



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Dummy That Lived

L. Frank Baum

In all Fairyland there is no more mischievous a person than Tanko-Mankie the Yellow Ryl. He flew through the city one afternoon—quite invisible to mortal eyes, but seeing everything himself—and noticed a figure of a wax lady standing behind the big plate glass window of Mr. Floman's department store.

The wax lady was beautifully dressed, and extended in her stiff left hand was a card bearing the words:

"RARE BARGIN!

This Stylish Costume

(Imported from Paris)

Former Price, \$20,

REDUCED TO ONLY \$19.98."

This impressive announcement had drawn before the window a crowd of women shoppers, who stood looking at the wax lady with critical eyes.

Tanko-Mankie laughed to himself the low, gurgling little laugh that always means mischief. Then he flew close to the wax figure and breathed twice upon its forehead.

From that instant the dummy began to live, but so dazed and astonished was she at the unexpected sensation that she continued to stand stupidly staring at the women outside and holding out the placard as before.

The ryl laughed again and flew away. Anyone but Tanko-Mankie would have remained to help the wax lady out of the troubles that were sure to overtake her; but this naughty elf thought it rare fun to turn the inexperienced lady loose in a cold and heartless world and leave her to shift for herself.

Fortunately it was almost six o'clock when the dummy first realized that she was alive, and before she had collected her new thoughts and decided what to do a man came around and drew down all the window shades, shutting off the view from the curious shoppers.

Then the clerks and cashiers and floorwalkers and cash girls went home and the store was closed for the night, although the sweepers and scrubbers remained to clean the floors for the following day.

The window inhabited by the wax lady was boxed in, like a little room, one small door being left at the side for the window-trimmer to creep in and out of. So the scrubbers never noticed that the dummy, when left to herself, dropped the placard to the floor and sat down upon a pile of silks to wonder who she was, where she was, and how she happened to be alive.



For you must consider, dear reader, that in spite of her size and her rich costume, in spite of her pink cheeks and fluffy yellow hair, this lady was very young—no older, in reality, than a baby born but half an hour. All she knew of the world was contained in the glimpse she had secured of the busy street facing her window; all she knew of people lay in the actions of the group of women which had stood before her on the other side of the window pane and criticised the fit of her dress or remarked upon its stylish appearance.

So she had little enough to think about, and her thoughts moved somewhat slowly; yet one thing she really decided upon, and that was not to remain in the window and be insolently stared at by a lot of women who were not nearly so handsome or well dressed as herself.

By the time she reached this important conclusion, it was after midnight; but dim lights were burning in the big, deserted store, so she crept through the door of her window and walked down the long aisles, pausing now and then to look with much curiosity at the wealth of finery confronting her on every side.

When she came to the glass cases filled with trimmed hats she remembered having seen upon the heads of the women in the street similar creations. So she selected one that suited her fancy and placed it carefully upon her yellow locks. I won't attempt to explain what instinct it was that made her glance into a near-by mirror to see if the hat was straight, but this she certainly did. It didn't correspond with her dress very well, but the poor thing was too young to have much taste in matching colors.

When she reached the glove counter she remembered that gloves were also worn by the women she had seen. She took a pair from the case and tried to fit them upon her stiff, wax-coated fingers; but the gloves were too small and ripped in the seams. Then she tried another pair, and several others, as well; but hours passed before she finally succeeded in getting her hands covered with a pair of pea-green kids.

Next she selected a parasol from a large and varied assortment in the rear of the store. Not that she had any idea what it was used for; but other ladies carried such things, so she also would have one.

When she again examined herself critically in the mirror she decided her outfit was now complete, and to her inexperienced eyes there was no perceptible difference between her and the women who had stood outside the window. Whereupon she tried to leave the store, but found every door fast locked.

The wax lady was in no hurry. She inherited patience from her previous existence. Just to be alive and to wear beautiful clothes was sufficient enjoyment for her at present. So she sat down upon a stool and waited quietly until daylight.

When the janitor unlocked the door in the morning the wax lady swept past him and walked with stiff but stately strides down the street. The poor fellow was so completely whuckered at seeing the well-known wax lady leave her window and march away from the store that he fell over in a heap and only saved himself from fainting by striking his funny bone against the doorstep. When he recovered his wits she had turned the corner and disappeared.

The wax lady's immature mind had reasoned that, since she had come to life, her evident duty was to mix with the world and do whatever other folks did. She could not realize how different she was from people of flesh and blood; nor did she know she was the first dummy that had ever lived, or that she owed her unique experience to Tanko-Mankie's love of mischief. So ignorance gave her a confidence in herself that she was not justly entitled to.

It was yet early in the day, and the few people she met were hurrying along the streets. Many of them turned into restaurants and eating houses, and following their example the wax lady also entered one and sat upon a stool before a lunch counter.

"Coffee 'n' rolls!" said a shop girl on the next stool.

"Coffee 'n' rolls!" repeated the dummy, and soon the waiter placed them before her. Of course she had no appetite, as her constitution, being mostly wood, did not require food; but she watched the shop girl, and saw her put the coffee to her mouth and drink it. Therefore the wax lady did the same, and the next instant was surprised to feel the hot liquid trickling out between her wooden ribs. The coffee also blistered her wax lips, and so disagreeable was the experience that she arose and left the restaurant, paying no attention to the demands of the waiter for "20 cents, mum." Not that she intended to defraud him, but the poor creature had no idea what he meant by "20 cents, mum."

As she came out she met the window trimmer at Floman's store. The man was rather near-sighted, but seeing something familiar in the lady's features he politely raised his hat. The wax lady also raised her hat, thinking it the proper thing to do, and the man hurried away with a horrified face.

Then a woman touched her arm and said:

"Beg pardon, ma'am; but there's a price-mark hanging on your dress behind."

"Yes, I know," replied the wax lady, stiffly; "it was originally \$20, but it's been reduced to \$19.98."

The woman looked surprised at such indifference and walked on. Some carriages were standing at the edge of the sidewalk, and seeing the dummy hesitate a driver approached her and touched his cap.

"Cab, ma'am?" he asked.

"No," said she, misunderstanding him; "I'm wax."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, and looked after her wonderingly.

"Here's yer mornin' paper!" yelled a newsboy.

"Mine, did you say?" she asked.

"Sure! Chronicle, 'Quirer, R'public 'n' 'Spatch! Wot'll ye 'ave?"

"What are they for?" inquired the wax lady, simply.

"W'y, ter read, o' course. All the news, you know."

She shook her head and glanced at a paper.

"It looks all speckled and mixed up," she said. "I'm afraid I can't read."

"Ever ben to school?" asked the boy, becoming interested.

"No; what's school?" she inquired.

The boy gave her an indignant look.

"Say!" he cried, "ye'r just a dummy, that's wot ye are!" and ran away to seek a more promising customer.

"I wonder that he means," thought the poor lady. "Am I really different in some way from all the others? I look like them, certainly; and I try to act like them; yet that boy called me a dummy and seemed to think I acted queerly."

This idea worried her a little, but she walked on to the corner, where she noticed a street car stop to let some people on. The wax lady, still determined to do as others did, also boarded the car and sat down quietly in a corner.

After riding a few blocks the conductor approached her and said:

"Fare, please!"

"What's that?" she inquired, innocently.

"Your fare!" said the man, impatiently.

She stared at him stupidly, trying to think what he meant.

"Come, come!" growled the conductor, "either pay up or get off!"

Still she did not understand, and he grabbed her rudely by the arm and lifted her to her feet. But when his hand came in contact with the hard wood of which her arm was made the fellow was filled with surprise. He stooped down and peered into her face, and, seeing it was wax instead of flesh, he gave a yell of fear and jumped from the car, running as if he had seen a ghost.

At this the other passengers also yelled and sprang from the car, fearing a collision; and the motorman, knowing something was wrong, followed suit. The wax lady, seeing the others run, jumped from the car last of all, and stepped in front of another car coming at full speed from the opposite direction.

She heard cries of fear and of warning on all sides, but before she understood her danger she was knocked down and dragged for half a block.

When the car was brought to a stop a policeman reached down and pulled her from under the wheels. Her dress was badly torn and soiled. Her left ear was entirely gone, and the left side of her head was caved in; but she quickly scrambled to her feet and asked for her hat. This a gentleman had already picked up, and when the policeman handed it to her and noticed the great hole in her head and the hollow place it disclosed, the poor fellow trembled so frightfully that his knees actually knocked together.

"Why—why, ma'am, you're killed!" he gasped.

"What does it mean to be killed?" asked the wax lady.

The policeman shuddered and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"You're it!" he answered, with a groan.

The crowd that had collected were looking upon the lady wonderingly, and a middle-aged gentleman now exclaimed:

"Why, she's wax!"

"Wax!" echoed the policeman.

"Certainly. She's one of those dummies they put in the windows," declared the middle-aged man.

The people who had collected shouted: "You're right!" "That's what she is!" "She's a dummy!"

"Are you?" inquired the policeman, sternly.

The wax lady did not reply. She began to fear she was getting into trouble, and the staring crowd seemed to embarrass her.

Suddenly a bootblack attempted to solve the problem by saying: "You guys is all wrong! Can a dummy talk? Can a dummy walk? Can a dummy live?"

"Hush!" murmured the policeman. "Look here!" and he pointed to the hole in the lady's head. The newsboy looked, turned pale and whistled to keep himself from shivering.

A second policeman now arrived, and after a brief conference it was decided to take the strange creature to headquarters. So they called a hurry-up wagon, and the damaged wax lady was helped inside and driven to the police station. There the policeman locked her in a cell and hastened to tell Inspector Mugg their wonderful story.

Inspector Mugg had just eaten a poor breakfast, and was not in a pleasant mood; so he roared and stormed at the unlucky policemen, saying they were themselves dummies to bring such a fairy tale to a man of sense. He also hinted that they had been guilty of intemperance.

The policemen tried to explain, but Inspector Mugg would not listen; and while they were still disputing in rushed Mr. Floman, the owner of the department store.

"I want a dozen detectives, at once, inspector!" he cried.

"What for?" demanded Mugg.

"One of the wax ladies has escaped from my store and eloped with a \$19.98 costume, a \$4.23 hat, a \$2.19 parasol and a 76-cent pair of gloves, and I want her arrested!"

While he paused for breath the inspector glared at him in amazement.

"Is everybody going crazy at the same time?" he inquired, sarcastically. "How could a wax dummy run away?"

"I don't know; but she did. When my janitor opened the door this morning he saw her run out."

"Why didn't he stop her?" asked Mugg.

"He was too frightened. But she's stolen my property, your honor, and I want her arrested!" declared the storekeeper.

The inspector thought for a moment.

"You wouldn't be able to prosecute her," he said, "for there's no law against dummies stealing."

Mr. Floman sighed bitterly.

“Am I to lose that \$19.98 costume and the \$4.25 hat and—”

“By no means,” interrupted Inspector Mugg. “The police of this city are ever prompt to act in defense of our worthy citizens. We have already arrested the wax lady, and she is locked up in cell No. 16. You may go there and recover your property, if you wish, but before you prosecute her for stealing you’d better hunt up a law that applies to dummies.”

“All I want,” said Mr. Floman, “is that \$19.98 costume and—”

“Come along!” interrupted the policeman. “I’ll take you to the cell.”

But when they entered No. 16 they found only a lifeless dummy lying prone upon the floor. Its wax was cracked and blistered, its head was badly damaged, and the bargain costume was dusty, soiled and much bedraggled. For the mischief-loving Tanko-Mankie had flown by and breathed once more upon the poor wax lady, and in that instant her brief life ended.

“It’s just as I thought,” said Inspector Mugg, leaning back in his chair contentedly. “I knew all the time the thing was a fake. It seems sometimes as though the whole world would go crazy if there wasn’t some level-headed man around to bring ’em to their senses. Dummies are wood an’ wax, an’ that’s all there is of ’em.”

“That may be the rule,” whispered the policeman to himself, “but this one were a dummy as lived!”

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