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The Vanity Of Annie

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Annie was a very vain little girl who spent a great deal of time in front of her mirror, arranging her black curls and admiring her pretty pink cheeks. However, she did not try to be pleasant or even look pleasant.

One day, as she sat before her mirror, she heard someone laugh. Looking up, she saw a strange little face laughing at her. Two little hands rested on the top of the frame, and as Annie looked closer, a very little man jumped up and sat upon the top.

"Who are you?" asked Annie.

"I am an elf," the little creature told her.

"What do you want?" she said, in an angry tone.

"I want to talk to you," he answered. "And I think I will come down where you are," he said as he jumped to the top of her dressing table and, turning a pin cushion over, seated himself.

"I think you are very bold," said Annie. "I did not invite you in here, and you are upsetting my toilet articles. I wish you would go away."

"Not until I talk to you," replied the elf.

"I do not care to talk," said Annie.

"You needn't," said the elf. "I am going to do the talking. You are a very pretty girl."

"I know that," said Annie, rather pleased that he acknowledged it so frankly.

"That is what I want to talk about," said the elf. "You are too proud of your good looks and selfish. You do not help your mother, and you are cross to your little brother and sister. The girls at school do not like you because you never speak pleasantly to them. You are a disagreeable little girl."

"I do not care if I am," said Annie. "And you get right off my table." And as she



spoke, she gave the elf a push, but to her surprise, she could not move him.

"You need not try to move me," said the elf. "And if you do not behave better, I'll turn into a mouse."

Annie was afraid of a mouse and did not touch him again.

"Now I am going to take away your good looks until you are a more agreeable girl," continued the elf.

"You cannot do that," said Annie, jumping up from her seat and running across the room.

"Can't I?" said the elf. "Look in your mirror and see your face now."

Annie ran back to the mirror. There she saw a white face looking very cross. It was her hair and her body, but the face was changed.

"There!" said the elf. "Until you are more agreeable and kind to your mother and your little brother and sister, you will have to wear that face. That is the way you look to other people, and you must look at yourself as you really are for a while." As he said this, he popped behind the mirror.

Poor Annie! She pinched herself to make sure it was she, and she began to cry. But that made her look worse. So she bathed her face and went out to her mother, who was trying to quiet the baby.

"I'll take him out in his carriage," said Annie.

On her way to school, she met some of the girls, and she was so agreeable that one of them put her arm around Annie's waist as they walked along. She studied her lessons and gave her attention to the teacher instead of obsessing over her perfectly arranged curls. In a few days, she had forgotten all about her looks. She was so happy with the other girls. Her little sister and brother ran to meet her when she came from school because they were glad to see her now.

One morning, as Annie was combing her hair, she heard someone say, "Good morning!" And there was the elf again, but this time he was not laughing at her, although he looked pleasant.

"I have come to tell you how much you have improved in your manners," he said. "Go look in the mirror."

Annie did as he told her, and there, smiling at her, was her own pretty face.

"If you will be as pleasant and agreeable as you have been for the last few weeks, you will always be a pretty girl," the elf told her. "But remember, it will not matter how pretty your hair may be or how pink your cheeks are. If you are not agreeable and kindness is not in your heart, it will mar your good looks, and

no one will care for you."

Annie told him she would try to be a good girl because she was happier now than ever before. The elf stepped behind the mirror again, and although Annie looks for him sometimes when she has been cross, he has never appeared to her since. She knows he thinks she is a better girl than before he came to her.

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