

The Christmas Cake

Once upon a time there was a boy who felt that there was nothing right with the world. His family had just moved to another country where his father had a new job and from the time he got there Sandro, that was the boy's name, had felt lonely and unhappy. He did not like his new school, the teachers did not understand him, none of his classmates were friendly and his father was always very busy at work and got home late in the evening.

Even the start of the Christmas holidays did not cheer Sandro up. Everything seemed to go even worse than usual on the last day of school: he got a bad mark, fought with another boy and lost his science book. Sandro got home feeling very sad and downhearted. He went into the kitchen and sat down at the table where his mother was making the Christmas cake. It was a kind of cake that Sandro really enjoyed.

After his mother had heard her son's sad story she asked him if he would like a snack and, when he said he would, she put bowl of flour in front of him: "What's this?" asked Sandro, dipping his finger into the white powder and putting it into his mouth. "Flour" answered his mother and Sandro made a face. "Here are some nice fresh eggs," said she, offering him the basket. The boy looked at her, puzzled. Then she put a plate of butter and a box of starch in front of him, saying "We can add the butter and starch". Sandro was even more surprised. "Would you like sugar? Candied peel? Sultanas? Maybe baking powder?"

But Mom, these things are not a snack!" burst out Sandro. "Really?" answered his mother gently "That's funny. These are all the ingredients for making that Christmas cake you like so much. If you take them one by one they may not seem to taste nice but when you mix them together in the right quantities they make an excellent cake. It's just the same for the things that happen to us: we should not look at them one by one but see them as part of a bigger picture. You think it is awful to have moved to a different house, country and school and for your Dad to have changed his job. But, thanks to this change, your Dad can do work that he likes and I have more time to spend with you, we have a bigger house where you can keep a cat and a dog, which you always wanted, and you have a new school where you can prove your worth by studying and working hard. What's more, I'm sure that, when you stop being sulky and cross with everybody, you'll find that there are plenty of boys and girls who could become your friends".

Sandro grinned and muttered: "I think I got the message but, in the meantime, can I have a slice of cake in exchange for all the ingredients?" His mother smiled and gave him a hug. "You'll have to help me make it, lazybones, otherwise we won't be eating any cake at Christmas" she said.

On Christmas morning the family ate the cake together; it was the best they had ever tasted and Sandro felt loved and happy.

