



The Boy Who Punished Himself

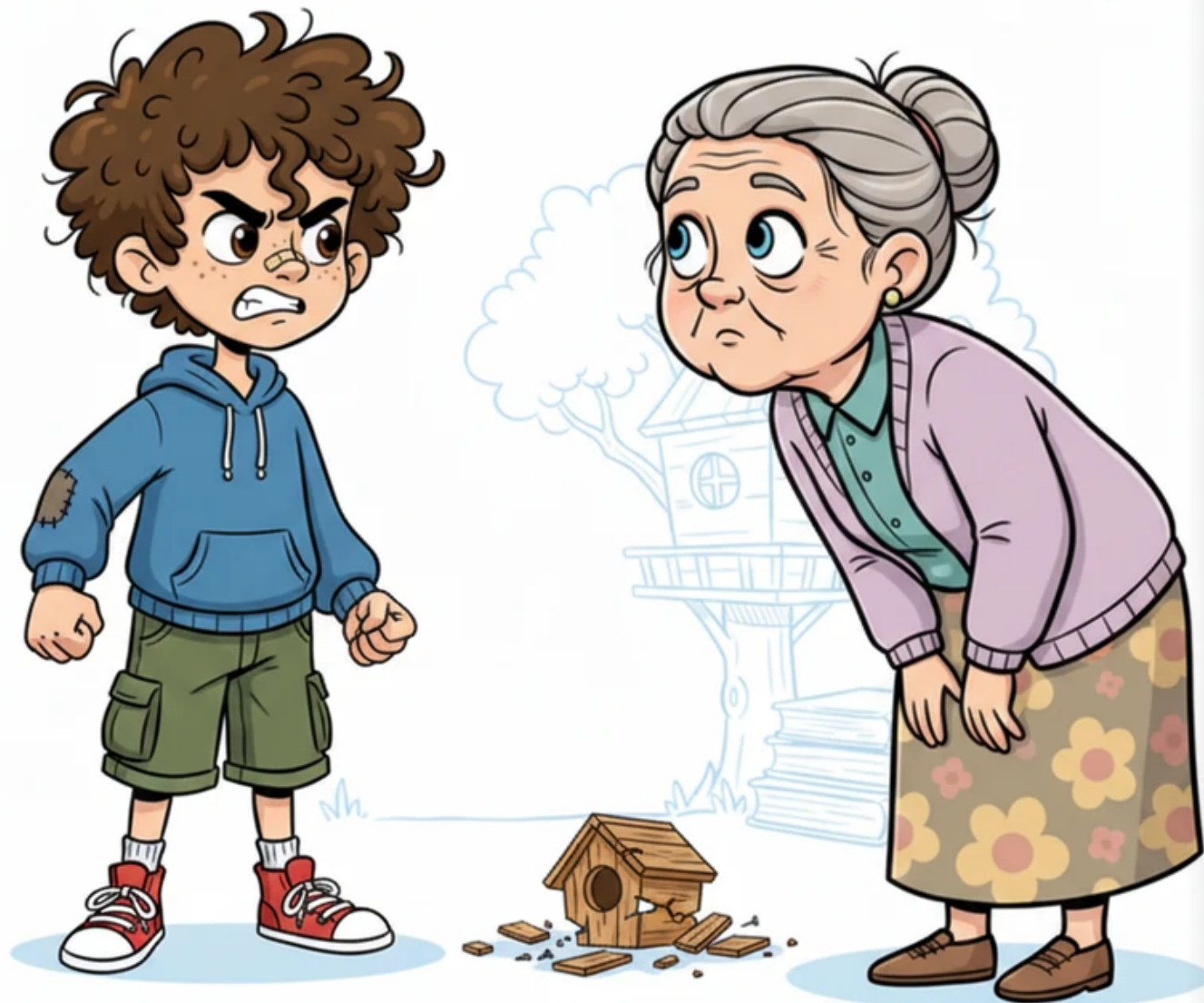
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Leo stood in the sunny park and spoke harsh, hurtful words to his best friend over a simple toy. His friend's face fell in sadness, and he slowly walked away, leaving Leo standing all alone with the toy he had fought for.



While walking down the busy sidewalk, Leo encountered an elderly man carrying a heavy bag of groceries. Instead of stepping aside to let him pass, Leo gave the man a rough shove, causing him to stumble and look back in quiet confusion.



LEO

A small, friendly dog wagged its tail and ran up to Leo, hoping for a kind pat on the head. Leo reacted with sudden anger and struck the dog, sending the poor, whimpering creature scurrying away into the tall grass.



When Leo returned home, his younger sister reached out to show him a beautiful picture she had drawn just for him. He snapped at her with such mean words that she immediately burst into tears and ran to her bedroom to hide.



The house grew remarkably silent, and the golden afternoon sun began to set, casting long, lonely shadows across the porch. Leo looked around and realized that everyone had left his side, and the world suddenly felt very cold and empty.



Leo sat down on the cold stone steps of his house and buried his face in his small hands, sobbing with deep regret. The tears flowed freely as he finally felt the crushing weight of being completely and utterly alone.



A neighbor leaning over the garden gate watched the crying boy and asked Leo's mother who had punished him so severely. His mother looked at her son with a sad smile and replied that no one had punished him; he had punished himself.