back the cloth.

Inside was a strange and beautiful object made of very old, tarnished metal and glass.

“Can I touch it?” Ellis asked his father as he reached out his hands.

“Okay,” Ellis’ Dad replied, “but you must be very careful.”

“Cool!” Ellis exclaimed as he picked up the handle and held it high. “It’s a mirror,” he said, looking at the faint shimmer of his own reflection in the glass.

“More of a looking glass, actually,” his father replied. “Ancient legend says that if you focus the lens on a person or anything you want to understand, it will show you the truth of what that thing really is. In some ancient cultures, it is called a heart mirror.”

“What do you mean, Daddy?” Freddye asked.

“That means it can show you if someone is truly good or truly bad. Look and see for yourself.”

Dr. Monroe showed Ellis and Freddye how to point the mirror right at him. At first, Freddye and Ellis could only see their own reflections in the glass, but then slowly their reflection faded and the image of their father became clear. In the looking glass, his whole body was surrounded with a strange deep orange light that made them happy.

“What do you see?” their father asked.

“That you have a good heart, Daddy,” Freddye answered while Ellis stared in amazement.

“Well, that’s good to know,” their Dad said with a laugh. Ellis noticed some strange markings around the edges and handle of the mirror just as his mother was calling them upstairs for bath time.

“What do these marks mean, Dad? Can you read them?”

“That’s a great question, Ellis, but no, I can’t.”

“I wish *I* could,” Ellis said, still staring at the mirror. “I want to know what it says. Can we keep it, Dad? Pleassee?”

“I’m afraid not, but I’ll have it with me for a few days,” he said thoughtfully. “I need to make a rubbing of the marks on the handle and send them to a professor who can

help me read them. But after that, I have to bring it to the museum to be kept and studied with all the other artifacts.”

“OK,” Ellis said, but he was only half-listening as he placed the mirror back down on the cloth. He couldn’t wait to take it to school tomorrow and show Toro what his Dad had found.

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