



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Gingerbread Boy

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Polly and Peter had to stay home one Saturday when mother was ill.

Mother said, "Polly, take my place in the kitchen, please, and, Peter, you must amuse the baby."

Polly went down stairs, put on her little all-over apron, and sat down on the kitchen stool.

She sighed: "Oh dear, something always happens on a sunny Saturday—when I want to play! We have to miss the school picnic today; but I will smile, and smile, and something nice will surely happen."

With that, the dimples began to play hide and seek upon her face, and she heard an airy, fairy voice calling:

"Little Fairy Help-You-Out,
Blithe and gay beyond a doubt,
I'll introduce you with much joy,
To the dear little, queer little Gingerbread Boy!"

"Who are you?" cried Polly.

She looked high and low, but no one was to be seen.

Polly smiled again, and said: "I have a new apron that I was going to wear to the picnic."

"The better to cook with my dear," said a sugary voice.

Polly looked about, but could not see the Gingerbread Boy, though she felt sure he had spoken.

Polly said: "I will make some gingerbread cookies, and see what comes of it."

As Polly mixed the cookies a sugary voice cried:

"More sugar, more spice,
Make everything nice."

Then the most wonderful thing happened!

The little rolling-pin that Polly was using turned to gold; and how it did roll out those gingerbread cookies! Then the cutter turned to gold, and cut them out into queer shapes and sizes.

The currants jumped upon the cookies making funny faces upon them.

They leaped into the pans, and all Polly had to do was to set them into the oven to bake.

She was so happy, she swept the kitchen and washed the dishes, and would have forgotten the cookies, I am sure, if she had not heard a voice calling:

“Try to think what you’re about,
Better take the cookies out;
Someone’s tapping at the door
Of the oven, as before!”

Sure enough, Polly heard a rapping, tapping, and when she opened the oven door she heard the cookies call in a happy chorus:

“We’re brown and pretty as any toy,
Hurrah, hurrah for the Gingerbread Boy!”

As Polly took the cookies out of the pan, she saw one was shaped like a regular boy, and before she could say a word, out he jumped and sat down on the ice box, fanning himself with a geranium leaf.

Polly said, “I must go and call Peter. I must introduce him to the Gingerbread Boy!”

Peter had been thinking about the picnic, but he tried to amuse the baby by playing ball, and at this very minute in came Polly to tell about the Gingerbread Boy.

To their surprise the Gingerbread Boy said,

“If you will eat my hands and feet
You’ll find you’ve something very sweet.”

“Oh, oh,” cried the children, “It would not be polite to eat you!” But all this time they crept nearer and nearer.



The Gingerbread Boy said:

“Come, nibble my fingers; come nibble my toes!
I can run—that’s the way the Fairy Tale goes!”

Peter nibbled the toes and Polly nibbled the fingers, while the baby stood by and clapped his hands with delight.

The Gingerbread Boy said;

“Molasses is used to sweeten, sweeten,
I was made to be eaten, eaten!”

The children nibbled away until only the Gingerbread Boy’s voice was left, but he sang gaily:

“To be happy and good I try,
Dear boys and girls, good bye, good bye.”

So he was all gone!

All this time the gingerbread cookies looked out of their large currant eyes, and Fairy Help-You-Out came into the kitchen and whispered into Polly’s ear and Peter’s ear and the baby’s ear something about a picnic.

The children clapped their hands with delight as three little baskets sailed down on the kitchen floor.

Each basket was full of good things to eat, and the baby’s basket had a bottle of milk in it, of course!

They were having the finest kind of a picnic right at home, in their own kitchen, when a voice called:

“I would like to come—I don’t wish to annoy,
Have you any room for the Gingerbread Boy?”

The children rubbed their eyes to see if they were awake, and the Gingerbread Boy jumped in the window and sat on the ice box, fanning himself with a nasturtium leaf.

He laughed until his sides shook, saying:

“Don’t wake your mother, don’t make a noise,
The woods are full of Gingerbread Boys.”

Fairy Help-You-Out faded away, because she was no longer needed. For all I know, the Gingerbread Boy is with the children yet.



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