

The Fake Cake

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

Everybody in the land was rushing around like crazed chickens. The Emperor had declared a special holiday tomorrow because it was his favorite pet's birthday. Percy was the largest peacock in the palace. The Emperor loved the beautiful blue and purple tail feathers that waved like a giant fan, and wanted to have a remarkable dessert made to celebrate the bird's special day.

The Emperor had sent out invitations to all the local bakers to bring their most wonderful treats to the palace. Whoever made the most impressive one would be named the Best Baker of All. It was quite an honor for any bakery, so they all did their very best to create something spectacular.

All the shops soon were sold out of flour, sugar, and eggs. Not only were the bakeries getting busy, but clever housewives and other townsfolk were also trying their hand at baking something special. Everyone wanted to be named Best Baker of All.

On the morning of Percy's birthday, there was a line outside the palace five miles long as people carrying delightful desserts waited to show the Emperor their creations. Servants set up long tables in the courtyard, and one by one, each baker brought their platter in and placed it before the Emperor. There were ice creams and sorbets in every flavor. There were delightful pies made from every kind of fruit. There were exotic desserts from around the world like éclairs, profiteroles, baklava, cannoli, gulab jamun, apfelstrudel, babka, and maple taffy. The guards standing at attention had to wipe their mouths to stop themselves from drooling over the amazing food.

But still the Emperor was not impressed.

More and more townspeople came though the courtyard. They brought cakes galore. Short ones, fat ones, round ones, square ones; every kind you could think of, and even some you couldn't. There were layers of different flavors, icings of different colors, and decorations like flowers and stars and everything in between. The townsfolk staggered under the swaying platters of sweet treats, but still the Emperor waved them away.

As one gentleman wheeled in his dessert on a cart, he bowed. "Your Magnificence, the birthday of your charming companion requires an equally magnificent tribute. Behold, my humble attempt to capture your peacock's spectacular image!" He revealed a cake that was ten feet tall and covered in what looked like blue and purple feathers. It did, indeed, look a lot like Percy.

The Emperor nodded. "Now that," he gestured to the crowd, "is a dessert fit for an emperor."

Everyone applauded. The gentleman baker bowed again. The Emperor stood up, and began to speak. "This cake creation is truly astounding. The baker has created a delightful representation of my own dear Percy, and it is my pleasure to bestow upon him the privileged title of Best Bak—"

“But how does it taste?” a tiny little voice piped up. The crowd all gasped. Nobody interrupts the Emperor! Who has spoken?

“What’s that?” boomed the Emperor, eyes searching the courtyard.

“How does it taste?” the small voice asked again. The crowd parted to reveal a small girl standing there in a shabby brown dress and dirty white apron. She looked at the Emperor bravely. “You cannot say the gentleman is the best baker if you have not even tasted his baking.”

There was silence as the crowd held their collective breath. The Emperor cracked a smile.

“She’s quite right. Spoon!” he bellowed. Quickly, a nearby guard handed him a silver spoon.

The Emperor plunged his spoon deep into the cake. He scooped out a big piece of cake and popped it into his mouth. Suddenly, his eyes rolled, and his nose wrinkled, and he spat out the mouthful of food onto the ground. “Arrest that man!” he shouted. “Are you trying to poison me? That is not even real food. That is cardboard and sponge! You tried to trick me with a fake cake!”

The crowd was shocked. They muttered and whispered. “Fake cake! Fake cake!” The guards grabbed the man by his arms and carried him away. The Emperor turned his attention back to the small girl.

“Now there is no dessert for Percy’s birthday party celebration,” he said. “What do you suggest we do about that, young lady?”

“Well,” she spoke softly. “Your feathered friend is lovely. But birds don’t eat cakes and sweets like we do. Since it is his birthday, I made this for Percy to eat.” She showed the Emperor the little bowl she carried. In it she had made a plain, small cupcake with seeds and berries. “I hope he likes it.”

The Emperor blushed. He laughed and shook his head. “My dear,” he said to her, “only a truly kind heart would remember who this special day is for. You have made a simply perfect birthday treat for my wonderful companion, and I’m sure Percy will love it. You have my thanks, and with it, you have also won the title of Best Baker of All. You may ask for any reward you like.”

The small girl curtsied. “Thank you, your Magnificence. I have everything I need, but can I ask that I be allowed to come visit with you and Percy sometimes and play in the royal gardens?”

“Your wish is granted, with pleasure.” The Emperor bowed to the girl, and they both smiled. Then the gathered crowd feasted on all the delicious delights in the courtyard together.

Questions

1. Find a simile in the story and explain its meaning.
2. What kind of person is the Emperor, and why do you think that? Use examples.
3. Why does the Emperor accuse the man of trying to poison him?
4. Why do you think the small girl was given the title Best Baker of All?