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The Story Behind the Gingerbread Man

There once was a small village in the middle of the newly pioneered America, and in this village lived a baker by the name of John boiler. He had spent all of his life, since a young boy, learning of the culinary arts. As is in history, many of the early settlements in America contained a lack of wealth and proved many hardships to the new colonists. John had a strong connection to all those who lived in his village, as the boat rides to America were usually evident with close encounters with other potential neighbors in the New Land. The New Land, as it was called, was said to contain many an opportunity for those who think they could make it. Many became sick due to the poor conditions of unorganized early colonies, and as a result, John saw his golden opportunity.

Though John was already experienced in his craft, he felt that he would not be able to make his creations of good enough quality to make any profit. John decided to go on a long walk through the land to think, and crossed paths with a forest. He had heard on the boat ride over from some of the puritan settlers that the devil was known to reside in the depths of the ominous vegetation, but thought little of it as he continued his spell. He found it to be rather peaceful, with the persistent break of light through the great arms from the trees to almost seem to escort him through the woodland. But there came a point where the trail of light abruptly stopped, queerly in front of what seemed to be in many ways a profound black lake.

In the middle of this lake was a small isle where a tree of immense size sat, which seemed to swallow up all luminescence like an impenetrable cloud of green with its leaves. The branches seemed to stretch for miles, with more leaves than an eye can count. There also seemed to be no set depth to this pool, as well as a lack of any reassuring indication of decline into the center; just a steep drop to what seemed to be the other side of the earth. Curious, John grabbed a rock of odd smoothness, and was about to toss the rock into the lake when a piercing voice interrupted his actions. “Can I help you, Stranger?”

When he looked up from the abyss, John found a tattered, discolored man sitting by the tree on the isolated piece of land. Confused, John replied back with the only substance he had to contribute to the conversation. “This is quite the odd pond, is it not?” At that comment the figure laughed a grotesque laugh that seemed to echo in the vastly occupied yet empty forest. “Is there something wrong with you, soul?” John asked. Upon hearing this, the figure once again bellowed. The wind shook the trees and swayed the limbs, causing a sound similar to waves crashing on a beach. As the sea of green moved all around the two bodies, they seemed to drown in the middle of the thick foliage.

“I am no soul; I am the taker of them, boy! You really are a stranger in these parts, aren’t ya? Then again, I don’t think I’ve gotten the opportunity to meet ya, the name’s Lucifer,” Said the pitch-black man. At that moment, John noticed the faint spark of flames in the man’s eye, and realized he was face to face with the devil himself. His hands went numb, and was about to drop when John concocted an idea.

“Ye be telling the truth, are you not?” John Questioned.

“One of the few times I do, yes. I can’t help but notice you got a little courageous, now why might that be?”

John snickered, “Though I am a simple baker, I fancy myself in the ways of bargaining. What say you to a small proposition?” John now seemed to have confidence of steel, and planted his feet in the ground as he heard the devil’s response.

“I be all for them! What do you have for me, Mr. ‘Simple Baker’?”

“The name’s John Boiler, fellow, and though I believe I am of good quality in my craft, I seek to be better. My purse is always a touch lighter than I fancy, and I’m always up for fixing that. The only way I can see doing this is improving my talents. I want to be able to make creations, come to life, in a sense, and at incredible speeds. Ye think ye be up to it?” At that moment the devil burst into flames and vanished. An instant later he heard a noise behind him with a sound similar to that of crackling sparks of a fire.

“Always,” said the devil in a smooth, low tone. John jumped and quickly turned, and upon doing so seeing a grin as wide as the trunk of the tree. “So you want your creations to, in a way, come to life?”

After his whimpering ceased, John managed to say “Yes, of course,” before he was able to tame his panic attack. “But what would you like in return for this deed?” John said, a bit more unflinchingly.

“Oh, ‘tis but one item, and small it may be. All I ask in return for my services is your soul,” said the devil, in a quality that seemed as sly as a fox. John had always been one of the few blissfully lucky ones to perceive time in a manner most slow. To him, a minute seemed twenty, a month seemed a year, and so far up to this point in his lifetime, he felt as if he could have fit 3 more and a half. He would have ages before he is to pass away, which would give ages to fill his billfold, as well as see his wildest imagination come to life in his work.

“And they say no one haggles Satan! I had told you, dear sir, that no one out bargains I! It is a deal,” John stated, with a smile on his face. The two shook hands, sealing the agreement. The moment the two hands made contact, sparks formed and John felt a burning feeling like he never had had before. The result of the contract left a mark on the right palm of John in the form of an upside down star.

“Your hands now be magic; your craft will come quickly and effortlessly, and will come to life before your very eyes. Enjoy your time, Mr. Boiler, and good luck in your pursuit of wealth!” With that the Devil burst to into a crackle of flames, and was gone.

“Odd, I still feel quite a bit myself,” spoke John, now secluded in the dense forest. In all entireties, he still was quite himself. All but his hands had been altered, but John did not know this yet. The beams of light that had lead him to this foreboding place had vanished. A storm began to form, marked by the now upsetting roar of the trees. The gusts of wind had dramatically picked up, and the once calm sea of leaves was turning into a typhoon of violent crashes and hissing. John saw no point in continuing his walk, not only because of the storm, but his venture for answers had been solved by his new found acquaintance. John quickly rushed home, and the next morning planned on putting his skills to the test.

John found himself stirring before even the hen had caught sight of the fruitful sun, which was rather abnormal for his morning tendencies. John set to work instantly, deciding to start with his childhood favorite, the gingerbread man. He had created the dough the night before in anticipation of the moment of truth. Surely enough, the Devil had stuck to his word, for John had relatively quickly created a silhouette of a small man. The more shocking thing, John found out, was when he had picked up the pan to bake the gingerbread man, the pan glowed cherry red. John’s eyes widened, for within seconds the once elastic sliver of dough was now firm and moist, ready to be completed. The pan reverted back to its dull grayish hue, and as John placed the pan back, he was bewildered by his new abilities.

John positioned the icing flawlessly, leaving only the face to be created. He placed the nose first, to get a good idea of the midpoint of the face. Next he placed the hair, and then the whites of the eyes. He set the white icing down and grabbed the blue, as to give the man pupils for his eyes. Upon finishing this, John set the blue icing back down. He then quickly shifted his eyes back at the gingerbread man, and his jaw dropped as if weighted by world; the eyes were moving! They shifted left and right, then frantically upward as the gingerbread man clutched at its throat with its rounded arms. John quickly realized he had still forgotten the mouth, and fumbled the white icing a few times before recovering balance. He then proceeded to craft the mouth on the gingerbread man, before it suffocated. When the two lips had met, there was a sudden gasp of air from the gingerbread man, as though it had been deprived of air since first being conceived as dough the night before.

“Geeze, what are ya trying to do,” demanding the still coughing gingerbread man, “kill me?” As the gingerbread man attempted to regain its good sense, John stood deathly pale, too terrified as to even scream; he opened his mouth, yet no sound would come forward. “What’s with you?” asked the gingerbread man, upon recuperating from its near death experience.

“You… You just… just…” Stumbled John.

“Talked? What are ya, daft? You’ve never seen a talking gingerbread man before?” John merely shook his head at the gingerbread man’s retort. “Are you serious? You’re useless! I’m finding my own home; obviously you’re not fit to even care for the rats!”

“Wait! I need you! If I don’t sell you, how am I to make any money?”

“Not my problem, thanks for the nice clothes though!” With that, the gingerbread man began to walk out the door, after which the baker ran for. “Run, run, as fast as you can, you can’t catch me I’m the gingerbread man!” Soon, the baker lost track of the gingerbread man, and retired to his workshop to try once more.

But, the devil be damned, the next one ran off too. Then the next batch, even the gingerbread house found a way to elude the baker. His funds were gone; all of his material now ran rampant in the woods. Penniless, disgraced, and distraught beyond belief, the baker found his way back to the sinister pond, where the Devil once more rests his head. “Lucifer, what is this deception?!” Shouted John, grinding his teeth in rage.

“There be no deception my naïve boy, this was exactly what you asked for,” replied the Devil in a chuckle.

“This is not what I asked for!” shouted John, “I asked for my creations to look as if-”

“You asked for your creations to come to life, and I made it be!” roared the Devil, “That, was your term.”

“No… I said…” Faltered John in disbelief.

“Now, my ‘man of bargain’, it is time to hold up your end. I believe you know what is to become,” said the Devil in a triumphant tone.

“No… No I will not go!” John seized one of the smooth rocks and was about to throw it when he noticed a small inscription on it. “Elizabeth C.,” he managed to pronounce. She was a younger girl who had died in the village earlier from illness. John stared blankly, and then looked up. The names of at least 50 other acquaintances hung from the ancient branches above him in the form of leaves. His knees gave out, and he fell to the victims of time and fate. His head turned and saw the names of others he knew, their deaths quite literally set in stone, and their fates sealed.

“No, not me!” John jumped to his feet, snatched one of the rocks, and hurled it to the tree. But the devil had vanished. Then, a crackle was heard behind, exactly like the one from yesterday, but yielding different intentions. John was grasped from behind, and lifted up off his feet. He felt himself being brought to the maddening pit, and with this position he could see a faint glow of red unfurling before his eyes.

“Enjoy your fate, baker of greed!” John was dropped, and plummeted to the deep abyss one can only assume to be hell. The light dimmed, and the pit had its fill.

A weary soul rested on the edge of the pond, after a long journey to the village in which the fabled baker had produced live pastries. His feet had carried him as long as he could be carried, and he found it now imperative to give respite when due. Curiously, he picked up one of the numerous rocks, on the edge. “Joh-”

“Can I help you stranger?”

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