

# Pets' Mews



*The NewsPaper for Instagramming Plushies, Pets, and their People*

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**PM IN TRANSLATION WILL BE BACK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**





# Making a Gingerbread House



by [@spybatmissions](#)

In many western countries, it's a tradition to make a gingerbread house for Christmas. In SpyBat's assistant's family, it was a family project that took a whole day. On a Saturday during the second half of December, they would make the whole thing from scratch, while listening to all their Christmas CDs and having a good time together!

The day before, the assistant's mother made the dough. It's absolutely fine to use store bought dough, but the mother has a recipe for a sturdier dough that makes the construction more stable. After the dough rested in the fridge overnight, it was ready to bake with. But the next morning, at first the blueprints had to be finished before the baking could commence. Usually, the assistant's dad had been working on the blueprints for some time, and on Saturday morning they had to be finished and cut out of paper. Then the baking began, and this was the assistant and her sister's main part of the project. Every piece of the blueprint had to be placed on the dough and cut out, with at least one extra piece of everything, and the dough needed to be as evenly rolled out as possible. After baking in the oven, which had to be watched carefully, the pieces sometimes had to be trimmed according to the blueprints, and then they needed to cool down. In the afternoon, when all the baking was done, it was time to assemble the pieces. For this, glue was made out of sugar that was melted in a frying pan on the stove. You had to count on a few fingertips being burned in the process, but this is the most effective edible glue. After all the pieces were put together, it was time to decorate! For this, royal icing was made. Sometimes they put candy on it, but most of the time they just used the icing.





One thing that made this family's gingerbread houses special is that they really put some thought into what they were going to make. Most of the time, they didn't just make a house. They often worked with a theme. Some examples of that are when they made a scene from a children's book by Astrid Lindgren the year the author would have turned 100 years old, when they made the German monument Brandenburger Tour in Berlin the year a German exchange student was living with them, and when they made a model of the Greek temple Parthenon when the assistant was taking a class in Roman and Greek history in school. Some other gingerbread creations they made are a smalltown, a scout camp, a circus, their own house they were living in, and their summer cottage.

After the Christmas holidays are over, it's part of the tradition to smash the gingerbread house and eat it. But to be honest, most of the time it doesn't taste very good. It's been sitting out for weeks and collected a bit of dust, but everyone in SpyBat's assistant's family always ate at least a little piece. The rest was put outside for the birds to feast on, and what the birds didn't want went into the compost.

Most of these creations were made long before SpyBat met his assistant. So, a few years ago, SpyBat wanted to make a gingerbread house too. He didn't follow a particular theme this time, but rather just made a house he thought might look pretty. He made the dough the night before, he made all the calculations for the blueprints, he baked the parts, he assembled them, and then he decorated the finished house. His assistant helped a bit, because sometimes it's just too difficult to get all the details right when you have wings and not hands with fingers. The pictures show SpyBat's gingerbread house project from a few years ago.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays, friends!



# The 12 Days of Christmas | Die Rauh Nächte - The rough nights\*

by gasbricki



\*It's the twelve nights between Christmas and 6 January  
Between years

When you think of roughness, you think of cold, darkness, storms, ice and snow that were, at least in earlier times, actually typical for this time of the year. The Rauh Nächte were, according to the rule of the farmer, also considered as determining the weather for the next twelve months.

## What customs and traditions are associated with it?

In order not to disturb the spirits and demons that carry the earth in the form of ice winds or even connect them with their own home, it was necessary in the past to follow some rituals and customs that have survived at least in principle until today.

*\*So people didn't leave their homes at that time.*

*-You should not travel*

*\*The servants were not allowed to work on the street.*

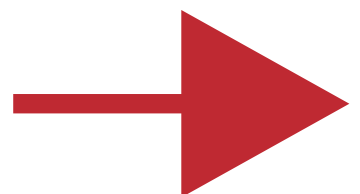
*-Do not work hard and never clean*

*\*Do not bake*

*\*Hanging clothes on the linen cord was also taboo: Passing demons could be tied in it, and a linen cloth (= shroud) on the linen cord could even be considered as a harbinger of death in the family.*

*\*Farmers scented their houses and stables with incense and other herbs - it was supposed to ward off evil spirits.*

But: The Rauh Nächte has always been a time of inner reflection and reflection about what was and what may come. So they also do something constructive.



### The wish oracle:

13 notes are labelled with a wish and thrown into a pot. Twelve of them are burnt - on every scorching night one - drawn and then burned, so that the spirits may take care of the fulfilment. You keep the 13th - for the fulfilment of this wish, are you responsible.

### Dream interpretations during the Rauhnächte

Every night represents a month of the next year. Write down the dream after waking up to check what became true during the year. You should pay special attention to symbols, recurring situations and emotions.

### Smoking and cleaning

The term "Rauhnächte" is derived - in some traditions - from the custom of burning incense. During the 12 nights, herbs, resins and woods are burned to rid the home of negative energies, to free itself from old burdens and evil spirits and to charge the house with positive energy for next year. So burning incense serves not only the physical purification, but also spiritual clarification. Special smoky mixtures were used, which varied according to regional tradition. In the past, incense was used primarily, but now there are popular herbal mixtures with sage or palo santo.

You can definitely use the usual incense cones / sticks!



\*The term "time between years" for these indefinite days refers to a gap between the lunar and solar calendars. The lunar year is only 354 days long, 11 days are missing for the astronomically correct annual run of the sun. The century that unified the counting of time, the old year ended in large parts of Europe on 24 December, while the new one began on 6 January.



# Plushie Book Review

by [@spybatmissions](#)



## Three Holidays and a Wedding - Uzma Jalaluddin & Marissa Stapley (2023)

This book is set in December 2000, when Christmas, Chanukah, and Ramadan/Eid-ul-Fitr all fell within the same week. These three religions with their cultural expressions mix in this celebratory romance book filled to the brim with holiday spirit, friendship, and love.

It all starts when a plane on its way to Toronto is forced to land in a rural small town in Canada because the area is hit by the largest snow storm in over a decade. The passengers on the plane are forced to seek shelter at the inn in the little town, and we follow two main characters and their families and friends for a few days as their lives intertwine in the most unexpected way.

Anna was supposed to celebrate Christmas with her boyfriend's family. He seems to be the most perfect boyfriend but still she doesn't feel completely herself when she is with him, so maybe a detour and a delay could just be good for her? Even more so when she finds her way back to her Jewish roots through the help of a stranger. Maryam tries to hold her family together during Ramadan while also trying to save her little sister's big Indian muslim desi wedding from being cancelled because of the snow chaos. Strangers work together to help each other and also the people living in the small town, and as friendships form and new love find it's way, it becomes the most special holiday time of their lives.

The three perspectives of Christmas, Chanukah, and Ramadan brings a rarely seen depth in holiday romance books. It's perfect for snuggling up under a blanket with a hot beverage, to really get into the Christmas/Chanukah/Ramadan/wedding spirit of the season!



DON'T FOGET, IF YOU  
HAVE A GREAT TIP FOR A  
BOOK TO READ, JUST LET  
@SPYBAT KNOW AND YOU  
CAN FEATURE IN A  
FUTURE ISSUE OF PM!  
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR  
FROM YOU!



# Welcome again to Strange New Planet! This time, we are visiting Pocieszka and Gumówka in Poland.

by fluffys fun adventures and @pocieszka\_gumowka

**Pocieszka:** "Welcome, Fluffy! I'm so happy that you finally came to visit us here! The region where I live is named Silesia. It is a mining region. We have some wonderful old mines to explore here. Primarily coal mines. The great attraction is the Guido mine. It has over 4 km of underground routes of various levels of difficulty. The extreme level shows how miners work. This is a very difficult and demanding job."

**Fluffy:** "Difficult and demanding work? I can't get near to that, I'm allergic to it! I even have a doctor's note, do you want to see it?" (pulls out a hand-written note in crayon).

**Gumówka:** 🙄

**Pocieszka:** "Silesia is also very famous for its cuisine. Let's get some Silesian dumplings and red cabbage roulade. This is a dish that everyone who comes to Silesia must try!"

**Fluffy:** "I can't eat cabbage, that sounds too healthy, and I'm allergic to healthy food! I have a doctor's note for that too!"

**Pocieszka:** "Red cabbage is not healthy at all because it is fried with bacon. But the most unhealthy dish is probably pork shank stewed in beer."

**Fluffy:** "That sounds awesome! Do you get drunk when eating it?" 😄

**Pocieszka:** "No, the beer gives the pork shank a special flavour, but alcohol always evaporates in cooking. Unfortunately."

**Fluffy:** "Can we at least wash it down with beer?"

**Pocieszka:** "Of course! Alcohol is highly recommended for this purpose, for digestion. Pure cold vodka is best."



**Fluffy:** "Really? Gosh, I love this place!" 🥰🥰🥰

**Pocieszka:** "Wait until you see the castle!"

**Fluffy:** "There's a castle? I must have it!" 🥰

**Gumówka:** "Don't you mean 'see it?'"

**Fluffy:** "No!" 😊

**Gumówka:** 😊

**Pocieszka:** "The region is rich in many attractions, there is something cool for everyone. For example, the fire brigade museum with a great collection of fire trucks, ladders and everything else people have ever used to extinguish fires."

**Fluffy:** "Can I ride on a firetruck?" 🥰

**Pocieszka:** "Of course you can!"

**Fluffy:** "And extinguish a fire?" 🥰

**Pocieszka:** "But there is no fire."

**Fluffy:** "Yet!" 🥰 (Editor's note: No, Fluffy, fires and plushies don't mix, and fire is not a toy.)

**Pocieszka:** "Uhm... let's go to the castle first. It's located near Kraków, the capital of Lesser Poland, the region neighbouring Silesia."

**Fluffy:** "Krakow, like the sausage? Is this city made out of sausages? Or are the inhabitants sausages? Can I eat them?" 🥰🥰🥰





**Pocieszka:** "Well, this is how Krakowska sausage got its name, from this city! 😊😊😊 I wouldn't risk eating people from Krakow though. In Krakow, there once lived a dragon near Wawel. To kill him, the shoemaker Szewczyk Dratewka stuffed a sheep with sulphur and fed it to the dragon. The dragon ate the sheep and then drank water from the river until it burst! The people of Krakow might try this trick on you too."

**Fluffy:** "Oh, don't worry, I wouldn't go near water! Let's go to the castle! I don't have a Polish castle yet in my collection!" 😊

**Gumówka:** "Is he serious?" 😬

**Fluffy:** "Oh yes!"

**Pocieszka:** "Well... But be careful: Under the mountain on which the Wawel Castle stands, there is a dragon's pit. And in front of it there is currently a statue of a dragon that breathes real fire!"

**Fluffy:** "Real fire? Perfect!" 😊😊😊 (runs off)

**Gumówka:** "Why...?"

**Pocieszka:** 🧑

(a fire truck stops next to them with squealing tyres and sirens turned on)

**Fluffy:** "Look what I got from the museum! Hop in!"

**Gumówka:** "I have a bad feeling about this..."

*Dear reader, the rest of the story can be found in the police report that was filed. Please do not try this at home. Remember that a certain someone is listening and you don't want to go on that naughty list!*





# Bandit's Grandma's Famous Pumpkin Seeds (American units)

by [bandit.the.niffler](#)

Human's mom's pumpkin seeds are always a hit during the holiday season. When making something with a fresh pumpkin, save those seeds and turn them into a tasty treat!

## Ingredients:

- 1 whole medium sized pumpkin
- 1/2 cup melted butter/margarine
- 2 tablespoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt

## Method:

Cut a hole in the top of the pumpkin. Remove the innards. Save the rest of the pumpkin for another recipe. Wash the innards over the sink in a strainer, picking out the orange bits. Line a baking tray with foil and preheat the oven to 375°F/191°C. In a pan, combine the seeds with the melted butter/margarine, then add the smoked paprika and salt. Add more paprika and salt if needed (seeds should be quite covered in it). Bake in the oven for 30-40 minutes or until crispy (not burnt). Enjoy! They should taste slightly smoky and salty.



Dear Reader,

We want to thank you for reading, commenting, sharing, and contributing, and supporting us for another year of PM! Plushies Build Bridges and it's been a joy to get to share a little more of our plushie community joy around the world. Please do get in touch if you have an idea for a future issue or want to get involved somehow.

A massive thank you to all our plushie journalists, photographers, and translators.

We could not do this without you! We send you our love and big hugs to you and your human pets / assistants / companions / personal photographers etc etc.



Tipsy Cat and Pets and the PM Team! xxx

