

The Lesson of Love

Once upon a time there lived a little girl whom everybody petted simply because she was beautiful! She had whole rooms full of toys, drawers and closets full of lovely clothes, servants who ran to gratify all her wishes, and so much money that she could not begin to spend it.

But little Nolita was not happy, and she made everybody around her miserable. She would slap her playmates and snatch her toys away if they did not play just as she wished, and was as rude and saucy to grown people as a child could be. No one corrected her, because she was so pretty, so daintily dressed and so rich. Every day she grew more selfish and fretful until at last the Good Fairies in pity took the case in hand.

After some consultation, one night they covered little Nolita's beautiful face with a dreadful wolf-mask which had great glaring eyes and cruel jaws.

"Now," said the Fairy Queen sadly, "little Nolita must wear this wolf-face until someone loves it away!"

In the morning when Nolita awoke she found everything changed! The servants who had humored every whim now fled from her, taking with them all her treasures and leaving only one blind deaf and dumb old woman to care for her. The friends who had petted her when she was beautiful, did not come near her. Her playmates screamed and ran whenever she came in sight.

At first Nolita was very angry and cried for hours; but no one approached to pacify her. She cried all one day and all one night; no one coming to comfort her. So it went on, until at last she began to think of the naughtiness that had brought her so much evil, and resolved to be good and gentle.

But no one believed in little Nolita now. No one gave her any credit although she tried hard to be kind. Before, no matter what naughty thing she did, people petted and praised her just

the same. Now, no matter how sincerely she tried to be good, she got only cold looks and few words. She gave all her toys away to the children she had been used to play with, but they were afraid of her. No child dared to let Nolita come near to play with her.

Months and months slipped away in loneliness. At last Nolita cried out in despair:

"It is no use! I can never make people love me! but if only they would let me love them, I would be happy!"

As these words fell from the wolf-lips, a sudden brightness came into the room. It was the smile of the Fairy Queen whom Nolita could see; and a voice as soft as the south wind spoke low in her ear:

"You can love them although they do not know. Help others when they do not see you, little Nolita."

So when all was dark little Nolita began to go about softly from house to house to find if there was something she could do to "help." Many a piece

of work left unfinished was found completed the next morning by the busy housewife, who smiled and said the brownies had never been so kind before. Little children found on their pillows the things they had longed for; they always thought they were gifts of the Good Fairies. When the babies cried in the dark, a gentle hand rocked the cradle and a low voice sang them to sleep again without waking the tired mothers.

And so, at last, Nolita began to be happier. One night in her rounds she found a little crying child whose father and mother were dead. It was sitting alone in the dark doorway of the silent house. Nolita took the little girl with her to her own home. All the night she tended her, but in the morning she called the blind old woman to care for her for fear the baby, too, would be afraid of her.

No one claimed the baby girl and she became Nolita's. Nolita made her clothes and prepared her food, but she had the blind old woman tend her in the day-time, and only came and stayed with her in the night. The child grew fast and learned to laugh and clap her hands when the darkness came—for she loved Nolita best.

"It is because she cannot see me," said Nolita quietly to herself. "She would never let me touch her again if she once saw my ugly face."

One dark midnight, there came a dreadful storm. The lightning blazed every second and the thunder crashed as if it would split the heavens. The poor little baby awoke frightened and sat up in bed calling and reaching out her arms. But Nolita did not dare to go near her when the lightning made the room so bright.

So Nolita ran to call the deaf old woman, but she could not awaken her.

The little girl's cry of terror sounded still more pitiful. The poor little thing was half dead with fright.

"She cannot be more afraid of me than of the storm," said Nolita, and she went softly to the little bed, calling the child's name. With a cry of rapture the baby sprang into her outstretched arms and clung to her neck, patting the hairy cheeks with one soft little hand and kissing the red wolf-mouth again and again. The thunder still crashed and the lightning scattered its awful brightness, but the child cuddled down in Nolita's arms and fell asleep to her singing.

In the early dawn, Nolita laid the little girl down and went to call the blind old woman. But as she went past the mirror she had a wonderful glad surprise. The wolf-face was gone! The baby lips had kissed it away. Nolita was seven times as beautiful as before. The first ray of sunshine rested like a crown on her soft hair. But she did not think of her beauty. She thought only of the little girl.

"Oh baby, baby!" she cried, "now I can be with you all day and we will be so happy!"

The baby awoke as Nolita came in and stretched up her hands with a glad little laugh.

The all the joy-bells in Fairyland began to ring, and that day the Good Fairies came once more to Nolita's home, and they brought back all her wealth and all her friends; and Nolita was happy ever after, for she had learned the Lesson of Love.

Rev. Dr. Parkhurst: It is only right that those who take no shame or blame to themselves for worry should realize that worry is simply the antithesis of faith, and is therefore as wrong as faith is right. If faith is a cardinal virtue, then is worry a cardinal vice, which it is the first duty of Christian faith to expel.

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