

The Secret Baker

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Mom and the Bakers

Parents can be weird. Adults, in general, can be weird. Okay, fine, I can be kind of weird, too, at times. At least that's the impression I get whenever my mom steps into the room, rolls her eyes, and sighs.

It happened on Tuesday, the last day of spring break. Sure, I was laying on the floor with my feet in her favorite chair, staring at the TV over the top of my brow. Sure, my mouth was open and a little string of drool hung from its corner. Yeah, one leg of my pants was rolled to my knee and I was only wearing one sock.

I might have looked a little weird.

But I was comfortable.

It didn't merit her eye roll and sigh. And I certainly didn't deserve what she said.

“You've had enough screen time, Callum.”

What? Preposterous! Inconceivable!

Last day of spring break!—did she not understand? Had she no sympathy? Plus, I hadn't been awake that long, I was still in my pajamas and the sun was barely up. *Had enough screen time.* What was she thinking?

“Go get dressed and find something else to do.”

“Arrrrggghhh. Why?” I complained as I rolled onto my belly and spread my arms across the carpet.

“You've been watching that guy play Minecraft for three hours.”

Three hours? No, that couldn't be right. I turned my head just enough to see the clock. It was 10:30. Maybe I had been awake longer than I realized.

“That's not true.” I had to defend myself and make a stand. I'd be back in school tomorrow and I knew what that meant—maybe thirty minutes of screen time after I finished homework, played outside, ate supper, and took a bath. That was only if we weren't doing something as a family, which mom always seemed to want to make us do.

From the corner of my eye, I saw my mom raise an eyebrow. One eyebrow meant I was still safe. She raised one eyebrow whenever I started to push too hard, and it was always her right, never her left. Now, two eyebrows—that meant trouble, especially if it was two eyebrows combined with the use of my middle name.

“Oh, really?” mom asked.

“Yeah.” I grinned. “Half the time he was playing Fortnite.”

She sighed as she sat in her chair now that my feet were off. I still hadn’t moved from the floor. I kept my eyes on the TV as she closed my video and searched for her show.

“You’re going to watch those bakers, aren’t you?” I asked.

“Of course.”

“Uggg.”

“You’ve had your turn. Mom gets her screen time now.”

Like I said, parents are weird. Mom didn’t watch much TV but when she did it was shows about remodeling houses or baking stuff. Recently, she was binging some baking competition where a bunch of British people, with accents I could barely understand, got together and baked in a tent. I didn’t understand why people wanted to bake outside. Yeah, dad grilled things like hotdogs, burgers, and chicken outside; but that involved fire. I understood not wanting to burn the house down.

But cakes and cookies and biscuits—which weren’t really like biscuits I had ever seen but were cookies, and they

always called cakes *sponges*, and who wants to eat a sponge? Anyway... Weird. It's weird.

I didn't get why mom wanted to watch it so often. She didn't do much baking. Sure, she made cookies from time to time but they usually turned out burnt. I was always more excited when I saw grandma's car as opposed to coming in and hearing mom in the kitchen. Grandma's cookies were the best.

"What am I supposed to do?" I whined. I still hadn't moved from the floor.

"You can play Legos with Luke."

"Boring."

"You can read a book."

Not on the last day of spring break. "No."

"You can play outside."

"It's too cold." I didn't actually know that. I hadn't seen mom go outside, so she wouldn't know if I was right or wrong, either.

"Then wear a jacket," mom replied.

I sighed.

“I don’t care what you do, Callum. Just don’t interrupt my show.”

This was getting me nowhere. I had to appeal to a higher power.

“Daaaad.”

Dad was sitting on the couch with my two-year-old sister, Lily. He was reading *The Grouchy Ladybug* for the fifth time that morning. It was Lily’s favorite book.

Dad chuckled. “Nope. Don’t *dad* me on this.”

“Fine.” I got on my hands and knees and crawled toward the stairs.

I started to crawl up the stairs when mom objected. “You’re ten, Cal. Walk like a big boy.”

I pushed myself to my feet and bounded the rest of the way, two stairs at a time. Luke sat in the middle of our bedroom floor, surrounded by a pile of Lego bricks and a few cars and planes he had built.

“Hi Cow!” he grinned. Luke was six and had a speech impediment. He always called me *Cow* or *Cowwum*. “Wanna see my car?” he asked as I flopped, facedown, onto my bed.

“Sure.” I turned my head and held out my hand. He placed a car in my palm. The colors made it look tie-dyed,

but its shape was symmetrical. He pointed to different features and told me what they were.

“Driver sits here, that’s me. You can be the passenger. This is a snow pwow. These are guns but not for buwwets. They shoot wazers to get rid of snow.” Luke grinned from ear-to-ear at his creation.

Luke annoyed me sometimes. He annoyed me a lot.

But he was really good at Legos.

“Wanna pway?”

I sat up and pushed my curly blond hair out of my face. I didn’t have anything better to do.

“Sure.”