

opening extract from

bunchy

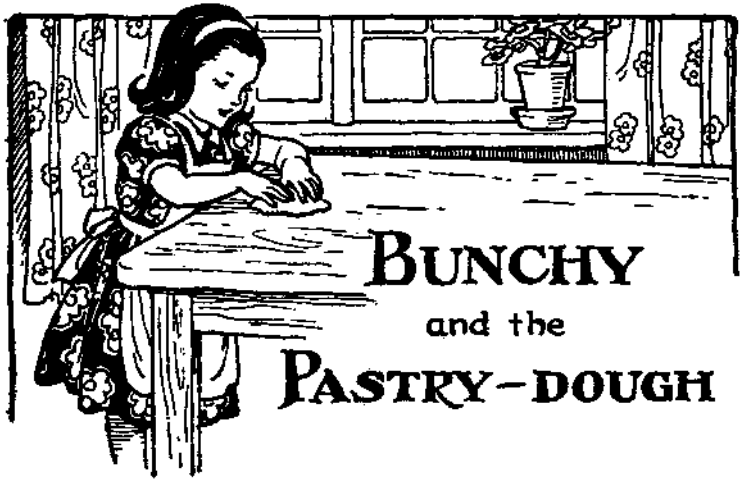
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BUNCHY and the PASTRY-DOUGH

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl called Bunchy, who lived with her grandmother in a cottage in the country.

It was a pretty little cottage, with roses climbing over it; and it had a pretty little garden with sweet peas and sunflowers growing in it; and there was beautiful country with woods and meadows lying all around it.

So Bunchy was a happy little girl, living there with her kind old grandmother.

There was only one thing missing, which was that she had nobody to play with.

The cottage was a long way from the village, and hardly anyone came so far along the road except the miller with his sacks of flour, or the peddler with his tray of needles and buttons, or the grocer with his packets of tea and sugar.

But never anyone who could stop and play with a little girl like Bunchy.

One day Grandmother had to go to market, leaving Bunchy to keep house alone, for it was rather rainy for her to go along too.

Grandmother put on her cloak and her bonnet, her goloshes and her mittens, took her big basket and her big umbrella, and set forth. And Bunchy stood in the little rose-covered porch, waving goodbye, feeling rather lonely, for she didn't know how she could manage to pass the hours by herself till Grandmother returned.

Grandmother got as far as the gate, and then she suddenly remembered something. And she stopped and called back to her granddaughter:

"There's a small lump of uncooked pastry-dough on the larder shelf, which was left over when I made the pie this morning. If you would like to have it to play with while I am gone, you may, my dear." (For she knew how Bunchy always enjoyed standing by the kitchen table making things with little bits of dough while her grandmother was rolling the pastry.)

"Thank you, Granny," called Bunchy, still waving from the doorway; and Grandmother waved her umbrella for the last time before she went out of sight behind the hedge, on her way to market.

Then Bunchy turned back into the house.

She wandered upstairs, and she wandered downstairs, and she looked out of all the windows (not that there were many stairs or windows in the little cottage). And then, not finding anything interesting to do anywhere there, she thought that perhaps she would get out Grandmother's piece of dough and play with it.

So she went to the larder. And there on a plate on the shelf was a little round lump of pastry-dough, soft and cold, waiting to be moulded into anything a little girl could fancy.

Bunchy took it into the kitchen, rolling it between her hands, and she put it on the table, and pressed it out flat and rolled it up again several times.

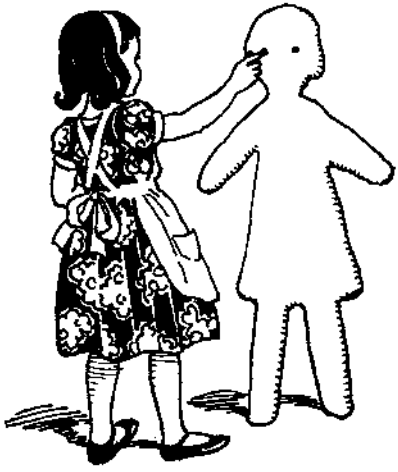
"What fun it would be," said Bunchy to herself, "to make a little pastry-girl to play with!"

So she got a knife from the basket, and, standing on a stool, started cutting out a little girl from the flattened dough on the table, beginning at the top of the head, all down one side, arm, and leg; then up the other leg and the other arm, up till she reached the head again.

And when the knife reached the place where it had made the first cut, and the little pastry-girl was quite complete—what *do* you think happened? Why, the little pastry-girl lifted her head from the table and sat up; and while Bunchy, still standing on the stool, watched, with her mouth wide open

in surprise, the little pastry-girl pulled her legs from off the table and jumped down with a soft thump on to the kitchen floor!

"Well!" said Bunchy to herself, staring with all her might. "Well, well, well!" (Which was what her grandmother always said when surprised, but there didn't seem to be anything else to say!)



The little pastry-girl began stretching herself as if she were doing exercises, but Bunchy soon saw that she was trying to get her arms and legs more to the same length, for Bunchy had really made them rather odd. Then the pastry-girl began feeling her pastry-head with her pastry-hands, and Bunchy suddenly thought:

"Why, I haven't given her any face!" So she quickly got the currant-box from the cupboard, took out two currants, and pressed them into the little pastry-girl's head, for eyes. Then she took a tiny knob of dough from the table and pressed it into the centre of the pastry-girl's face for a nose. And then with a spoon she made a line below it for a mouth.

And in a trice the little pastry-girl was smiling and twinkling at her in the friendliest way possible!

Here was a quaint playfellow!

Bunchy was delighted, and amused herself for some time by making pastry buttons down the front of her dress, to finish her off; and as each one was set in place the little pastry-girl looked so pleased.

Presently Bunchy gathered all the odd scraps of dough together into a ball. And, strangely enough, they made a lump which seemed as big as the first one. She rolled it out flat again.

This time she thought she would make a pussy-cat; so she cut out a fine big one, head and ears and paws and tail all complete. And when it was done, up it got and down it jumped on to the floor, waving its white pastry-tail from side to side.

This *was* fun!

Bunchy stood rolling together the left-over bits of dough while she watched her pastry-girl and pastry-cat making friends.

Strangely enough, the dough ball seemed still to be quite as big as before, so Bunchy rolled it out yet again on the table.

This time she thought she would make a house. So she cut out a house, with a roof and chimneys, and a door and windows, all complete, while the little pastry-girl and the cat looked on, very interestedly. And when the last window was cut

out and the house was finished it reared itself upright on the table and slipped down on to the floor; and it grew and grew, until at last it was quite of a size to admit people like Bunchy herself.



As she stood there staring up at it the little pastry-girl slipped one chilly hand into hers and drew her towards the front door. The pastry-cat ran in before them, leading the way into a little white kitchen, with a table and chairs and a dresser and crockery all made of pastry-dough (which surprised Bunchy, for she had not made any 'inside' to the house).

The pastry-girl pulled out a chair for her, and Bunchy sat down carefully. She felt as if she were sitting on a piece of cold, soft india-rubber.

There was a shining black kitchen-range at one end of the room, with a warm glow of fire in it, just like the one in Grandmother's kitchen; in fact, somehow Bunchy thought it *was* that same one, though how it got into the pastry-house, or whether the kitchen itself had turned into pastry, or if the pastry-house were still standing in the kitchen, she couldn't make out.

While she was puzzling over it the little pastry-girl picked up the pastry-cat and set it on top of the stove. Bunchy was afraid it would be too hot there, but it settled down quite contentedly, while the little pastry-girl fetched plates from the dresser and set them on the table.

Bunchy sat watching them both, and presently she noticed that the pastry-cat was slowly turning to a golden-brown colour. The next minute the pastry-girl had taken it from the stove, broken it in crisp pieces, and piled them on the plates on the table.

Then she signed to Bunchy to draw up her chair and eat, and in some surprise Bunchy did so.

The pastry-cat tasted very good, and Bunchy crunched away until she had eaten up all the pieces; for the pastry-girl only pretended to eat (having, of course, no proper mouth), and when she had

pretended enough over one piece would slip it on to Bunchy's plate and take another.

When the meal was finished the pastry-girl led the way up some funny soft rubbery stairs to the little bedroom above.

Here was a white pastry-bed, with a thick pastry-coverlet; and the little pastry-girl at once pulled her buttons off (which were the only things she could remove) and got into bed, making room for Bunchy to get in beside her.

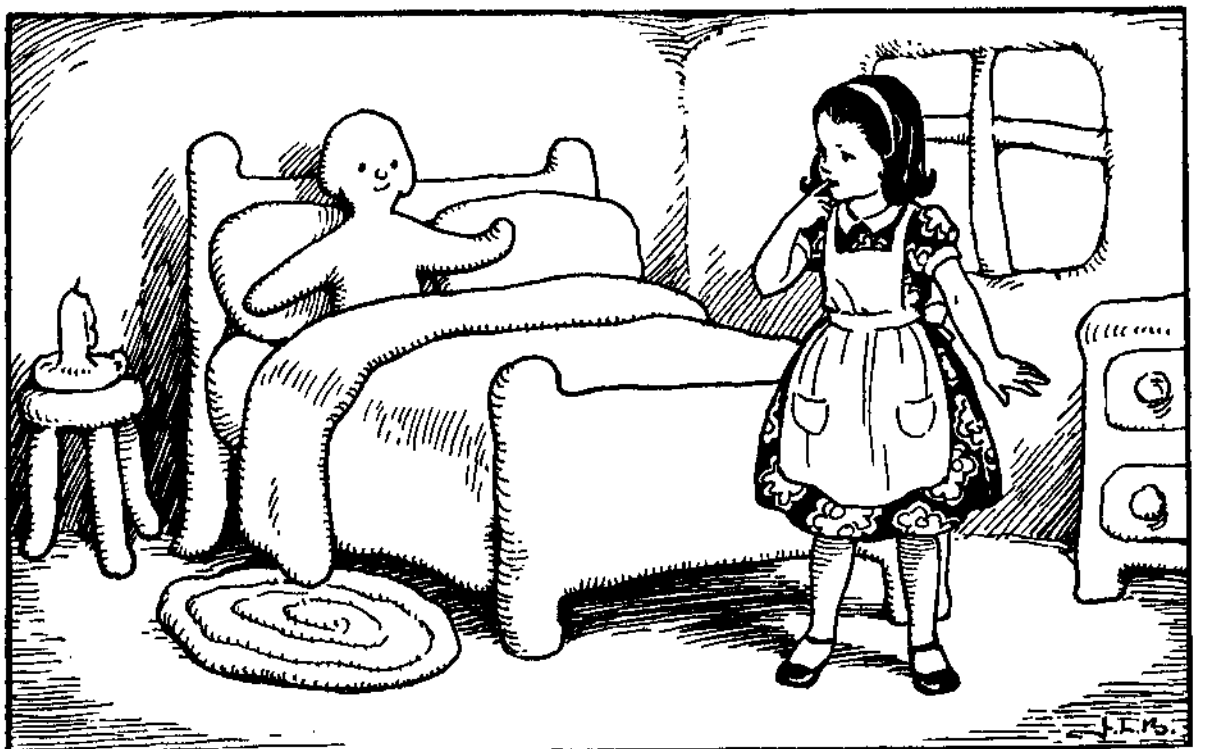
But Bunchy didn't want to get in—the bedclothes looked so cold and sticky. Still the little pastry-girl kept beckoning and patting the lump of pastry which served for a pillow.

Just at that moment there was a distant bang of a door shutting. Was it Grandmother, come home from market?

Bunchy turned and ran from the room down the pastry-stairs and out into the kitchen.

She had a sudden glimpse of the pastry-house falling together and rolling up into a little ball as soon as she got outside it; and then the kitchen door opened and Grandmother came in, with her umbrella and her basket and a great number of parcels.

"Well, my dearie, have you managed to amuse yourself while I've been gone?" asked Grandmother, setting her things down on the kitchen table.



Bunchy didn't want to get in

"Oh, yes, Granny!" said Bunchy. "I had such fun with the dough! I made a house, and a cat, and a little pastry-girl."

"Ah!" said Grandmother knowingly, "I thought so, directly I saw the dough-ball!"

Now how *did* Grandmother know?

