In the heart of a village where the fields whispered secrets, there lived a boy named Jesse. His laughter was a sharp thing, like a knife that cut through the quiet. One sunless morning, he stood at the edge of the village, his voice a jagged cry: "Wolf! The shadow-wolf is here!" The villagers, their hands calloused from tending the earth, dropped their tools. They rushed to him, their faces etched with worry. But when they reached him, Jesse’s eyes danced with mischief. "No wolf here," he said, his voice a hiss. "Just a joke." The villagers’ relief turned to anger, their words sharp as thorns: "Fool us once, boy. Not again."

Weeks passed, the air thick with the scent of rotting harvests. Jesse shouted again, his voice a fractured echo: "Wolf! The shadow-wolf!" This time, the villagers hesitated. A grieving mother, her son lost to a fever years past, spat at his feet: "You’ll howl with the wolves someday, boy." The elder, who had once pulled Jesse from a well, shook his head: "Trust is a seed; once uprooted, it withers." They turned away, their footsteps heavy.

One twilight, the sky bled crimson. Jesse’s cries rose like smoke: "Wolf! Help!" But the villagers stood still, their ears deaf to his pleas. The shadow-wolf emerged from the trees, its fur the color of ash, its eyes twin voids. It took Jesse in a single, silent leap. The villagers heard only the wind, carrying the boy’s laughter—one last, chilling echo.

Years later, the shadow-wolf still roams the fields, its howl a dirge for the boy who cried lies. The villagers tend their land, their hands trembling, their hearts heavy with the weight of what they let happen. At Jesse’s grave, the earth is cracked like dried bones, and the wind whispers: "Trust is a seed; once uprooted, it withers."