

## Gingerbread House Hunting

As a candy connoisseur, you can only have the best. Well, not completely true, but the unique stuff is certainly up there. And in the Land of Fairy Tales you are at least guaranteed to find something you've never seen before, even from a hundred feet in the air. That's what people saw after a large shadow swept across the land, owned by an enormous purple dragon-whale hybrid keeping a watchful vigil. Lazily gliding along the air, they would occasionally flap their wings, their gut bouncing as they kept their current height. One would almost think their belly would make for a considerable anchor, and one would probably be right. But this is a story so it doesn't necessarily need to make sense, which the hybrid thought as their keen eyes narrowed, having spotted the tell-tale sign of one of the sweetest treats in Fairy Tales: The Gingerbread House.

Now, your typical gingerbread house is usually manned by witches, who are solitary creatures and are one of the many predators of small, innocent, and/or abandoned children. The Fairy Tale food chain was an unkind thing that was for certain given how often kids were at the bottom of it, but at least the predator had their own predator keeping them in check. Narrowing his wings the hybrid swooped down, arms at the ready as they dove, grabbing onto the roof and pulling in an upturn. The building was wrenched from its hard-shell chocolate floor, leaving the witch in question very surprised at the sudden breeziness of the situation as the rest of her home was seen flying away in a dragon-whale's grasp. "That's the second time this month!" she shrieked, getting off her toffee chair and pointing a withered finger at the departing dragon. "Oh, wish I had my glasses for this" she muttered, squinting hard at the blurring shapes.

Muttering a spell, she aimed at the steadily shrinking speck and fired. The shot of magic flew straight and true... enough. It missed Draco's tail by an inch and hit the house instead. Satisfied regardless, the old biddy grabbed her nearest phone book and started looking for a new contractor. "Every bloody time. "Oh yeah sure it's dragon-proof" they keep saying. I regret only turning the last one into a bloody toad. A pumpkin would've been more fitting. I mean look at the walls! They came off the foundations with ease" she grumbled, her lost house and the dragon thief long forgotten.

The hybrid, meanwhile, was feeling very pleased with himself. Gingerbread houses had a nasty habit of breaking apart in a fly-by theft, and this one came free with ease. Clearly the icing hadn't set right. Gotta love el cheapo contractors these days. Draco chuckled as he admired his prize, not noticing the flickers of magic circulating around it until the house suddenly jumped in size. The dragon-whale's flight shuddered from the sudden extra weight pulling at him, then another jump as the house grew again. Draco's gentle beats became urgent flapping as he tried to adjust, but his prize grew again, finally pulling him down as his

weight limits were exceeded. Doing his best to avoid losing hold of his prize, the hybrid aimed for the nearest field and flapped rapidly, slowing down his descent as much as possible until the house, now almost big enough for him to fit through the front door, landed safely. Huffing as he landed with it, Draco frowned as the house **creaked**, growing again. "Well this is a bother" he grumbled.

Now how on earth was he going to get such a big house home? Well, piece by piece perhaps, but they never look right after getting rebuilt. It had to do with how the gingerbread walls were set. Plus weather plus anyone could steal the remaining parts, and the other candy furniture too. You might as well come for a car and only walk away with the steering wheel. "Darn" Draco said under his breath.

The house hadn't made another peep, so clearly whatever spell that witch had done was only meant to disadvantage rather than completely stop. Still, it was a pity to abandon it, and breaking it apart was absolutely out of the question. Blowing smoke, the hybrid knew that there was only one outcome here. Thankfully, he had missed lunch on the off-chance there had been a nice moose or deer gently grazing, but this would do instead. Ripping the door off its hinges, Draco gave it a probing lick, finding the gingerbread to still be in quite good condition. "That's nice. They usually go stale after a while" he muttered to himself.

Angling it to his wide maw, the hybrid crunched through the cookie and hardened icing, finding it to be of passing taste, though the icing was a bit plain. It took little work to crunch through the entire thing, and the dragon-whale did appreciate the tasty peppermint doorknobs. They were quite a good touch, and added some much needed freshness to the whole thing. The corpulent hybrid pet his belly, which had barely budged an inch from eating the entire door. But with the doorway freed up, he started crunching around the frame, his mighty jaws turning it to paste before it joined the rest of it. It had such an appreciable crunchiness to it, which you didn't always find on modern gingerbread houses. The soft ones were usually used to lure the kiddies in. It was a house, but not a home; it's a very important distinction to make. And what a home too, with spun toffee windows. Draco purred in appreciation as his enormous tongue slathered across them, more hints of peppermint from the frame and supportive truss in the middle. **BAWONG!**

The dragon-whale hadn't noticed, as one does when enjoying a treat, but his entire body had suddenly grown bigger. Like a sudden crutch and jump, his entire being had suddenly expanded, his belly a little heftier and his long tail sweeping more grass away. Perhaps the magic hadn't fully gone away? But instead it had simply found a new place to root.... Not that Draco cared as his larger jaws made it easier to eat his way up the wall to the attic. You never really found two-story gingerbread houses these days, not with the portable cellars being offered. But in this case the hybrid didn't mind, as the cellars weren't really edible

anyways. Remember, most were houses, not a home. And Draco was more than content to give this house a home, a nice big purple home as he ripped off a hard fondant window shutter. It took only two bites to devour it, before the window itself was pulled free, and crunched up like the rest. The beast seemed almost lost in the sauce, his attention fully on gobbling up the house, and not elsewhere as his body did the odd compaction, before stretching towards again, a rubbery **stretching** sound going along with it as he grew almost as tall as the large house. His belly, noticeably, grew larger than the rest, pressing into the soft grass and against a segment of uneaten wall.

Draco was still oblivious to all this as he bit a huge chunk from the wall, crumbs falling like snow before an avalanche. His round belly was getting nice and tight, any accentuating folds it had starting to vanish as he filled it with more house. He wasn't even bothering to savour things, choosing instead to devour everything with slavering glee. No, not glee, **hunger**. Slavering hunger as the entire first wall was gone, and without a thought he bit into the attic floor, exposing the leg of a candy cane bed. Grunting, he tore apart the attic floor, letting it fall into his waiting hand. He clasped it, before his body trembled and he grew again, his flat head now level with the house and his gut busting down what was left of the wall. Draco licked his lips and devoured the bed, and the nightstand that had fallen with it. It wasn't even about making sure nobody else got the house now, it was purely about **hunger**. The house beckoned him to eat it all, challenged him to do so. It was like a siren call and he was obliged to answer.

Lumbering into the building, his enormous bulk tore through the roof, his jaws clamping onto the roof and tearing it apart. Truth be told, it was almost horrifying to watch him go, attacking everything like a feral beast. Nothing was safe from his hands or jaws, grabbing and chomping and destroying like he was Godzilla attacking Tokyo. Chew and swallow and chewing and swallowing. The hybrid's belly engorged itself on its meal, tearing the place apart almost as much as his hunger had. And his body kept expanding, the house almost in ruins as he devoured everything in sight like his life depended on it. His limbs grew flabby, and his legs weighed down with rolls of fat that **stomped** with the force of an elephant stampede. Whatever was left of his prize had been reduced to a pile of half-eaten chunks, and Draco greedily fell onto his mountainous belly, his plump fingers snatching at the chunks and hurling them into the abyss that was once his maw. His flabby body rolled and rocked with over a tonne of pure flab, his gigantic body practically beached on itself as the final remains of his prize were gone. The dragon-whale's body **bubbled** and **grumbled**, gas building into him that escaped as a tremendous, self-satisfied belch. The gale was strong enough to have a tree fifty feet away be ripped from the soil. But he was content, and the malaise that had stolen his mind seemed to flicker and vanish, leaving the now, much larger dragon, back in control. *"Well, that was nice"* he thought to himself.

Grunting hard, his lard-laden wings flapped madly, but he went nowhere. Frowning, he tried again, and maybe rose his bulk by like, an inch or two? But that was it. Dragon-whale that he was, it was growingly apparent that he was more of a beached whale now as he lay in his corpulence. So, it did beg the question, really: *"Hmm, how long will it take to roll back home?"* Draco pondered, clearly unbothered by the whole arrangement.