



### Anni's Things

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Storybook, fiction

Age: 4+

Anni has a mom and a dad and two older brothers: Ats and Saamuel. She also has a bed, a dresser, stuffed animals, and a doll house that Ats made her for her birthday. The little girl has a red umbrella and white slippers and a little backpack with gum stuck to the bottom for good. But if Anni pulls the backpack over her head, she's still able to lick the sticky goo!



## Reading sample

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### Grandma's Hair

Anni has Grandma's hair. But Anni no longer has her grandma. How can that be? Grandma got very sick, passed away, and was buried in a cemetery. It happened a long time ago, when Anni was still in her mommy's belly.

When Anni was born, she started growing fast and right away. Anni's hair grew even faster. Before long, it was dark, thick, and strong. That's when her parents started to say: "Our Anni has Grandma's hair." Even strange old ladies would comment: "That Anni of yours has her grandma's hair."

"What do you mean?" Anni asked, quite puzzled. She couldn't understand how a dead grandma's hair could get onto her own head.

"It's simple," Mom said. "I've got my late grandma's nose, for instance."

Now, Anni felt totally lost.

"You mean your grandma was buried without her nose?!"

"No, no," Mom replied, laughing. "She still had her nose. Mine just grew to be like hers."

"And my hair grew to be just like my grandma's!" Anni declared.

"That's right," Mom said. "And you also have your dad's eyes and my dimples."

Mom smiled and dimples appeared in her cheeks. Anni smiled back, and pretty little dimples popped up in her own cheeks as well. But then she felt troubled, so she asked:

"Does that mean I don't have anything that's all mine?"

"Of course you do," Mom said, giving her a hug. "Each one of us is all yours—with our eyes and hair and dimples and everything."

That idea seemed rather complicated, but it was pleasant all the same.



## **The Secret**

One time on the playground at preschool, Karolin walked up to Anni and said:

“Come here, I want to tell you something.” Anni followed her behind an old pear tree. That’s where Karolin whispered a secret into Anni’s ear.

“Don’t tell anyone else,” Karolin said. “This secret’s just for us.”

Anni was delighted that Karolin had shared a secret with her. Karolin had kept half of it, and now Anni had the other half. The secret was interesting and a little silly, which made Anni giggle to herself when she thought about it.

“What’re you giggling for?” Kaur asked in line for the toilet.

“Karolin and I have a secret,” Anni said.

“Tell me, too!” Kaur begged. But Anni just said: “I can’t. It’s only for Karolin and me.”

“Fine, then don’t,” Kaur grumbled. “I don’t really care. It’s got to be a dumb secret, anyway.”

Anni used the bathroom, went over to Karolin, and told her what Kaur had said.

“Kaur’s the one who’s dumb,” Karolin snorted. “He’s just jealous that he doesn’t have a secret like ours. It’s a really great secret. And really secret, too. Don’t you tell anybody, you promise?”

“I promise,” Anni said.

Soon, Mom came to pick Anni up from preschool.

“You know what?” Anni gushed as soon as Mom lifted her into the child seat on the back of her bike. “Karolin and I have a secret. You want to hear it?”

“I’d love to, but I’m not allowed,” Mom said. “Secrets are to be kept a secret, otherwise they’re not actually secret!”

That evening, Anni went to her dad and gave him a sly grin.

“Do you know what I’ve got?” she asked.

“Nope,” he answered. “Show me!”

“I’ve got a secret,” Anni said. “And it’s the kind you can’t even show.”

“A secret, huh?” Dad said, nodding.

“Well, then I won’t ask and we’ll just leave it there.” But he asked all the same: “Is it a good secret?”

“Yeah, it’s really good,” Anni replied.

“And really secret.”

All of a sudden, Anni felt tears pricking the corners of her eyes. She desperately wanted to tell *someone*. It felt like the secret was squirming inside of her and wanted everyone to know.

Finally, it was time for bed. Anni snuggled under her blanket, Mom sang her a lullaby, gave her a kiss, and turned off the light. Then, Anni took her stuffed wolf, lifted up its ear, and whispered:

“Hey, wolf—I’m going to tell you a secret.”

Anni knew that stuffed animals can’t talk, so she didn’t wait for the wolf to reply. But as soon as she’d shared the secret, she added just in case:

“And make sure you don’t tell anyone about it. Not even my duck or my doll or my teddy bear. The secret’s just for you, me, and Karolin.”



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### The Invitation

Anni started going to preschool last autumn. At first, she found it a little hard to get used to. All the kids were strangers and Anni only played by herself for a while. Slowly but surely, she got to know the other kids. And now, she's even excited to go! She has a lot of friends at preschool already: Linda and Otto and Marissa and Aaron. And Karolin is her best friend of all.

One afternoon when Anni's dad came to pick her up, he found a little letter on the top shelf of her nook.

"Check it out, Anni!" he said.

"Someone's written you a letter. Let's walk down to the river and read what they wrote.

Anni was ecstatic. She'd gotten a letter!

When Anni and her dad had finished their ice creams on a bench on the riverbank, they wiped their fingers clean and Dad took the letter out of his pocket. It was written on pretty daffodil-colored paper with colorful maple leaves drawn in the corners.

Dad read the letter to Anni:

#### INVITATION

My dear friend, Anni. Please attend my birthday party, which will be held on October 7<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. in the Dots and Stripes Playroom at 19 Kuperjanov Street, second floor.

My mom's phone number is: 558 93893.

Your friend,

Karolin

"Oh, wow!" Anni gasped. "It's a letter from Karolin!"

"That's right, Anni," Dad said cheerfully.

"She's inviting you to a party."

Anni grinned.

"Read it to me one more time, please," she asked.

So, Dad read:

"Invitation. My dear friend, Anni. Please attend my birthday party, which will be held

on October 7<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. in the Dots and Stripes Playroom at 19 Kuperjanov Street, second floor. My Mom's phone number is: 558 93893. Your friend, Karolin."

Anni listened attentively and when Dad repeated the part that went "your friend, Karolin," she grinned again. She also liked the funny-sounding "19 Kuperjanov Street".

When they got home, Anni asked her dad for the letter and ran it over to her mom, not even taking off her sandals indoors.

"Look!" she shouted. "I got an invitation!"

"Oh-ho!" Mom exclaimed. "From whom?"

"You'll have to read it for yourself," Anni said. "Then you'll find out."

Anni sat down on the couch next to her mom and urged her:

"Well, go ahead!"

So, Mom read aloud:

"Invitation. My dear friend, Anni. Please attend my birthday party, which will be held at on October 7<sup>th</sup> 6 p.m. in the Dots and Stripes Playroom at 19 Kuperjanov Street, second floor. My mom's phone number is: 558 93893. Your friend, Karolin.

"How wonderful!" Mom exclaimed when she'd finished reading, and gave Anni a hug. "You've made yourself a friend!"

"Yeah!" Anni cheered. "Karolin wrote 'your friend, Karolin', and that means we're friends!"

Anni told her brothers the news as soon as they came home from the skate park. And they had to read the letter out loud to her, too.

"It's an invitation," Anni explained. "My friend Karolin wants me to come to her birthday party. It's at 19 Kuperjanov Street!"

"Cool," Mats and Samuel both said.

That night when Anni was getting ready to go to sleep, Mom came in to read her a bedtime story. But Anni said:

"Let's read Karolin's invitation tonight instead."

"But it's so short," Mom protested.

"We can read it twice, then! Please . . ."

So, Mom agreed and started to read.

Anni whispered along with her, because she'd already memorized Karolin's whole letter. And

at the end, when Mom read “your friend, Karolin”, Anni’s smile automatically returned.

Anni and Karolin have been great friends ever since that birthday. And no doubt Anni will also invite Karolin to her own birthday party next spring. Anni doesn’t know what playroom she’ll have the party at yet, but she reckons it might be one on Kuperjanov Street.

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### The Pullup Bar

Anni likes to run and jump and do somersaults, but most of all, she likes to hang on things. That’s a fact! Whenever Anni spots something good to dangle from, she grabs on to it immediately and lifts her legs off the ground. She hangs from the garden gate and bus poles. And the jungle gym at the playground. And in cafés, Anni hangs from the edge of the counter so the salesperson only sees her fingers.

Whenever Anni hangs from the bookshelf at home, Dad scolds her and says: “Don’t hang from that, Anni. It’ll come off the wall.” And when Anni hangs from the edge of the bathtub, her big brother Samuel warns: “Don’t hang from there—it’s slippery. You’ll fall and get hurt. And we’re supposed to be brushing our teeth right now, anyway.”

Whenever Dad comes home from work and walks in through the gate, Anni wants him to pick her up. But instead of running over to him, she dangles from a branch on the apple tree and yells:

“Daddy! Daddy! Come help! There are mean sharks down there!”

Dad then runs to Anni and scoops her up in his arms.

When Anni wants Mom to read to her, she hangs from the doorknob and squeals: “Come save me! I’m going to fall off this cliff!”

Mom comes to the rescue, of course.

And then, Anni says:

“Thanks, Mommy! Now, read me a chapter from *Piia Biscuit!*”

One time, Dad brought home a funny-looking pipe. He screwed it into the wall in Anni’s bedroom and said:

“Look, Anni—this is a pull-up bar. I know you like to hang on things, and this is made just for hanging. Isn’t that slick?”

“Sure is,” Anni said, and hung from it for a little while. Then she hung a little longer, but it wasn’t all that fun anymore.

“I think I’m not a fan of hanging anymore,” Anni announced, and started tossing balloons over the pull-up bar instead.

But sometimes when no one is looking, Anni still likes to go into the bathroom and hang from the edge of the tub a little.

