

L. FRANK BAUM



JOHN DOUGH
AND THE CHERUB

ILLUSTRATED EDITION

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John Dough and the Cherub

The Great Elixir

Over the door appeared a weather-worn sign that read: "JULES GROGRANDE, BAKER." In one of the windows, painted upon a sheet of cardboard, was another sign: "Home-made Bread by the Best Modern Machinery." There was a third sign in the window beyond the doorway, and

this was marked upon a bit of wrapping-paper, and said: "Fresh Gingerbread Every Day."

When you opened the door, the top of it struck a brass bell suspended from the ceiling and made it tinkle merrily. Hearing the sound, Madame Leontine Grogrande would come from her little room back of the shop and stand behind the counter and ask you what you would like to purchase.

Madame Leontine or Madame Tina, as the children called her was quite short and quite fat; and she had a round, pleasant face that was good to look upon. She moved somewhat slowly, for the rheumatism troubled her more or less; but no one minded if Madame was a bit slow in tying up her parcels. For surely no cakes or buns in all the town were so delicious or fresh as those she sold, and she had a way of giving the biggest cakes to the smallest girls and boys who came into her shop, that proved she was fond of children and had a generous heart.

People loved to come to the Grogrande Bakery. When one opened the door an exquisite fragrance of newly baked bread and cakes greeted the nostrils; and, if you were not hungry when you entered, you were sure to become so when you examined and smelled the delicious pies and doughnuts and gingerbread and buns with which the shelves and show-cases were stocked. There were trays of French candies, too; and because all the goods were fresh and wholesome the bakery was well patronized and did a thriving business.

The reason no one saw Monsieur Jules in the shop was because his time was always occupied in the bakery in the rear a long, low room filled with ovens and tables covered with pots and pans and dishes (which the skillful baker

used for mixing and stirring) and long shelves bearing sugars and spices and baking-powders and sweet-smelling extracts that made his wares taste so sweet and agreeable.



The bake-room was three times as big as the shop; but Monsieur Jules needed all the space in the preparation of the great variety of goods required by his patrons, and he prided himself on the fact that his edibles were fresh-made each day. In order to have the bread and rolls ready at breakfast time he was obliged to get up at three o'clock every morning, and so he went to bed about sundown.

On a certain forenoon the door of the shop opened so abruptly that the little brass bell made a furious jingling.

An Arab dashed into the room, stopped short, looked around with a bewildered air, and then rushed away again and banged the door after him.

Madame looked surprised, but said nothing. She recognized the Arab to be a certain Ali Dubh, living in the neighborhood, who was accustomed to purchase a loaf from her every morning. Perhaps he had forgotten his money, Madame thought.

When the afternoon was half over he entered again, running as if fiends were at his heels. In the center of the room he paused, slapped his forehead despairingly with both palms, and said in a wailing voice:

"They're after me!"

Next moment he dashed away at full speed, even forgetting to close the door; so Madame came from behind the counter and did it herself. She delayed a moment to gaze at the figure of Ali Dubh racing up the street. Then he turned the corner of an alley and disappeared from view.

Things did not startle Madame easily; but the Arab's queer behavior aroused in her a mild curiosity, and while she

stood looking through the glass of the door, and wondering what had excited the man, she saw two strange forms glide past her shop with a stealthy motion and proceed in the same direction Ali Dubh had taken.

They were also Arabs, without a doubt; for although their forms were muffled in long cloaks, the turbans they wore and the glint of their dark, beady eyes proclaimed them children of the desert.

When they came to the alley where Ali Dubh had disappeared, the two strangers were joined by a third, who crept up to them with the sly, cat-like tread Madame had noted, and seemed to confer with them. Afterward one turned to the east, a second continued up the street, and the third stole into the alley.

"Yes," thought Madame, "they are after Ali Dubh, sure enough. But if they move so slowly they are not likely to catch the poor fellow at all."

Now, Madame knew very little of her queer customer; for although he made a daily visit to the bakery for a loaf and a few cakes, he was of a gloomy disposition, and never stopped for a chat or a bit of gossip. It was his custom to silently make his simple purchases and then steal softly away.

Therefore his excited actions upon this eventful day were really remarkable, and the good lady was puzzled how to explain them.

She sat late in the shop that evening, burning a dingy oil lamp that swung in the center of the room. For her rheumatism was more painful than usual, and she dreaded to go to bed and waken Monsieur Jules with her moanings.

The good man was slumbering peacefully upstairs she could hear his lusty snores even where she sat and it was a shame to disturb him when he must rise so early.

So she sat in her little room at the end of the counter, trying to knit by the light of a flickering candle, and rocking back and forth in her chair with a monotonous motion.

Suddenly the little bell tinkled and a gust of air entered the shop, sending the mingled odors of baked stuff, whirling and scurrying about the room in a most fragrant manner. Then the door closed, and Madame laid down her knitting and turned to greet the new-comer.

To her astonishment, it proved to be Ali Dubh. His brown cheeks were flushed, and his glittering black eyes roamed swiftly over the shop before they turned full upon the Madame's calm face.

"Good!" he exclaimed, "you are alone."

"It is too late for trade. I am going to bed presently," said Madame.

"I am in great trouble, and you must help me," returned the Arab, hastily. "Lock your door and come with me into your little room, so that no one can see us through the street windows."

Madame hesitated. The request was unusual, and she knew nothing of the Arab's history. But she reflected that if the man attempted robbery or other mischief she could summon Monsieur Jules with a cry. Also, her interest had been aroused by Ali Dubh's queer behavior during the day.

While she thought the matter over the Arab himself locked the street door and hurried into the little room, where Madame composedly joined him a moment later.

"How can I help you?" she asked, picking up her knitting again.

"Listen!" said the Arab. "I must tell you all. You must know the truth!" He put his hand in a pocket of his loose robe and drew out a small flask. It was no bigger than two fingers and was made of pure gold, upon which strange characters had been richly engraved.

"This," said the Arab, in a low, impressive voice, "is the Great Elixir!"

"What does that mean?" asked Madame, glancing at the flask doubtfully.

"The Great Elixir? Ah, it is the Essence of Vitality, the Water of Life --the Greatest Thing in all the World!"

"I don't understand," said Madame.

"Not understand? Why, a drop of the priceless liquid which this Golden Flask contains, if placed upon your tongue, would send new life coursing through your veins. It would give you power, strength, vitality greater than youth itself!

You could do anything accomplish wonders perform miracles if you but tasted this precious liquid!"

"How odd!" exclaimed Madame, beginning to feel bewildered. And then she asked: "Where did you get it?"

"Ah! that is the story. That is what you must know," answered Ali Dubh. "It is centuries old, the Great Elixir. There is no more of it in all the world. The contents of this flask came into the keeping of the Ancestor of the Chief of my Tribe whom we call a Shiek and has been handed down from father to son as an heirloom more priceless than diamonds. The Chief of my Tribe, its last owner, carried the flask always hidden in his breast. But one day, when he and I were hunting together, a mad camel trampled the Shiek to his death, and with his last breath he gave the Great Elixir into my keeping. The Shiek had no son, and the flask was really mine. But many other Arab Shieks longed for the treasure and sought to gain it. So I escaped and wandered over the world. I came here, thinking I was safe from pursuit. But they have followed me! "

"All the way from Arabia?" asked Madame,

"Yes. To-day I saw them. They know my lodgings. They are secretly hidden near, and before morning I know they plot to kill me and secure the Great Elixir. But for a time I have escaped them. I came here unseen. You must help me. You must take charge of the Great Elixir and keep it safely for me."

"Nonsense!" cried Madame, becoming aroused at last.

"Do not say that, I beg of you," exclaimed the eager Arab. "You are honest I know you are! And they will never suspect you of having the Golden Flask."

"Perhaps not," said Madame, "and then, again, they may. My business is to tend the shop, and I am not going to get myself killed by a lot of desperate foreigners just to oblige you. Monsieur Ali Dubh! Take your Great Elixir to someone else. I don't want it."

For a minute the Arab seemed in despair. Then his face suddenly brightened.

"You suffer from rheumatism, do you not?" he asked.

"Yes, it's pretty bad to-night," she replied.

"Then I will cure it! I will cure your pains forever if you will keep my precious Elixir in secret until I come to reclaim it."

Madame hesitated, for just then she had a very bad twinge indeed.

"You think you can cure my pains?" she asked.

"I know it!" declared the Arab. He put his hand in a pocket and drew out another flask a mate to the one containing the Great Elixir; only this was made of solid silver instead of gold.

"This flask," said Ali Dubh, "contains a positive cure for rheumatism. It will not fail. It never has failed. Take it and use it to make yourself well. Five drops in a bowl of water are enough. Bathe well the limbs that ache, and all pain will be gone forever. Accept it, gracious Madame, and keep for me the other flask in safe hiding until my enemies have gone away."

Madame was a practical woman, and it seemed an easy thing to do as the Arab desired. If she could get relief from those dreadful pains it would be well worth while to undertake a little trouble and responsibility by caring for Ali Dubh's other and more precious flask.

"Very well," said she. "I agree."

The Arab's face flushed with joy.

"Good," he cried; "I am saved! Guard well my precious flask the one of gold. Show it to no one not even to your good husband. Remember that diamonds and rubies could not buy the Great Elixir the marvelous Essence of Vitality. As for the silver flask, I give it to you freely. Its contents will cure all your ailments. And now, good night, and may Allah bless you!"

Swiftly he stole from the room, unlocked the street door and vanished into the darkness. And Madame sat looking thoughtfully at the flasks.

2. The Two Flasks

Presently she remembered that the front door was yet unlocked. So she trotted out into the shop, bolted the door securely, drew down the curtains, -and put out the dim light that had burned over the counter. Then Madame returned to the little room and looked at the two flasks again.

Aside from her rheumatism the good lady had one other physical weakness; she was color-blind. That is, she could seldom distinguish one color from another, and was quite liable to think blue was green and green was yellow. Many people have this trouble with their eyes; but it never had bothered Madame especially in waiting upon her customers.

Now, however, when she came back into her room and gazed at the two flasks upon her table, she had no idea

which one was of gold and which of silver for the weakness of her eyes prevented her from telling them apart by means of their color.

"Let me see," she murmured; "this must be the flask which the Arab first drew from his pocket. No I think this was the one." But the more she hesitated the more confused she became, and in the end she told herself honestly that she had not the faintest clue to guide her in knowing which flask contained the Essence of Vitality and which the cure for rheumatism.

And the pains were now so bad that she was anxious to cure them without a moment's delay.

The engraving on the two flasks was nearly the same; and if some of those queer foreign characters really differed, Madame did not know it. Also in size and shape the flasks were exactly alike. Truly Madame was in a fine quandary, and there seemed no way of getting out of it with safety.

She had almost decided to hide both flasks until the Arab returned, when several sharp twinges of pain caught her and made her long most earnestly for relief. If she went to bed now she would be sure to suffer all night, and in one of the flasks was a sure cure.

"I'll guess at it, and take the chances!" declared Madame, firmly. And then, choosing at haphazard, she hid the silver flask behind the mirror and put the gold one in her pocket. Afterward she picked up the lamp and walked as silently as possible through the short passage that led to Monsieur Jules' bake-room.

The big place was still and dark, and the little lamp only brightened a small part of it. But Madame did not care for

that. Those pains were getting extremely hard to bear, and she had even ceased to care whether or not she had selected the right flask.

Taking a brown bowl from the shelf she drew it nearly full of water and then placed it upon a corner of the long, white mixing-table, beside the lamp. Next she took the golden flask from her pocket.

"How much did the Arab say to put in the water?" she wondered, pausing in perplexed thought. "I declare, I've actually forgotten! But he said it was sure to cure me, so I may as well use all the flask contains. For, after I am cured, I shall not need any more of it."

Reasoning thus, Madame removed the stopper and poured into the bowl every drop of that precious Elixir which Ali Dubh had prized more than life itself, and which his wild countrymen had come all the way from Arabia to America to possess. For generation after generation the priceless liquor had been preserved with jealous care, and now the baker's wife was rubbing it upon her limbs in an endeavor to cure the pangs of rheumatism!

She used very little of the contents of the bowl, after all. The touch of the Elixir upon her skin, although it was diluted with so much water, sent a glow of exhilaration throughout all her stout body.

The pains were suddenly eased, and Madame began to feel as light and airy as a fairy, in spite of her great mass of flesh.

It occurred to her that she would like to dance; to run and shout, to caper about as she used to do as a girl. But soon her shrewd common sense returned, and she told herself

this was but the effect of the wonderful medicine, and that the wisest thing she could do was to go to bed and sleep soundly while she might.

Being still somewhat bewildered, the good woman picked up the lamp, and, leaving the bowl containing the Elixir standing upon the table, mounted the stairs with lighter steps than she had known in years.

Five minutes later she was in bed, snoring as loudly as Monsieur Jules himself.

3. The Gingerbread Man

The baker awoke at three o'clock, and soon afterward came downstairs yawning and rubbing his eyes in his accustomed manner. For it is a real hardship to arise in the middle of the night and go to work, and Monsieur Jules sometimes regretted he was such a skillful baker; for any other profession would have allowed him to sleep until daylight. But the bread and rolls and gingerbread must be fresh and warm by breakfast time, or the people would be sadly disappointed; and the only possible way to get them ready was to start the work at three o'clock.

First, he lighted the big swinging lamps, which made the room bright as day, and then he built the fires in the great furnaces. Presently these last were roaring in a very business-like manner, and as soon as he heard the roar Monsieur Jules began to whistle. It was his custom, and kept him from getting lonesome while he worked.

Next he kneaded the bread, formed it into loaves, and placed them in long rows upon the slabs ready for the oven.

The rolls were then mixed and kneaded, and it took a longer time to get them ready than it had the bread, for they were small and quite daintily shaped. But at last the important task was completed, and while they were rising and the ovens heating, Monsieur mixed his gingerbread and cakes.

Somehow, the work progressed very swiftly this morning, and after a time the baker found he had a good hour to spare before the ovens would be ready.

Then a sudden idea struck him.

"Why, to-day is the Fourth of July," he thought, "and that is a National Holiday. I think I will make a fine gingerbread man, such as I used to make in Paris, and put it in the shop window to attract attention. These Americans like enterprise, and they have never seen a gingerbread man, for I have not made one since I came to this country."

With Monsieur Jules, to think was to act, and scarcely had he spoken these words when he began to gather his material together for a great batch of gingerbread dough. For he resolved that the man he was about to make should be big enough and fine enough to arouse the wonder of all beholders.

He began by filling a great bowl with flour, and then rubbed into the flour some butter and lard. "That will make it short," said Monsieur, "although it is to be a tall man." Then he added some molasses. "He will be a sweet fellow," thought the baker, smiling at his own pleasantries. Then he shook in the ginger and several fragrant spices, and began mixing the dough into one great mass.

"It is too stiff," reflected the baker, a few moments later. "My man must not be stiff, for that would render him disagreeable." He laughed at the whimsical thought, and glancing around, saw the brown bowl that Madame had left sitting upon a corner of the table. It was nearly full of the precious liquid, and Monsieur Jules, with his mind intent upon his work, never stopped to wonder how it came there. Perhaps he thought he had himself unconsciously filled the bowl with water. Anyway, he dumped all of the Essence of Vitality the Great Elixir which could never be duplicated in all the world into the mass of dough he was preparing for his gingerbread man!

Monsieur merely noticed that the dough had now become the proper consistency, and mixed easily.

Whistling merrily, he presently spread the huge batch of dough upon the big table and began rolling it and working it into the shape he desired.



Ah, but Monsieur Jules Grogrand was a true artist, although a baker! Under his skillful hands the gingerbread man slowly but surely took form; and the form was fully as large as that of a well grown fourteen-year-old boy. But it was by no means a boy that Monsieur was forming with such care; it was, rather, the figure of a typical French gentleman, such as may seldom be met with elsewhere

than on the boulevards of Paris. It was interesting to watch the figure grow: interesting, of course, to Monsieur Jules, as there was no one else in the bake-room to see.

The man appeared to be dressed in excellent fashion. Monsieur made him a collar and shirt-front of white bread dough, which looked very beautiful in contrast to the brown gingerbread-dough of his clothes. Then with a lump of dough, carefully kneaded, he formed the man's necktie, making a very artistic bow indeed. A waistcoat of fashionable cut was next added. The buttons on the man's coat were white lozenges, and to represent shoes the baker mixed his dough with licorice, until the shoes seemed as black and shiny as if freshly polished.

You would have loved to see, could you have been present, the delicate skill with which the clever baker carved the hands and fingers of his man, using a small but sharp knife, and patting and rounding each dough finger into proper shape. He even clipped from a sheet of transparent celluloid the finger-nails, and pressed them carefully into the dough at the ends of the fingers. Who but Monsieur would ever have thought of such a thing?

But, after all, it was upon the face that the baker exercised his best skill. As a sculptor forms his models out of clay, so Monsieur pressed and squeezed and molded his pliant dough, until every feature of the gingerbread man became wonderfully lifelike. Of course the face was made of the white dough, with just a trifle of the pink coloring mixed into it to make it resemble real flesh. But the wavy hair that surrounded the face was of gingerbread-dough, as its brown color, after it had been baked, would be quite natural and lifelike.

Among the things brought from Paris by the Grograndes was a pair of excellent glass eyes, and Monsieur Jules rummaged in a drawer until he found them, and then pressed them into the dough face. And now it positively seemed that the gingerbread man was looking at you, and the eyes lent its face a gentle and kindly expression.

"There's something lacking, however," murmured the baker, looking at his work critically. "Ah, I know it's the teeth!"

Teeth for a gingerbread man! But nothing was easier to represent, once their absence was noted. Between the lips of the man our baker pressed two rows of small white candies, and it was wonderful to remark the pleasant smile that now lent its charm to the face.

With a sigh of satisfaction in the result of his work, the baker at last declared his gingerbread man ready for the oven.

"And it is my masterpiece!" cried Monsieur Jules, proudly. Never, even in Paris, have I seen so perfect a man of dough. He is well worthy to have a name, and I will call him John Dough, which will be appropriate, indeed!"

But the great ovens were now glowing brightly, so Monsieur filled them with bread and rolls, and watched them carefully until the big and little loaves were all done to a turn. The cakes and cookies came next, and by the time that dawn arrived the front shop was stocked with heaps of the warm, fresh-smelling loaves and rolls, and trays of delicious cakes and buns, hot from the ovens.

Then the baker came back to his gingerbread man, which he first placed gently upon a great iron slab, and then slid

it all into the open door of a perfectly heated oven.

With great anxiety Monsieur watched the oven. The dough was properly mixed, the workmanship was most excellent. Would the baking turn out to be as perfect as the rest? Much good dough may be spoiled in the baking. None knew that better than Jules Grogrande.

So he tended the oven with nervous care, and finally, at exactly the right moment, the baker threw open the oven door and drew out the sheet of iron upon which the great and grand gingerbread man rested.

He was baked to perfection!

Filled with pride and satisfaction, Monsieur bent admiringly over his great creation; and as he did so, the gingerbread man moved, bent his back, sat up, and looked about him with his glass eyes, while a wondering expression crept over his face.

"Dear me!" said he, "isn't it very warm and close in this room?"

The Great Elixir had accomplished its purpose. The wonderful Essence of Vitality, prized for centuries and closely guarded, had lent its marvelous powers of energy, strength, and life to a gingerbread man! And all through the stupidity of a baker's wife who was color-blind and could not distinguish a golden flask from a silver one!

Monsieur Jules, who knew nothing of the Arab's flasks, or of the Great Elixir, glared wildly into the glass eyes of the gingerbread man. He was at first sure that his own eyes, and also his ears, had played him a trick.