

Lady  
Rumdidøddledum's  
Children



S. B. Dinkelspiel

**LADY  
RUM-DI-DOODLE-  
DUM'S  
CHILDREN**

**BY  
S. B. DINKELSPIEL**

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**John and Mary leaned forward and saw in the glass hundreds of lovely colors.]**

**LADY  
RUM-DI-DOODLE-DUM'S  
CHILDREN**

**BY  
S. B. DINKELSPIEL**

*Which is Dedicated to My Mother, Your Mother,  
and Lady Rum-Di-Doodle-Dum, Who is the  
Mother of all the Bald-Headed, Pug-Nosed Little  
Baby Creatures in the World, and to the Child-Person  
for whom Lady Rum-Di-Doodle-Dum  
winked one evening when I asked her to do so.*

# PREFACE

(TO BE READ)

THE Dictionary says that a Preface is something spoken before. Usually it gives the author an opportunity to talk about himself. Some authors talk very much, especially about themselves, in their Preface. Mr. George Bernard Shaw writes more Preface than Book, and Théophile Gautier simply uses the Book as an excuse for the Preface. But you do not need to worry, as you will not read either of them for a very long time.

My Preface is going to be different. It is about something that comes at the end and not the beginning; furthermore, I am not going to talk about myself.

Of course you do not know what in the world I am driving at; I will come at once to the point. I had all but finished the stories of Lady Rumdidoodledum's children when I received the following letter. I have a pretty good idea that "L. H. D." is no other than the Child-Person for whom Lady Rumdidoodledum winked.

"MR. S. B. DINKELSPIEL,

"DEAR SIR,——

"I have the honor to inform you that Mrs. Sherman is the mother of a lovely new baby daughter, born this evening. She is to be christened 'Margaret,' but will be known to her friends (of whom I trust you will be among the number) as 'Midge.' Liza and Martha Mary

are delighted over the new arrival—the boys have not yet seen the little lady.

“Hoping that she will prove as welcome to you as to the rest of her very devoted family, I am, sir,

“Your very obedient servant and humble collaborator,

L. H. D.”

The Planet Venus.

A day or so later, a thick envelope came through the mail for me.

“Is it,” said I to myself, “another of my stories rejected by a heartless editor?”

It was not! It was the story of “Midge,” written by “L. H. D.,” and it came just in time, for I had been having a miserable hour seeking a last chapter for the book, and here one fell—I might say—out of the sunny sky.

S. B. DINKELSPIEL.

San Francisco, California.

# CHAPTER I

## IN WHICH WE MEET FLIP, ALTHOUGH HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET

DOWN on the edge of the Poppy Field there is a very large, wide lake; the largest lake you have ever seen. Of course there are deeper lakes across the mountains where you have never been, but Poppy Lake is quite deep enough. When you turn your back and lean down and look between your legs so that everything is upside-down, it looks still larger; almost as big as the sky and just as blue. Right on the shore, tied to a willow tree, is a wonderful green boat with two oars when you wish to go exploring alone, and four if you intend to take a crew with you.

John usually went alone, because crews never know their place and want to be Captain if they are men, or always talk about fairies and husbands and silly trifles if they are women. There is of course only one woman and she is Martha Mary; you see, Liza is only three years old and can't really be called a woman. The fact is, John prefers traveling with Liza to any of the others. She respects John very much and will not mind anyone else—not even Nurse Huggins. John is quite a famous traveler; there have been times when he would sit at the helm of his good ship and Liza would sit on the deck on her legs and fold her arms and watch the Captain with very large, grey eyes. Then John would cough and bow to her and say in a voice almost as loud as Butcher Levy's:

“Where does your Ladyship desire to sail to-day?”



Liza would say, “Yes,” which is not an answer at all.

Then John would pick up the oars and row with all his might, just as though the ship were not tied to the willow tree. Right into the ocean they would go. Sometimes they could travel almost as far as England before Nurse Huggins called them to come to tea. Nurse Huggins always called just as they were about to get somewhere.

Martha Mary thought it silly for John to play with Liza so much; you see, John was at least twelve and Martha Mary was ten, so they were much more fitted for each other than John and Liza. So Martha Mary would come down to the Lake and call to John and he would put his hands to his ears and shout:

“I can’t hear you. I’m miles and miles away.”

Then Martha Mary would stamp her foot, and go away to find Edward Lee Sherman, who was seven years old and her youngest brother, and Walter, who was eight and almost Edward’s twin. You see, the Sherman family was quite a large one; first, there was John and then Martha Mary; then Walter and Edward Lee, and then Liza. But that wasn’t all. Nurse Huggins was a very important member of the family, and there was Agnes, the cook, and Dawson, the gardener, and Mother Dear, who looked almost like a girl herself, sometimes, and Father, who was terribly old and had brown whiskers and the softest grey eyes, just like Liza’s. And I almost forgot Hermit. He was the huge St. Bernard and next to Mother Dear, the most important member of the household. No one knew just how old Hermit was. But Captain John was quite sure that the very first thing he heard when he opened his eyes in this world was Hermit’s welcoming bark. That was twelve years ago, and twelve is old for a dog.

And—there was one other. He was supposed to be a secret, but I never could keep a secret and, as long as I have told about Hermit and Hermit found him, I might as well tell. He was Flip. That wasn't his real name, but Liza could not say Philip, so she called him Flip. And after a while everyone else did, too. This is the way we found him. You see, Hermit did not come home for dinner one night and everyone was very much frightened. They went all over the poppy field calling him, but he didn't come. It grew so late that the stars came out, so Mother Dear put Liza and Edward Lee to bed. She was very quiet and not at all smily when she tucked them in, because she was worried about Hermit. For hours and hours John and Father and Gardener Dawson hunted with yellow lanterns; they called and whistled, but Hermit did not come. So they went to bed, and Father said:

“Leave the old boy alone. He is sure to come back.”

Father always did know everything!

The first thing next morning, all the family hurried out to the garden, but there was no Hermit. Father went East and John went West and all the others scattered in different directions, leaving Liza all alone to take care of Mother Dear. But Mother Dear was not at all good company; she wouldn't crawl on the floor and she wouldn't smile, so Liza slipped away, very unhappy. She took her Nigger Doll, Samuel, and walked way, way off, down into the Lily Place where the frogs live. And right there, perfectly happy and grinning, was Hermit—all muddy and with his tongue hanging out as though he had been running and was out of breath. Next to him, sprawled out on the grass, with one foot stuck up in the air and a cap on his toe, was a man and he was talking to Hermit. Liza did not pay any attention to him; she just jumped on Hermit's back and

rubbed her face in his neck. The man was very much surprised. He sat up, brushed the dirt off of his trousers, and said:

“Good morning.”

Liza laughed at him and pulled Hermit’s tail.

“I said ‘Good morning,’” said the man. “Can’t you talk?”

That sort of frightened Liza, so she jumped up and ran off to find John, with Hermit bounding after her. Just then John came through the trees, followed by Edward Lee and Walter and Martha Mary. They hugged Hermit to show how glad they were to see him, and then Liza took them to the new man.

“Hullo!” he said. “Are you the whole family?”

“We are the Shermans,” said John.

“Yes,” said Edward Lee, “and we wish you would go away so that we could play.”

“Edward Lee!” Martha Mary whispered. “You mustn’t be impolite.”

The man laughed. “Please,” said he, “may I play, too?”

“You are too old,” said Walter.

“No, I’m not.”

John did not mean to have any unfairness. “How old are you?” he asked.

The man held his fingers to his lips. "It's a secret. Folks say I'm twenty-three," he said. "But they really don't know. The fact is I'm only twelve."

"Swear it and hope to die?" demanded John.

"I swear."

"And hope to die?"

"Do I have to?"

"No," said Martha Mary. "If you want to be twelve, we will let you. Please, what can you play?"

"Everything."

"That is lovely," said Martha Mary. "We'll play 'Robinhood.'"

"And I'll be Robinhood," said John.

"And I'll be Little John," said Walter.

"I'm Little John," said Edward Lee.

"You're not. I am."

"All right," said Edward Lee. "Then I don't want to play."

The man frowned. "See here," he said. "You can't both be Little John. Suppose we play something else. Suppose I tell you a story."

"Do you know any?" Martha Mary asked.

"Dozens of them."

"How nice! I think I shall like you. What is your name?"

“Philip.”

“Flip,” said Liza, and that is how he got his name.

Meanwhile Mother Dear had joined Father. They hunted high and low for Hermit and for the children, too, for by this time Mother was growing really and truly frightened. All of a sudden they heard Edward Lee laughing. To the Lily Place they ran, and there—through the trees—guess what they saw! There was Flip leaning against a fat old oak tree, with one leg up in the air and his cap on his toe. Liza was sitting on the knee of the leg that wasn't up in the air, while Martha Mary was lying on the ground on her stomach, weaving buttercups. John and Walter were sitting up in the tree; Edward Lee was on Hermit's back, and Flip was telling his story. So Mother Dear sat down very quietly and pulled Father after her. She leaned against his shoulder and closed her eyes, while Father smoothed her hair. And they listened to the story, too, and this was it:

## CHAPTER II

IN WHICH PETER SPILLS THE DEW OUT OF HIS  
POCKET AND IT CAUSES A GREAT DEAL OF  
BOTHER, BUT MR. SMITH, WHO IS THE KING  
OF FAIRIES, PUTS AN END TO THE TROUBLE

“PETER sat on a blade of wheat and swung backwards and forwards and up and down in the wind, till his feet were higher than his head and all the dewdrops spilled out of his pocket. I don’t suppose you have ever seen Peter. He is about this big—that is, as big as a red-headed match—and he has little thin wings made out of the fuzz that grows on the cowslips. Peter has red hair, too, just like the match, and he is freckled, but one can never see the freckles because they are so small. In ways, Peter is a very wonderful boy. You see, he can carry dewdrops in his pocket (when he doesn’t spill them) and he skips around the garden just before the stars go to bed putting a dewdrop on every flower, just as a mother cat would bathe her kitten. Peter likes his work; he knew that every boy has to do something worth while, so he chose the work that was the most fun. Of course it is fun to bathe flowers. They look so bright and sunshiny when they have their drop of dew, just as your face does when Nurse What-do-you-call-her——”

“Nurse Huggins, please,” said Martha Mary.

“Nurse Huggins rubs soap on it and in your eyes. So on this particular May morning Peter sat on the piece of wavy wheat and

waited for the biggest and loveliest Mother star, Mrs. Rumdidoodledum, to go away, so that he could go to work.

“Finally, when Mrs. Rumdidoodledum had gone to bed and the sky grew pink like the eyes of Fluffytail, the white rabbit, Rosemary, who was the queen of the flower fairies, came out and clapped her hands to set all the morning elves to work. First, Mr. James, the butler fairy, appeared and pulled all of the dark-cloud curtains out of the sky. Then a hundred and three golden fairies tied daisy ropes to the sun and pulled him up over the hill. Lastly Nurse Agnes, the fattest fairy you ever saw, went around and opened all the flowers’ eyes. Then everyone stood still and waited for Peter to come down and wash them. Of course the stupid Peter couldn’t, because he had swung too high and spilled all the dewdrops. At this, Queen Rosemary was terribly angry—which wasn’t very bad, because the fairies have all been well trained and never lose their tempers. But she said Peter would have to be punished. What do you think Queen Rosemary did? She led Peter down to the red rosebush, tied him to it with a piece of green grass, and left him there for ever and ever so long. Next morning, when Nurse Agnes had opened all the flower children’s eyes, they waited for Peter to come and wash them, but he couldn’t, because he was tied up. The flower children were glad, because they didn’t very much like to be washed, either; it was such a nuisance to get the dewdrops in their eyes and have them burn. You see, flower children are just as silly as other children when they are silly, and just as pretty and happy when they are bright. So they went without washing all that day, and when Mr. James, the butler, pulled the cloud curtains into the sky that night the children were all tired and in bad humor, just like you when you are dirty. They didn’t sleep very well and they had queer dreams, and Midge, the violet baby, woke up and cried three

times and kept everyone else awake. Then, the next morning, when the hundred and three small wood sprites went to pull up the sun, he came up frowning. He looked at all the flower children and it spoiled his pleasure to see how dirty and cross they were. So he simply refused to shine at all, but went behind a miserable black cloud that Butler James had forgotten. There he sulked all day. When they had no sun to brighten them, the flower children all fell sick and faded; even sulphur and molasses would not help them, for in that way they were different from you. You see, things were in a very bad way in the flower garden. The flower children were so sickly that the bees would not come to them for honey, because it had become too thin. The sun hid away day after day and refused to shine and there were large black clouds that frightened everyone. The ground got hard and stiff and squeezed the flowers terribly.

“Then Rosemary became very much worried, because she had to keep the flower children well and at the same time punish Peter. So she thought and thought and could not make up her mind what to do. Then along came Mr. Smith. You know, of course, that Mr. Smith is the king of the fairies and he rides on the Southeast Wind. He said to his wife:

“The flower children look very sickly and the sky is dark. What is the trouble, my dear?”

“She told him all the confusion she had had, but he laughed, because he was a man, and such things never bother men. He jumped on the Southeast Wind again and rushed up, up, right into the clouds and broke them to small pieces. Of course, when the clouds were all broken, the rain fell out of them and all over the flower children. And then—it was just like eating chocolate cake, it was so nice. The flower children were washed and became bright;



the sun came out because he was glad; the bees came buzzing around again, and all the world was happy. Then Queen Rosemary, on her throne in the sweetpeas, was pleased, so she forgave Peter for spilling the dewdrops. She told him, though, that whenever he was bad in the future she would tie him up, because she could count on the Southeast Wind to bring rain and do Peter's work.

“And so you see, whenever the sky grows black and the flowers look sickly and the sun hides, you may know that Peter has been misbehaving and cannot wash the children. But you must not mind, because the rain is sure to come to do his work, and there is always sunshine after the rain.”

When Flip had finished his story Mother Dear hugged Father and whispered, “Who in the world is this wonderful boy?”

She did not say it very loud, but Flip heard her and got up, with his cap in his hand, and almost spilled Liza. He bowed and said:

“It isn't really wonderful. Stories like that always happen.”

“Ridiculous!” said Father, in a very stern way. “Who are you? Where did you come from?”

“I'm Flip, Liza says,” was the answer, “and so I must be.”

“Please, Mother Dear,” said Martha Mary. “He is nice, and Liza found him. Do you think he might stay for tea?”

“And tell more stories before bedtime,” said Walter.

“And he found Hermit,” said Liza.

Mother Dear whispered something to Father that no one else heard. Then Father said:

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