

“The Tale of Annie and Her Evil Stepmother”

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Once upon a time, there lived a father, mother, and daughter. The daughter was named Annie, and was a very beautiful and nice young girl who loved her father and mother very much. One day, her mother became very ill, and before she died left Annie a ring and told her that if she was ever in trouble, she should place the ring on her right hand and everything would be taken care of.

Some time passed, and Annie's father decided it was time to remarry. He married a woman who had two daughters. This woman was very ugly, selfish, and was envious of Annie's beauty. Annie's stepmother had two daughters of her own who were the images of their mother. Annie's stepmother and stepsisters were very lazy and made her do most of the work around the house. Annie's father worked very long hours and traveled very often and was not around much.

One day, Annie's stepmother decided that she did not like Annie any more and wanted to get rid of her. She gave Annie some money and told her to go into the ghetto of their town and get a certain book since her and her daughters were bored and needed some new entertainment. Annie's stepmother knew the ghetto was a dangerous place and a nasty old witch owned the bookstore, so Annie was sure to never return. Annie followed her stepmother's orders and started out for the ghetto.

The ghetto was far away, and Annie was scared, but she kept on going because she did not want to upset her stepmother. While she was walking, Annie saw an old man sitting on the side of the road who had no eyes. He stopped her as soon as she stepped in front of him and told her that if she wanted to go any farther, she would have to pay him money. Remembering the money her stepmother gave her for the book, Annie took some

out and gave it to the eye-less man and went on her way. A little farther down the road, she came across another man who had no ears. He stopped her as soon as he heard her footsteps and told her that she had to pay him money if she wanted to go any farther. Annie gave him some of the money her stepmother gave her and went on her way. A little while later she came across a third man who had no nose. As soon as he smelled her, he also told her that she had to pay money in order to pass. Annie only had a small amount of money left, but she gave it all to him: she needed to get the book for her stepmother.

Eventually, Annie came across a bookstore that was on chicken legs and went inside. The only person in the store was an old woman who owned the little shop. Annie told her what book she needed, but when she went to pay for it, she had no money. The old woman, who was really a witch, became very angry and told Annie that she must stay there and complete tasks or else the old woman would eat her. Annie remembered the ring her mother had given her and agreed to help the old woman.

The old woman began counting the books in the store and told Annie that before she was done, she had to write a novel that was longer than the distance it took to get to the thrice tenth kingdom in the thrice tenth land. Annie went into the other room and placed her mother's ring on her right hand. Immediately a thick novel appeared before her. While Annie was waiting for the old woman to finish counting, she watched mice scurry about the store, re-arranging books, and wondered what they were doing. When the old woman was done counting, she came to check on Annie, hoping the girl would not be done and she could eat her for dinner. The old woman became very annoyed when

she saw the thick book, and told Annie that before dawn, she had to get rid of every piece of dust in the store. If she did not do this, the old woman would eat her.

The old woman left the room, and Annie again placed her mother's ring on her right hand. As if from nowhere, the store became spotless and not a speck of dust could be found in the whole place. When dawn arrived, the old woman woke up thinking she would enjoy a delicious breakfast of fresh Annie, but to her amazement, the store was spotless! Now the old woman was even more annoyed and told Annie that before the sun went down, she had to cook a feast that could feed 100 hungry soldiers.

The old woman left, and Annie placed her mother's ring on her right hand. Immediately, food appeared as if from nowhere. When the old woman returned, she was amazed at the abundance of food. The old woman told Annie that she could eat anything that was left once she finished eating. The old woman then told Annie that she could ask her any question. Annie remembered the three men she encountered on her way there and asked the old woman first about the man with no eyes. "He is my sight, and keeps watch over who enters the ghetto." Remembering the man with no ears, Annie asked the old woman about him. "He is my hearing, and listens for who enters the ghetto." Annie remembered the man with no nose. "He is my smell, and lets me know when Russians are entering the ghetto." The old woman asked Annie if she had any other questions. Annie remembered the mice that had rearranged books but did not ask about them. "No," she said. The old woman became pleased and told her that its not good to be too nosy and then asked Annie how she had completed the three tasks. Annie told her it was a

secret. The old woman became very angry and told Annie that secrets were not kept in her store. She gave Annie the book her stepmother wanted and sent her on her way.

On her way back, Annie saw once again the old woman's smell, hearing, and sight. When Annie returned home, her stepmother and stepsisters were anxious to read the book and grabbed it from her hands. As soon as they opened it, the three of them were sucked into the pages, and Annie was turned into a bookmark.

Prince William (☺) had been searching far and wide for a bride. His travels led him to the ghetto where the old woman lived. He encountered the man with no eyes, the man with no ears, and the man with no nose before he came across the old woman's store on chicken legs. He barged into the store and demanded that the old woman tell him where his bride was. The old woman refused to tell him and went on counting her books. Prince William became annoyed and started knocking books off shelves and saying random numbers to confuse the witch. The old woman told Prince William that if he did not stop she would eat him for dinner. Prince William grabbed one of her mice and said that if she did not tell him where his bride was, he would kill the mouse. The old woman agreed and told him where Annie's house was.

Prince William set out for his bride's house. When he got there, he went inside and saw nothing except a book. He picked it up and pulled out the bookmark. Annie immediately appeared, and Prince William whisked her away to his kingdom where they were married and lived happily ever after. I was there and drank too much champagne, and might have kissed Prince William (☺), but that is for me to know!