

by Deborah Klaassen

“The bright blue sea is much prettier,” thought little Stevie.

He didn’t understand why his parents wanted to see the ruins of a castle when they could build their own sand castles on the golden beach and eat ice cream all day. They were on a holiday! But his parents said he should learn something about the history of Antalya.

They walked past huge columns, marble steps and fire-blackened debris.

“Smile for the camera,” said his daddy.

Stevie climbed on top of a big block of marble and struck a Superman pose.

“You’re a darling,” said his mum. She kissed him on his forehead. His daddy took another photo. In the background were the crumbling walls of the castle.

When Stevie jumped back onto the path, a cloud of red dust puffed up around his feet. Through the dust, a sparkle caught his

eye. He groped for it, hoping that he had found a treasure, but it was only a fragment of a mirror. It was the size of Stevie's thumbnail. He turned it between his fingers and brought it to his face so that he could have a look at his summer freckles.

Little Stevie could not believe his eyes. He didn't see his own reflection, but the face of a Turkish man with huge lips. His upper lip reached all the way to the sky, and his lower lip was sagging to the floor. It was such a strange face that Stevie laughed out loud.

"I am your servant, Sultan," said the man. "Tell me your wish and I shall fulfill it."

"My name isn't Sultan," said the boy, "I'm Stevie."

Now it was the sprite's turn to laugh. "All right, Stevie, what do you want?"

"A treasure," said little Stevie.

A pile of gold coins, colourful gemstones and real diamonds appeared in front of him. Shocked, Stevie looked at his parents. They were following the dusty road and didn't have an inkling of what was going on.

"Make it disappear," Stevie whispered.

The sprite laughed again. His big lips bounced up and down. When Stevie looked up from the small mirror, the treasure was gone.

"Why are you laughing?" asked Stevie.

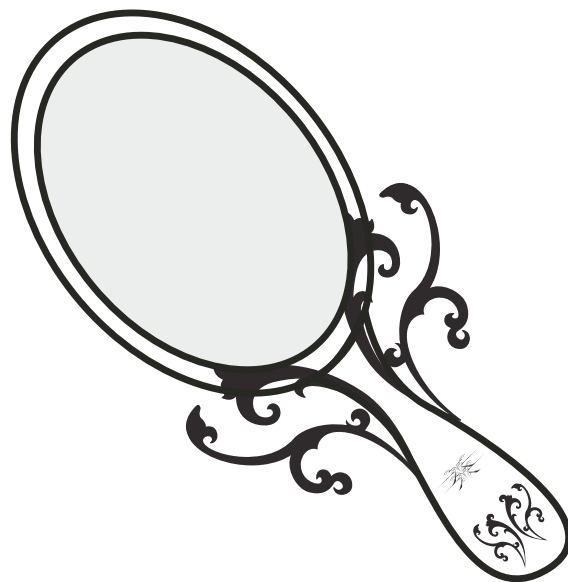
"When people find me, their first two wishes are always the same," said the sprite. "Give me a treasure, take the treasure away from me."

“Really?” asked little Stevie. “What else do people ask for?”

“You’re a smart one,” the big lipped sprite said. “Nobody has asked me that before. Do you see that castle?”

Stevie looked at the ruins behind him and nodded.

“That’s my work. A long, long time ago, the son of a lumberjack asked for a magnificent palace. But that wasn’t all. He wanted to live in the palace with the daughter of the king. She was the most beautiful girl in the world. I gave him everything he asked for. They kissed and hugged and they were happy.”



Color this picture

Before little Stevie’s eyes, the crumbling walls grew taller and trees emerged from the bare ground. The ruins were transforming into a gorgeous palace! He could even hear wedding bells and smell the fig trees in the orchard.

“So then what happened?” he asked.

“Because they didn’t need any staff to cook or clean the castle for them, the princess grew lonely,” said the sprite. “The king was sad too, because his daughter had disappeared. He sent a witch to go looking for her. The witch found the castle and befriended the lonely princess. But... the witch had promised the king she would

bring back his daughter.”

Little Stevie saw a young woman walk through the orchard. She had long black hair and a very pretty face, but she looked sad. She was talking to a hunched lady with a head scarf.

“The witch asked why she never saw any servants. The princess didn’t know. ‘You should ask your husband,’ said the witch, and that’s exactly what the princess did. Shall we follow her into the castle?”

“Yes,” said little Stevie, and he ran after the young woman. He went through the arched doorway and entered a spacious foyer with a winding oak staircase. At the top of the stairs, he could see the beautiful girl hug a handsome young man. They looked happy

“The lumberjack’s son didn’t want to see his wife sad,” said the sprite, “so he told her about me. But the next day, the princess passed the news on to her friend. ‘You should tell him how bored you are,’ said the witch, ‘maybe he’ll let you play with the mirror while he is away chopping wood.’ The lumberjack’s son loved the princess so much that he gave her what she asked for. But when the princess showed the mirror to the witch, the wicked woman snatched it from her hand and ordered me to return the princess to her father.”

Little Stevie watched the young woman vanish in a cloud of red dust.

“That’s so sad,” said Stevie.

“Yes,” said the sprite, “and then she told me to burn down the palace.”

Through the open door behind him, little Stevie saw the orchard catch fire. The flames came closer quickly.

“No!” Little Stevie could feel the heat on his cheeks and the smoke made his eyes tear. He wiped the tears from his face. When he looked again, there was nothing left of the castle but crumbling walls and blackened debris.

“Are you all right, darling?” asked his mummy.

She startled him and Stevie dropped the small piece of mirror.

“The palace was so beautiful,” he said. “It’s so sad it’s all gone.”

“Yes.” His daddy took another photo. “I knew you would love it.”

Stevie looked at the floor, but the magic mirror had disappeared.

“Thank you for taking me here,” he said to his parents. “I’ve learned a lot about the history of Antalya.”

