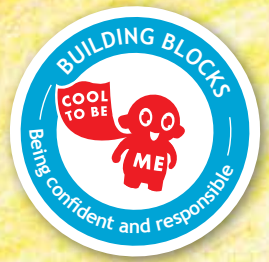


A story to read
with children about



BEING TRUTHFUL



Written by Linda Joyce Bruce and Lisa Cohen
Illustrated by Shifrah Getz

Chapter 1:

A little puff of smoke

“Let’s play Stuck-in-the-mud. I played it with my cousins during the holidays. It is so much fun! I’ll teach you,” cried Musa, jumping up and down.

“Yes let’s!” shouted Sammy Squirrel.
“How do you play?” asked Bru’Me.



The friends all gathered around Musa. They were excited to play together again after the long holiday.

Musa waved his arms around wildly as he explained how to play the game. Bru'Me and Sammy understood immediately and nodded enthusiastically, but Thandi just heard a mixture of confusing words. "Run ... catch ... freeze ... crawl through legs ... don't get caught."



Thandi didn't like games like this. Her short legs and heavy shell made it difficult for her to move quickly so she always got caught.

"I'll just watch," she said. Then, Thandi did something she would never normally do. She didn't want her friends to force her to play, so ... she told a lie.

"I have a sore leg."



As the words flew out of her mouth, Thandi felt something squeezing and pulling at her heart. She squirmed. Something uncomfortable caught in the back of her throat. She coughed and a little puff of dark grey smoke floated out of her mouth.

It hovered in the space between Thandi and her friends. She stared at the dark puff of smoke, embarrassed that it had come out of her throat. She looked over at Bru'Me, Musa and Sammy, but none of them seemed to have noticed a thing.

Bru'Me was concerned, "What happened to your leg Thandi? Why is it sore?"

"Er, uh, cough." The squeezing and pulling in Thandi's heart was making her feel so uncomfortable, she was battling to speak. "Err, ummm, cough, err, aggh, cough..."

She stammered until the truth tumbled out of her mouth like a flick-flacking gymnast, "Well actually my leg is fine, I didn't hurt it and it's not sore, I just don't like playing running games because I am so slow and heavy."

As soon as the truth was spoken, the uncomfortable squeezing and pulling in Thandi's heart stopped. The little puff of smoke disappeared, and Thandi felt a warm lightness and brightness spread inside of her.

"Why don't you all play the game? I am happy to watch you," she smiled reassuringly. The others, relieved that Thandi's leg was okay, agreed it was a good idea.



Soon after Bru'Me, Sammy and Musa started playing, Thandi Tortoise became lost in her thoughts.

What happened? What was all that uncomfortable pulling and squeezing? Where did that dirty puff of smoke come from? Why was I the only one who saw it?

Thandi's thoughts were interrupted by angry shouts. "I touched you, I touched you!" Bru'Me shouted angrily at Musa.

"No you never," said Musa determinedly.

Thandi Tortoise would have believed him but she saw the puffs of smoke that were streaming out of Musa's ears and mouth ... and she knew that Musa was telling a lie.

"But I did touch you," insisted Bru'Me in frustration.

Musa's eyes shifted awkwardly and then he blurted out, "Okay, you did touch me Bru'Me. I'll freeze and play fair." The cloud of smoke immediately evaporated.

Thandi knew that something very strange was going on ... but Musa Monkey, Bru'Me and Sammy Squirrel had not noticed a thing.



Chapter 2:

The spread of the smoke cloud

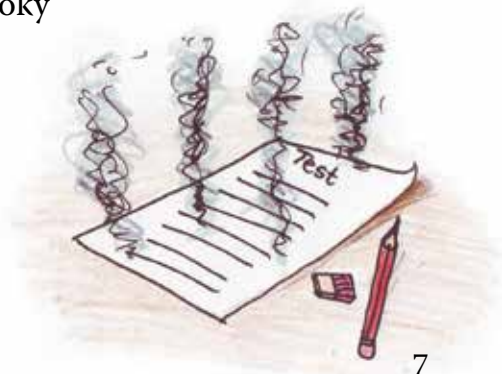
The next day, the busy hustle of the first day back at school distracted Thandi from worrying about the grey puffs of smoke.

She was unpacking her books into her desk when Teacher Softheart walked into the classroom and smiled warmly at the children.

“Take out your test books and a pencil, rubber and ruler,” Teacher Softheart instructed as she handed out the test papers. “We are going to have a test to get everyone back into the swing of things and see what you can remember from last term.”

Thandi Tortoise started answering the questions, but was distracted by a slight burning in her nose and eyes. She looked up and caught a glimpse of the boy in front of her peaking at another child’s work and guiltily copying the answer. He was cheating. Puffs of grey smoke billowed out of his nose and mouth. The puffs of smoke drifted up to the ceiling, and gathered in a small smoky cloud that hovered above them.

Thandi Tortoise had noticed a pattern. Every time someone was untruthful, puffs of smoke came out of their nose and mouth to form a smoky cloud.



“Where was all the smoke coming from?” she wondered, remembering the uncomfortable squeezing and pulling on her heart when she told the lie and the warm glow she felt when she told the truth. It was all so strange.

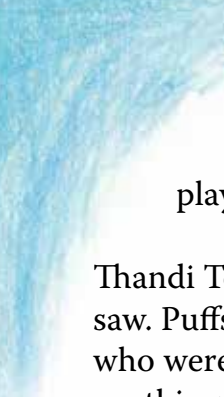
Why am I the only one who can see the smoke? Maybe I am imagining things. Is there something wrong with me? Perhaps my new glasses from granny are making me see things?

It wouldn't be the first time something strange had happened after Thandi spent time with her wise, old grandmother.

The break time bell interrupted Thandi's thoughts. As she walked out the classroom she saw a little girl steal a sweetie out of Teacher Softheart's special sweetie jar. Puffs of smoke drifted out of her mouth and joined the dark smoky cloud that was growing bigger and spreading across the ceiling towards the door.

Thandi stopped at her locker to get her lunch. Horrified, she watched as a boy sneaked a cap out of someone else's locker. He put it on his head, and smoke puffed out of his ears.





The smoke cloud on the ceiling had grown so big that it drifted out of the classroom door. It snaked into the playground, in and around the children.

Thandi Tortoise walked outside and was shocked by what she saw. Puffs of smoke swirled furiously around a group of children who were watching a bully torment a smaller boy. Nobody said anything, even though they knew it was wrong.

A girl who was acting all cool and trying to impress the ‘popular crowd’ (when she was actually gentle and sweet) also disappeared in puffs of smoke.

The more the children were untruthful, lying, cheating, or pretending to be someone they were not, the bigger and thicker and blacker the cloud became.

The smoke was everywhere now, touching everything. But no one could see it except Thandi. Her classmates were all walking around in a smoky haze, unaware of the ugliness of their untruthfulness. Everything was becoming so dark that Thandi could hardly see any children or buildings. There was no light, only dark, choking smoke.

She had to warn them!

She had to open their eyes and make them see what was happening!

And so Thandi Tortoise stood up on her hind legs and shouted at the top of her voice,

“Stop being untruthful ...
listen to your heart!”

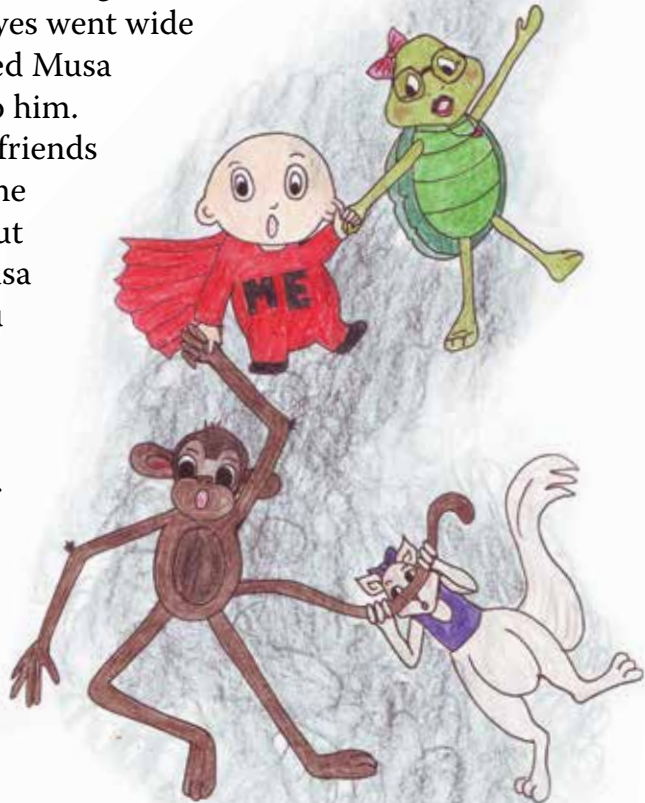


Chapter 3:

King Jembo the giant

Suddenly time stood still and everything froze. Thandi heard her heart beating loudly in her ears. The black, thick cloud drifted above the children and turned towards Thandi. It began to swirl, slowly at first, and then, as it picked up speed, Thandi felt its magnetic pull. The smoke was pulling her towards it and she started to lose balance. She reached and grabbed the person standing next to her. It was Bru'Me. His eyes went wide with fright and he grabbed Musa who was standing next to him. Sammy Squirrel saw her friends being pulled towards some invisible force and without thinking she grabbed Musa Monkey's tail. Before you could say 'It's COOL TO BE ME', the four friends were swallowed by the thick, black smoke cloud.

A few moments later, they were sitting on a cold, stone floor, coughing and spluttering and rubbing their burning eyes.



The smoke had disappeared and it seemed like they were no longer at school.

“What just happened?” croaked Bru’Me.

“Let me explain,” said Thandi Tortoise, taking a deep breath, “it all started on the last day of our holidays when I lied about having a sore leg.” Thandi told them all about the uncomfortable squeezing and pulling in her heart and the smoke that came out of all the children’s noses and mouths when they were being untruthful. “No one else can see the smoke, only me. Everyone was being so untruthful that the smoke formed a huge, billowing, black cloud that was spreading throughout the whole school. When I tried to warn everyone, the big black cloud of smoke swallowed us up and brought us here.”

“Where is here?” asked Sammy Squirrel.

“I have no idea,” said Thandi Tortoise as she looked around.

They were sitting in an enormous circular room. In the centre of the room was a hissing, smoking and smouldering bonfire with a few dying purple and orange, flickering flames. Next to the bonfire was a giant size throne. It had massive, thick and solid, golden legs and a plush seat of purple velvet. The back of the throne was beautifully carved wood that looked like dancing flames. Sitting on the floor next to the throne, with his shoulders slumped and his head hanging down between his knees, was a very large giant.



Bru'Me, Thandi Tortoise, Musa Monkey and Sammy Squirrel really should have been very nervous of the giant. If he had wanted to, he could have crushed them between his thumb and forefinger, but instead the giant looked very sad.

Holding onto each other, the four friends walked over to the giant and looked up at him. He did not seem surprised to see them, and spoke in a deep, rumbling, sombre voice.

“Hello, I am King Jembo the giant. I hope the black smoke cloud did not scare you. It can be a rather uncomfortable way to travel.”

“Why are we here?” asked Thandi, feeling brave.

“I think you can help me,” said King Jembo, “I just hope it is not too late.” And he let out a deep and sad sigh that nearly blew Bru'Me, Musa, Thandi and Sammy off their feet.

Then Jembo explained. “I am the keeper of the Fire of Truth.”



“The Fire of Truth?” repeated Thandi feeling a tingle in her heart. “What is that?”

King Jembo pointed at the huge smouldering bonfire in the centre of the room.

“That is the Fire of Truth,” he said. “It shines light into the hearts of people on earth, reminding them to choose right from wrong.”



Jembo looked at the four friends and continued, “If a person is untruthful, then the light in their heart flickers uncomfortably. In most people, these uncomfortable feelings remind them to be truthful again and when they are, they feel proud and honourable, just like a king.”

Thandi remembered the uncomfortable squeezing and pulling she felt when she told the lie about her sore leg. She also remembered the light, bright, warm glow that replaced it when she told the truth. It was all starting to make sense now.

“But what about all the smoke I saw?” she asked.

“Thandi, the smoke you saw is a great threat to the Fire of Truth,” said Jembo the giant. “When a person is untruthful, a flame in the Fire of Truth dies, releasing a puff of uncomfortable choking smoke. If the person listens to their heart and chooses to tell the truth, the puff of smoke immediately evaporates and causes no harm. BUT, if the person continues to be untruthful, then the little puffs of smoke get bigger and blacker and thicker and make a big, dark smoke cloud. The smoke cloud is very dangerous because it can spread, blocking out the light from the Fire of Truth so that people can no longer tell right and wrong or truth from lies.”

“Oh,” gasped Thandi, “that is what is happening at our school right now, I saw it with my very own eyes!” Then she looked at Jembo quizzically, “Why was I the only one who could see the smoke cloud?”

He smiled, “Your wise old grandmother is a very old friend of mine, Thandi. I asked her to give you those glasses because they have been infused with magical powers that make you see what I can see.” He looked seriously at all the children, “I wanted you to see the ugliness of the smoke cloud because I need your help to stop it. The earth is in great danger.”

“The Fire of Truth is almost out,” whispered Thandi, staring at the spluttering flames. “If it goes out completely, there will be no light in people’s hearts.”

“That is right Thandi, and that is why you are all here,” said King Jembo.

“What can we do to help?” asked Bru’Me earnestly.



Chapter 4:

The Fire of truth

King Jembo stood up slowly, his huge body towering over Bru'Me, Musa, Sammy and Thandi. The ground shook beneath them as he walked, tall and proud across to his throne and sat down heavily. Looking directly into The Fire of Truth, he beckoned to the children. "Come, link hands and make a circle around the Fire of Truth. I want to teach you a song."

Then King Jembo the giant started to clap and sing this merry little song.

"I smile inside and shout I am King;
shout I am King; shout I am King.
I smile inside and shout I am King,
When I am truthful about everything."



The children caught on quickly, and sang with Jembo.

“I smile inside and shout I am King;
shout I am King; shout I am King.
I smile inside and shout I am King,
When I am truthful about everything.”

Bru’Me, Sammy, Musa and Thandi were enjoying themselves so much that they started dancing around the fire and singing even louder.

“I smile inside and shout I am King;
shout I am King; shout I am King.
I smile inside and shout I am
King, When I am truthful
about everything.”

As they danced and sang,
they felt a warm glow start
to grow in the middle of
the circle. Soon, there
was an intense heat
licking their cheeks
and eyelids. The Fire
of Truth had become
a roaring blaze of
dancing flames.



King Jembo stood up and spoke to Bru'Me, Thandi, Musa and Sammy.

“The Fire of Truth will burn now for three days and three nights. Go back to earth and teach your friends at school this song. The words will direct the light from the Fire of Truth back into their hearts and remind them to choose right from wrong. They will feel so proud and say ... ‘I smile inside and feel like a king when I am truthful about everything.’”

Then Jembo put his enormous giant hand into his pocket and pulled out three pairs of glasses identical to the ones Thandi Tortoise was wearing.

“These glasses will assist you in your quest.”

Sammy took a pair and put them on. She looked around. Everything looked the same.

“Hey, Musa! Tell me a lie.”

“My name is Bru'Me,” Musa responded with a smirk. No smoke. No pulling or squeezing in his heart. Nothing happened.

King Jembo laughed at the children, “The puffs of smoke only appear when you are really being untruthful, not if you are joking or acting or playing a make-believe game.”

“Oh,” said Musa.

“I knew that already,” said Sammy, trying to seem clever. But as she muttered the words she felt an uncomfortable squeeze in her heart and saw a puff of smoke come out of her mouth. The others had already put on their own pairs of glasses and saw it happen. Their mouths dropped open and they were just about to tell her off when she quickly blurted, “Oops, sorry!”

The smoke immediately disappeared.

“WOW!” they all exclaimed together.

“Let’s not waste any more time – we’ve got a school to save!”
Thandi Tortoise declared.

And with that, Jembo took a deep breath and blew into the Fire of Truth. It leaped and danced, shooting luminous sparks of light into the air! The bright light engulfed the children in a warm bubble and, the next thing they knew, they were back in the school playground.



Chapter 5:

Quest to save the school

The smoke cloud at school was now so thick, the four friends could hardly breathe. Musa Monkey, Bru'Me and Sammy Squirrel coughed and wheezed as they took in the sight of the school playground.

“Let’s split up, it will be quicker and we don’t have any time to waste. We must show our friends the ugliness of the smoke cloud,” shouted Thandi Tortoise, snapping them out of their daze.

Bru'Me walked over to the boy wearing the stolen hat. “Stop being untruthful! Listen to your heart!” he shouted, gasping for air. The boy narrowed his eyes angrily at Bru'Me, but, before he could open his mouth to protest, Bru'Me slipped the magic glasses over his eyes. “This is what untruthfulness looks like,” he said. The boy’s mouth dropped open as he took in the black smoke cloud.



“But I didn’t do anything,” said the boy defiantly and a puff of smoke escaped out of his mouth. His eyes grew wide in surprise as he felt the uncomfortable tugging and squeezing in his heart. Bru’Me started to sing,

“I smile inside and shout I am King;
shout I am King; shout I am King.
I smile inside and shout I am King,
When I am truthful about everything.”

The boy shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot and suddenly walked determinedly up to the rightful owner of the hat.

“I am sorry,” he said as he took the hat off his head and handed it to its owner, “I took your hat. I won’t do it again, I promise.” He smiled a warm, glowing smile as the light in his heart

made him feel like a proud and honourable king. Immediately the smoke cloud around the boy evaporated and Bru’Me took in a deep breath of fresh, clear air.



Musa Monkey was standing in a cloud of smoke with the boy who had cheated on his test. He was wearing Musa’s glasses.

“No, I won’t smile and I won’t feel like a king,” wailed the boy, “I will get into terrible trouble!”

Musa persevered, “Even if you do get into trouble, you will still feel like a king because you told the truth. I know it can feel hard and scary, but trust me, I know what I am talking about. Just try it. Please.” Musa took a deep breath and, looking the boy straight in the eye, tried again,



“Stop being untruthful! Listen to your heart!”

Then Musa watched as the boy walked over to the teacher. His eyes were welling with tears and his head hung low. “I am sorry Teacher Softheart,” he said, “I cheated on my test. I don’t understand the work and I was scared I would get into trouble if I did badly ... but I am probably in even worse trouble now because I cheated.” As soon as the truth was spoken, the smoke cloud around him evaporated.

Teacher Softheart looked kindly down at the boy, “Thank you for telling the truth. I know it must have been very difficult to tell the truth and I admire you greatly for your courage and honesty. Your only punishment is going to be to stay after school for some extra lessons until you understand that work.”



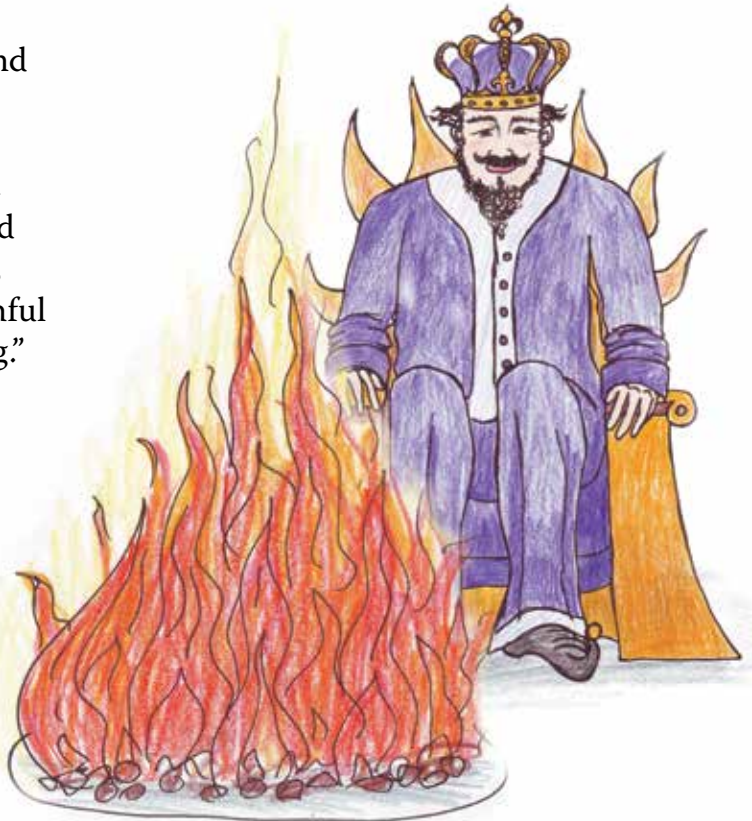
The boy began to glow and sparkle like a firecracker. He jumped up and down, spun around in circles and then threw his arms up into the air and shouted, “I do, I do, I do ... I do smile inside and feel like a king when I am truthful about everything!”

Thandi Tortoise, Bru'Me, Sammy Squirrel and Musa Monkey stood together and looked out over the playground.

The children who had listened to their hearts and chosen to be truthful were now encouraging the other children to do the same and the smoke cloud was disappearing fast, leaving a warm, proud glow in its place.

Just at that moment, the four friends' magic glasses started to vibrate. A vision of King Jembo the giant appeared before them. He was sitting tall and proud on his throne and the Fire of Truth was dancing vibrantly before him. He was singing and clapping a merry little tune.

“I smile inside and
shout I am King;
shout I am King;
shout I am King.
I smile inside and
shout I am King,
When I am truthful
about everything.”



Glossary

1. Squirmed – to wriggle or twist your body as a result of feeling nervous, uncomfortable or embarrassed
2. Flick-flacking gymnast – A movement where a gymnast takes off from one or two feet, jumps backwards onto her hands and flicks over to land on her feet.
3. Evaporated – when the sun causes water to disappear into the air; to vanish or disappear
4. Billowed – a rolling mass (of flame or smoke) that moves or flows outward like a wave
5. Sombre voice – a heavy, dark and gloomy voice
6. Defiantly – to boldly or strongly resist
7. Vibrate – to move back and forth quickly or to feel a quiver of emotion

About the authors:

Linda Joyce Bruce is a mother of three and an Economics and Industrial Psychology major from Stellenbosch University. In 2008 Linda published her first book, 'Motherhood and Me', through Oshun, an imprint of Random House Struik. She then founded COOL TO BE ME in 2009, where she dedicates her time, energy and knowledge to the development of social-emotional learning as an educational concept that can be taught to and learned by children in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of education.

Lisa Cohen is a Storyteller and Speech and Drama teacher with a post-graduate degree in Psychology. She is an experienced and skilled facilitator and is passionate about working with children. Through 'Grow a Tale' and COOL TO BE ME, she works with individuals and groups using a holistic approach to education, with an emphasis on personal development and creative expression.

Being truthful

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BEING CONFIDENT AND RESPONSIBLE

BEING TRUTHFUL

Get swallowed up by the big black smoke cloud with Bru'Me and his friends so King Jembo the giant can teach you how to choose right from wrong and truth from lies.

I smile inside and shout 'I am King,' when I am truthful about everything!

BEING CONFIDENT

Follow Bru'Me and his friends down the wild toboggan run to discover why you should feel confident.

This is me, look and see, it's just the way I want to be!

BEING RESPONSIBLE

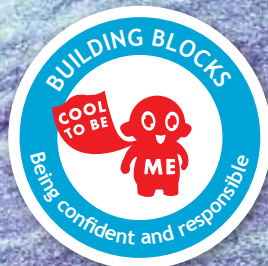
Join Bru'Me at 'Captain Able's Zero to Hero School of Responsibility' and learn to become responsible and fly like a superhero.

A superhero I can be, when I choose responsibility!

BOUNCING BACK

Flow down the river with Bru'Me and his friends and let THE BIG BOUNCE show you how to bounce back from mistakes, accidents and life disappointments.

When life around me seems to go wrong, I first learn the lesson and then move on!



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