A Cake for the County Fair



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About This Book

At a Glance

- **Reading level:** English level A1+ (CEFR)
- **Age:** 7+
- **Length:** 10 chapters · ±10,900 words

Edition

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Version	Date	Notes
1.0	October 2026	First edition

About the Story

The Series

Rosie's Bakery sits on Main Street in the little American town of Maple Falls, where Evie and her mom bake fresh bread every morning and cakes to order. Evie loves to bake — and most of all to decorate, with a ring of red cherries on top. In each book she takes on one baking job, from the first mixing bowl to the last cherry, while her little brother Billy tastes everything and Crumble the shop dog waits for a crumb. Warm, gentle stories for children just starting to read English.

This Book

It is August in Maple Falls, and there is a baking contest at the county fair. Evie, Sara, Tess, Billy and Sam want to bake one cake together, as a team. But the rules are hard. Two hours in a big white tent. No moms and no dads. No grown-ups help with the baking!

Mrs. Hill has a small jar of Grandpa's maple syrup, and Evie has an idea: a maple cake. But the first cake goes flat in the middle, and the icing runs off the second one. And on the day of the fair, a girl at table three drops all her eggs…

Can five kids bake the best cake at the county fair?

Chapter 1: The Paper on the Wall



It was a hot Monday morning in August.

The sun was big and yellow, and the grass in Maple Falls was dry.

Evie and Billy walked down Main Street with Tess and Sam.

Sara stood at the door of her store. She waved at them.

“Come in and look!” she said. “My mom pinned the paper from the picnic on the wall.”

Inside the store it was cool. There were apples, pears and red cherries in the boxes.

The paper was on the wall, with a little red pin at the top.

“What is a pin?” said Sam.

Sara’s mom showed him a pin. “It holds the paper on the wall,” she said.

Evie read the big words at the top. “The county fair,” she said.

“And here are the rules,” said Sara.

“What are rules?” said Sam.

“Rules say what you can and cannot do,” said Tess.

“I will read them,” said Sara. “One by one.”

She put her finger on the paper.

“Rule one. Kids from six to thirteen.”

“I am six!” said Sam. “I can go!”

“And I am seven,” said Billy. “I can go, too.”

“Rule two. One team, one cake.”

“What is a team?” said Billy.

“We are five kids, and we bake one cake. Then we are a team,” said Evie.

Sam smiled a big smile. He liked the word team.

“Rule three. Bring your own things,” Sara read. “Bowls, spoons, flour and eggs.”

“Rule four. You bake at the fair, and you have two hours.”

Tess counted on her fingers.

“One hour is sixty minutes,” she said. “Two hours is a hundred and twenty minutes.”

“Is that a lot?” said Sam.

“For one cake it is not a lot. But it is not a little,” said Tess.

“Rule five,” said Sara. She read it slowly. “No grown-ups help with the baking.”

Billy looked up. “What are grown-ups?”

“Big people, Billy. Moms and dads,” said Evie.

“No Mom? No Dad?” said Billy.

“No grown-ups at the cake. Only kids,” said Sara.

"Where do the grown-ups go?" said Sam.

"They sit on a bench at the back, and they watch," said Sara's mom.

Billy was quiet for a moment. Then he smiled.

"No Mom at the cake," he said. "So I can taste a lot!"

They all laughed.

"Rule six," said Sara. "The judge tastes the cakes."

"What is a judge?" said Billy.

"The judge tastes every cake, and then the judge says who wins," said Tess.

"Every cake?" said Billy. "I want to be the judge!"

Sara's mom laughed. "You are seven, Billy. The judge is a grown-up."

Evie looked at the paper again. Then she looked at her friends.

"Now we know the rules," said Evie. "But what do we bake?"

Nobody said a word.

"A cherry cake?" said Billy.

"But we always bake a cherry cake," said Sara.

Tess pushed up her glasses. "We need a good idea," she said.

"What is an idea?" said Sam.

"An idea is a new plan in your head," said Tess.

Evie thought for a long time. Then she smiled.

"Mrs. Hill always has a good idea," she said.

They walked to the town square. The big maple tree was green and tall, and the shade was cool.

Behind the tree was Pine Lane, with only one house. It was small and blue, with a white door and three steps.

Evie went up the steps and knocked on the door.

Mrs. Hill opened it with her cane in her hand.

“Five kids on my steps on a hot Monday,” she said. “What is this?”

“We need an idea for the county fair,” said Evie.

Mrs. Hill let them in.

Her kitchen was small, and five kids made it very full.

“Sit down,” said Mrs. Hill. “First I have a surprise for you.”

She took a big pan. She mixed flour, milk and eggs in a bowl.

“Pancakes!” said Billy.

“In March I said one thing to you,” said Mrs. Hill. “Do you remember?”

“You will see!” said all of them.

Mrs. Hill smiled. “I said you will see. Now you see.”

She made a pancake for Evie, Sara, Tess and Sam. Then she made one for Billy, and one more for Billy.

“Billy, that is two,” said Evie.

“I am the taster,” said Billy. “A taster needs two.”

Mrs. Hill laughed. “Then the taster gets two. But that is the last one.”

“Wait,” she said. “Pancakes need one more thing.”

She took a small glass jar down from the shelf. It was full of thick, golden syrup.

Evie knew that jar.

“Grandpa’s syrup!” she said. “The small jar from March!”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Hill. “I kept it.”

“You kept it all spring and all summer?” said Sara.

“I kept it for a big day,” said Mrs. Hill.

She put a little syrup on every pancake. Not a lot, only a little.

Billy tasted first and closed his eyes. “Mmm,” he said.

Evie tasted, too. The syrup was sweet and good.

She thought of Grandpa’s old trees and the forty buckets of sap.

Then she looked at the jar for a long time.

“Mrs. Hill, is the county fair a big day?” she said.

Mrs. Hill smiled. “Maybe it is. What is your idea?”

“A maple cake,” said Evie. “A cake with Grandpa’s syrup. Because we live in Maple Falls.”

Sara and Sam clapped. Billy clapped with syrup on his hands.

Sara took out her pencil and wrote it on her list.

“Maple cake,” she said. “That is the first line.”

But Tess did not clap. She pushed up her glasses.

“Wait,” she said. “How do you bake a maple cake?”

Nobody said a word.

Evie did not know how. Sara and Tess did not know how either.

“Ask your mom, Evie,” said Mrs. Hill. “Rosie knows every cake in Maple Falls.”

“Thank you for the pancakes!” said the kids.

“A promise is a promise,” said Mrs. Hill.

They ran home to the bakery, and the bell on the door rang.

Mom was in the kitchen with baby June.

“Mom, we have an idea!” said Evie. “A maple cake for the fair!”

“And Mrs. Hill made pancakes,” said Billy. “Two for me.”

Mom laughed. Then she went to the shelf and took down an old box.

In the box was an old card with a lot of lines on it.

"A maple cake," said Mom. "I baked it one time, a long time ago."

Then she turned the card over. On the back were more lines. A lot more lines.

"But it is hard," said Mom. "Very hard."

Chapter 2: The First Try



It was Tuesday morning, and the bakery was warm.

Evie, Billy, Sara, Tess and Sam stood in the kitchen. All five had their aprons on. Tess had her purple apron, and Billy had his small blue one.

Mom sat at the big table with baby June on her lap. Crumble lay under the table.

The old box was on the table, too. Mom took out the old card.

“Here is the recipe,” said Mom.

“What is a recipe?” said Sam.

“A recipe says what you put in a cake,” said Evie. “And how much.”

Mom gave the card to Sara. “Sara, you read the list. That is your job.”

“And you, Mom?” said Billy.

Mom smiled. “At the fair I sit on the bench. So today I only watch.”

“Only watch?” said Billy. “No help?”

"No help with the baking," said Mom. "You are the team."

Sara looked at the card. It was old, with a lot of small lines.

"Flour, sugar, butter, eggs and milk," she read. "And maple syrup."

"Maple syrup!" said Billy. "Mrs. Hill's jar?"

"No, Billy," said Evie. "Mrs. Hill's jar is for the fair. It is still on her shelf, and it is nearly full."

Sara put a bottle on the table. "My mom gave us this syrup from the store. It is for the tries."

"What is a try?" said Sam.

"A try is a test cake," said Tess. "We bake it here first, because at the fair we have only two hours."

"And if the try is not good?" said Sam.

"Then we try again," said Evie.

"Sam, you carry," said Sara. "Flour, sugar, butter and eggs."

Sam carried the things from the shelf to the table. He carried the flour, then the sugar, then the butter. He carried the eggs very slowly.

"Four eggs," said Sam. "And I did not break one!"

Tess took her cups and her spoons. She put flour in a cup. She looked at it for a long time. Then she took a little out.

"Now it is right," she said.

She did the sugar, the milk and the syrup, too. Not a little more, and not a little less.

Evie took the big bowl. She put in the butter and the sugar, and she mixed. Then she put in the eggs, one by one.

"Now the flour," said Sara. "And then the milk and the syrup."

Evie mixed and mixed. The batter was soft and light brown.

"Can I taste?" said Billy.

"Not the batter, Billy," said Mom. "It has eggs in it. You taste the cake. Later."

So Billy put a little syrup on a spoon. He tasted it and closed his eyes.

"Mmm," he said. "Good syrup."

"That is not tasting," said Sara. "That is eating!"

They all laughed.

Sara read the card again. "One round pan," she said.

Evie took the big round pan. She put butter in it. Then she poured in the batter. It was one big cake.

"The card says forty minutes in the oven," said Sara.

Evie put on the big oven gloves. She put the pan in the oven, and she closed the door.

"Now we wait," said Tess. "Forty minutes."

Then the bell on the shop door rang.

"That is Mr. Green," said Mom. "He wants his bread."

She went into the shop with June.

The kitchen was quiet. Evie and Sara washed the bowl and the spoons.

Billy stood by the oven.

"I want to see the cake," he said.

He opened the oven door a little. Hot air came out.

"It is not big yet," said Billy, and he closed the door.

"Billy, come and help," said Evie. "Put the spoons away."

Billy put the spoons away. Then he went back to the oven.

He opened the door again. This time he opened it wide.

"Now it is big!" he said. "Sam, come and see!"

Sam ran to the oven. "It is high!" he said.

Billy closed the door.

The bell rang again, and then again. It was a busy morning in the shop.

The kids waited. Tess counted on her fingers.

At last Tess said, “Forty minutes. It is time.”

Mom came back into the kitchen with June.

Evie put on the oven gloves. She opened the oven and took out the pan. She put it on the table.

Nobody said a word.

The sides of the cake were high and brown. But the middle was not high. The middle was flat and low.

“What is that?” said Sam. “Is it a hole?”

“It is not a hole,” said Tess. “The middle went down.”

“Went down?” said Sam.

“It was high,” said Tess. “And then it went down.”

Evie looked at the cake. She felt sad. It was their first try, and it was flat.

Billy did not say a word. His face was red. He looked at the floor.

“I only looked,” he said in a small voice.

“Looked?” said Sara. “Looked at what?”

“At the cake,” said Billy. “In the oven. Two times.” He sat down on the floor next to Crumble. Crumble put his nose on Billy’s hand.

Mom put her hand on Billy’s head.

“It is a first try, Billy,” she said. “A first try can go wrong. That is OK.”

Evie took a knife and cut the cake. It was soft at the sides, and wet and heavy in the middle.

“Billy,” said Evie. “You are the taster. You taste first.”

He tasted a little piece from the side.

"It is flat," he said. "But it is sweet. And it tastes of maple."

Sam tasted, too. "It is good!" he said.

"It is good at the side," said Tess. "But not in the middle."

Mom looked at the cake. Then she looked at the oven door. Then she looked at Billy.

Mom knew. Evie saw it in her face.

"Mom, what went wrong?" said Evie.

Mom smiled. "I know, Evie. But I will not say it. Not now."

"Why not?" said Sara.

"At the fair I sit on the bench," said Mom. "And then you find it. You, and not me. So find it now, here, at home."

The kids looked at the flat cake.

"Was it the flour?" said Sara.

"No," said Tess. "The flour was right. I did it two times."

"Was it the eggs?" said Sam.

"No," said Evie. "Four eggs. The card says four."

Tess pushed up her glasses. She looked at the cake for a long time. Then she looked at the card, and then at the oven.

"One thing went wrong," said Tess. "And I will find it."

Chapter 3: Two Thin Cakes



It was Wednesday morning. The sun was hot again.

Tess came to the bakery very early. Sam ran in after her.

“Tess thought about the cake all night,” said Sam. “And at dinner, too.”

Evie, Billy and Sara were in the kitchen. Mom sat at the big table with baby June. Crumble lay under the table.

The flat cake was on a plate. Only half of it was there now.

Tess stood by the flat cake. She pushed up her glasses.

“I found it,” she said.

“Found what?” said Evie.

“The thing that went wrong,” said Tess. “It was not the flour. It was not the eggs.”

She walked to the oven. She put her hand on the oven door.

“It was the door,” she said.

“The door?” said Sam.

Tess looked at Billy. Her face was kind.

“Billy, yesterday you told us, ‘I only looked. In the oven. Two times.’”

“Yes,” said Billy. “I said it.”

“To look in the oven, you open the door,” said Tess. “And you opened it two times. One time a little, and one time wide.”

“Hot air came out,” said Sam. “I saw it.”

“And then the middle went down,” said Tess.

She looked at Mom. “Is that it?”

Mom smiled. “Yes, Tess. That is it. You found it.”

Then Mom told them in plain words.

“A cake in the oven needs heat,” she said. “Heat is the hot air in the oven. When you open the door, the heat goes out. The cold air goes in. And the middle goes down.”

Billy looked at the floor. “I did not know,” he said.

Mom put her hand on his head. “No, you did not know. But now you know, Billy. That is good.”

Billy smiled a little.

“We need a new rule,” said Evie. “A rule for the oven door.”

Sara wrote it on her list. Then she read it out.

“Nobody opens the oven door.”

“And who watches the door?” said Evie.

Sam jumped up. “Me! I watch the door!”

“Sam watches the door,” said Sara, and she wrote it.

“And me?” said Billy. “I am the taster.”

“You taste first,” said Evie. “But only at the end.”

"Only at the end," said Billy. "OK."

They began the second try.

Sara read the card. Sam carried the flour, the sugar and the butter. He carried the eggs very slowly. Tess measured. Evie mixed.

They used the bottle of syrup from Sara's store again.

"Is Mrs. Hill's jar still full?" said Sam.

"Nearly full," said Sara. "It is for the fair."

Evie poured the batter into the big round pan, and she put it in the oven. She closed the door.

"Forty minutes," said Tess.

Sam stood at the oven door. He did not move.

Evie and Sara made the icing with butter, sugar and a little syrup. Tess measured it. The icing was soft and light brown.

After twenty minutes, Billy walked to the oven.

"Nobody opens it!" said Sam.

Billy laughed. "I know, Sam. I only want to stand here."

So Billy stood next to Sam. Nobody opened the door.

At last Tess said, "Forty minutes. It is time."

Evie opened the oven and took out the pan. She put it on the table.

The cake was high at the sides, and it was high in the middle.

"It went up!" said Sam. "And it stayed up!"

"In the oven a cake goes up," said Tess. "Bakers say the cake rises."

"And this cake rose very well," said Mom.

They all clapped. June clapped, too.

"Can I taste now?" said Billy.

"Not yet," said Evie. "First the icing."

Evie took the cake out of the pan. She put it on a big plate. Then she took the icing, and she put it all on top.

The icing began to melt. It got soft, and then it began to run.

It ran down the sides. It ran onto the plate. It ran onto the table.

"It is running!" said Sam.

One drop fell on the floor. Crumble came and ate it.

Billy laughed. Sam laughed. Sara and Tess laughed, too.

But Evie did not laugh. She looked at the cake. Her face was hot. She was sad, and a little mad at the icing.

"It melted," said Evie. "Why did it melt?"

Billy stopped laughing. He stood next to Evie.

"Sorry, Evie," he said. "It is funny. But it is your icing."

Tess held her hand over the cake. "The cake is still warm," she said. "Warm cake, soft icing. Then the icing melts."

She looked at Evie. "A warm cake needs time."

"Time for what?" said Sam.

"Time to cool," said Tess. "Cool is not hot, and not cold. The cake goes from hot to cool."

"Tess is right," said Mom. "You put icing on a cool cake. Not on a warm cake."

"How long?" said Evie.

"A big, thick cake?" said Mom. "One hour. Maybe two."

Tess counted on her fingers. "Forty minutes in the oven. Then one hour to cool, or two. At the fair we have only two hours!"

Tess looked at the big round cake. It was very high now.

"This cake is thick," she said, and she held her hands far apart. Then she held them close. "But this is thin."

"Thin?" said Sam.

"Not high," said Tess. "Low and flat."

Then she smiled. "Two thin cakes cool fast."

"Why?" said Sam.

"Because thin cakes lose the heat fast," said Tess.

Evie looked up. "Two thin cakes. Icing in the middle, and icing on top."

"Can I ask?" said Tess to Mom. "How long does a thin cake bake?"

"About twenty-five minutes," said Mom.

Tess took Sara's list and a pen. She counted, and she wrote.

"We mix for twenty minutes," she said. "The thin cakes bake for twenty-five. They cool for forty. The icing is twenty. That is a hundred and five minutes."

"And we have a hundred and twenty," said Sara.

Tess put down the pen. "Then we have fifteen minutes left," she said. "No more."

"Now it is the end," said Billy. "Can I taste?"

"Now you can," said Evie.

Billy took a spoon. He put a little cake and a lot of icing on it. He tasted it and closed his eyes.

"Mmm," he said. "The icing is not on the cake. But it is very good."

Now Evie laughed, too.

Then she looked at Tess's numbers again. Fifteen minutes. That was not a lot.

"And at the fair?" said Evie. "What if something goes wrong?"

Nobody said a word.

Chapter 4: “Then It Is Not Our Cake”



It was Thursday morning. The five kids were in the bakery kitchen again. Mom sat at the big table with baby June.

“The third try,” said Sara. “Two thin cakes.”

Tess put two round pans on the table. They were not deep. They were thin and flat.

“Two pans, two thin cakes,” said Tess.

Sam stood at the oven door. “And nobody opens it,” he said.

“Nobody opens it,” said Billy. He put his hands in his pockets.

They began. Sara read the card. Sam carried the eggs very slowly. Tess measured the flour and the sugar. Evie mixed.

Tess looked at the clock on the wall. “Twenty minutes,” she said. “The mixing is done.”

Evie poured the batter into the two pans. Each pan got half. Tess looked at them for a long time.

"The same," she said. "Good."

Evie put the pans in the oven, and she closed the door. Sam did not move.

"Twenty-five minutes," said Tess.

They waited. June played with a spoon. Crumble slept under the table. Billy walked to the oven one time, but he did not open it. He only stood next to Sam.

At last Tess said, "It is time."

Evie opened the oven. Two cakes came out. They were thin, but they were high in the middle. They were light brown and soft.

"They stayed up!" said Sam.

Then Mom got up. She took something from the shelf and put it on the table. It had a lot of thin lines of metal, with little holes between them.

"What is that?" said Sam.

"A rack," said Mom. "You put a hot cake on a rack. The air goes under the cake, and over it. Then it cools fast."

Evie took the cakes out of the pans. She put them on the rack.

"Now we wait forty minutes," said Tess.

"Forty!" said Billy. "That is a long time."

"A thick cake needs one hour. Maybe two," said Tess.

They made the icing. Butter, sugar and a little syrup. Evie mixed it. It was soft and light brown.

After forty minutes, Evie put her hand on the first cake. It was cool. She put her hand on the second cake. It was cool, too.

"Now," she said.

She put the first cake on a big plate. She put icing on top of it. Then she put the second cake on the icing. Then more icing on top.

The icing did not melt. It did not run. It stayed on the cake.

"Icing in the middle," said Sara. "And icing on top. It worked!"

Then Evie took the cherries. She put them on top, in a ring. And she put one red cherry in the middle.

"Now it is our maple cake," said Evie.

They all looked at it. June clapped her hands.

"It is done," said Billy. "Can I taste now?"

"Now you can," said Evie, and she smiled.

Evie cut a piece. Billy took a fork, and he tasted it. He closed his eyes for a long time.

"Billy?" said Sam.

Billy opened his eyes. "It is the best cake in the world," he said.

They all laughed. Then they all tasted the cake. It was soft, and it tasted of maple.

"It is very good," said Mom. "And you made it. Not me."

Then Sara took a new page for her list.

"Now we need a list for the fair," she said. "All our things go in one box."

She wrote, and she read it out.

"Two bowls. Four spoons. Tess's cups. Two thin pans. The rack. Flour, sugar, butter and milk. The cherries. Mrs. Hill's jar."

"And eggs," said Tess.

"Eggs," said Sara. "Four eggs."

"Four eggs and two extra," said Evie. "A baker always bakes extra. Mom says so."

Mom smiled. "I do."

So Sara wrote: "Six eggs. Four, and two extra."

On Friday Dad put a big box on the kitchen table. The kids put their things in it. Two bowls, four spoons, Tess's cups, two pans and the rack. Flour, sugar and butter. Sam put the eggs in a small box of their own, very slowly.

"The milk and the cherries go in on the day of the fair," said Evie. "They need to be cold."

Then the bell on the shop door rang. It was Mrs. Hill, with her cane in her hand.

"I have something for your box," she said.

She took the small jar out of her bag. It was still nearly full. The syrup was thick and golden.

"Grandpa's syrup," said Evie.

"I kept it for a big day," said Mrs. Hill. "Tomorrow is a big day."

Evie took the jar with two hands. She put it in the box, next to the rack. Sara checked it off her list.

"Now the box is full," said Sara.

That night, Evie sat in the kitchen with Mom. Billy was in bed. June was asleep. It was quiet.

Mom looked at the box. Then she looked at Evie.

"Evie," she said, "the icing is the hard part. And the time at the fair is short."

"Yes," said Evie. "Fifteen minutes left. No more."

"Icing is not baking," said Mom. "I can make the icing at home, and you take it to the fair. Then you have more time."

Evie did not say a word. She looked at the box, and she thought about it.

The icing was soft and light brown. It was in the middle of the cake, and on top. Evie mixed it every time. Tess measured it. Billy tasted it. It was their icing.

Then Evie looked at Mom.

"Thank you, Mom," she said. "But the icing is part of the cake. And the rule says kids only. Then it is not our cake."

Mom was quiet for a moment. Then she smiled.

"You are right," said Mom. "I am glad you said it."

She gave Evie a hug.

"Then it is your cake," said Mom. "All of it. And I sit on the bench and watch."

Evie went up to bed. She lay in the dark, but she did not sleep.

She thought about the big box. She thought about the jar and the two thin cakes. She thought about the cherries on top.

Evie was excited, because the fair was a big day. She wanted it to come.

But she was a little nervous, too. Her hands felt cold. What if the eggs broke? What if the icing ran? What if the cake went down?

"We are a team," she said to the dark. "Tess measures. Sara reads the list. Sam watches the door. Billy tastes. And I do the cherries."

She closed her eyes. She opened them again.

Tomorrow was the county fair.

Chapter 5: The Big White Tent



It was the day of the fair. Evie got up very early. The sun was not up yet, but she was not tired.

She ran down to the kitchen. Mom was there with baby June. The big box stood on the table.

“The milk and the cherries,” said Evie.

Mom took them out of the fridge. They were nice and cold. Evie put them in the box, on top.

Then the bell on the shop door rang. It was Sara, Tess and Sam. Sara had her list in her hand.

“The milk?” said Sara.

“In the box,” said Evie.

“The cherries?”

“In the box.”

Sara checked them off. “Good,” she said. “Now we can go.”

Dad carried the box out to his truck. He put it in the back. Billy came with his little red wagon, and Dad put it next to the box.

“Why the wagon?” said Sam.

“For the box,” said Billy. “The fair is big. My wagon can carry it.”

Mom sat in front with June. Evie, Billy, Tess and Sam sat in the back seat. Mr. and Mrs. Lee came in their car, with Sara. Grandpa and Mrs. Hill came later.

They drove out of Maple Falls. They drove past farms and fields.

“I know what a fair is,” said Sam. “But what is a county?”

“A county is a lot of towns and farms,” said Tess. “Maple Falls is in our county.”

“Once a year, all the farms and towns of the county come to one big field,” said Dad. “There are animals, games, rides and food. And there are prizes. For the best pie, the biggest pumpkin and the best cow.”

“And the best cake,” said Billy.

“And the best cake,” said Dad, and he smiled.

Then they saw it. It was a big green field, and it was full of people. There were flags in red, blue and yellow. A big wheel stood high over the fair. It turned very slowly.

“What is that?” said Sam.

“A Ferris wheel,” said Dad. “You sit in it, and it goes up high.”

Dad stopped the truck. He put the box in Billy’s wagon. Billy pulled the wagon, and Sam pushed it.

They walked past the animals. There were cows in pens. A pen is a little place with a fence. A brown cow looked at Billy.

“Moo,” said the cow.

“Moo,” said Billy. He laughed, because the cow looked right at him.

Then they came to the pigs. A big pink pig lay in the hay. It was asleep.

"It is a very big pig," said Sam.

"And it is asleep," said Billy. "At a fair! I cannot sleep at a fair."

"What is hay?" said Sam.

"Hay is dry grass," said Tess. "Cows eat it."

There were big round bales of hay, too.

Then Evie smelled something sweet and warm. It was popcorn.

"Popcorn!" said Billy.

"After the contest, Billy," said Mom.

Then they saw the big white tent. It was very big and very white. The front of the tent was open. By the door stood a tall pole, and on the pole was a big bell.

They went in. It was warm in the tent. There were ten tables in two rows. On every table stood a small oven. At the back there were long benches.

"Ten tables," said Tess. "Ten ovens. Ten teams."

A tall man came to them. He had a gray beard and a white hat. He had a small notebook in his hand, and a fork in his pocket.

"Good morning," he said. "I am Mr. Brook. I am the judge."

Sam looked up at him. "Do you taste all the cakes?"

"All ten," said Mr. Brook. He did not smile, but his eyes were kind.

"And then you say who wins," said Sam.

"And then I say who wins," said Mr. Brook. "Who are you?"

"We are the kids from Rosie's Bakery," said Evie. "There are five of us. We are a team."

Mr. Brook wrote it in his notebook. "Table four," he said.

Billy pulled the wagon to table four. The kids took their things out of the box. Two bowls, four spoons, Tess's cups, two thin pans and the rack. Flour, sugar, butter and milk. The cherries. Mrs. Hill's jar.

Then Sam took the small box with the eggs. He put it on the table, very slowly.

"Six eggs," said Sam. "Not one broke."

At table five there were two kids. They were a boy and a girl, about ten, with dark curly hair. They had the same eyes and the same nose. On their table was a big bag of red apples.

"Hi," said the girl. "We are the Carter twins."

"What are twins?" said Sam.

"Two kids, one birthday," said the boy, and he laughed.

"We bake an apple cake," said the girl.

"And we bake a maple cake," said Billy. "The best cake."

Then Evie looked at table three. A girl stood there alone. She had red hair in two braids, and freckles on her nose. She had a yellow dress. On her table stood a small basket with eggs in it.

Evie walked over to her.

"Hi," said Evie. "Where is your team?"

The girl smiled. "I am Molly. I bake alone. I am my team."

"Alone?" said Evie.

"My mom has a cold," said Molly. "She is in bed at home. I came with my dad."

She waved to the benches. A man at the back waved, too.

"I am Evie," said Evie. "And that is my team."

Molly looked at the five kids at table four. "Five!" she said. "That is a big team. But I am fast."

Then Mr. Brook stood by the door.

"Grown-ups, go to the benches, please," he said. "No grown-ups help with the baking. Kids only."

Mom gave Evie a hug. "I will sit on the bench and watch," she said.

Dad held June. Mr. and Mrs. Lee sat next to them. All the grown-ups sat at the back.

Evie looked at her team. Tess pushed up her glasses. Sara held her list. Sam stood at the little oven door. Billy put his hands in his pockets.

Evie was excited. But she was a little nervous, too. Her hands felt cold again.

Mr. Brook went out to the big bell. He took the rope, and he pulled it.

Ding! Ding! Ding!

"You have two hours," said Mr. Brook. "Start!"

Sara read the first line of her list. Tess took the flour. Evie took a bowl.

Then they heard a loud crash. It came from table three.

Evie turned. Molly stood very still. Her mouth was open.

Her basket was on the floor.

Chapter 6: Eggs on the Floor



Evie ran to table three. Sara and Tess ran with her.

The basket lay on the floor. Next to it lay the eggs. There was white and yellow egg all over the floor.

Molly looked down, and she did not say a word.

“Are they broken?” said Evie.

Molly got down on the floor. She took the basket and looked in it. One egg, two eggs, three eggs. All of them were broken.

“All of them,” said Molly. Her voice was very small.

Her face went red, and her eyes were wet. Then a tear ran down her cheek, and one more. Tears are the water from your eyes when you are sad. Molly was very sad.

“I bumped the table,” she said. “The basket fell. It was my fault.”

Billy and Sam came, too. Billy looked at the floor. Then he looked at Molly.

"Can you get new eggs?" said Billy.

"No," said Molly. "The store is in town. That is far. And we only have two hours."

"And the rule says: bring your own things," said Sara.

"And my dad cannot help me," said Molly. "No grown-ups."

At the back of the tent, Molly's dad stood up. He looked at Molly, but he did not come. He sat down on the bench again. He knew the rule, too.

Molly looked at her empty basket. "No eggs, no cake," she said.

Evie looked at Sara. Sara looked at her list.

"We have six eggs," said Sara. "We need four. Two are extra."

"A baker always bakes extra," said Billy. "Mom says so."

"How many eggs do you need, Molly?" said Evie.

"Three," said Molly. "My cake needs three eggs."

"But we only have two extra," said Sara.

Tess pushed up her glasses. She looked at Molly's table and at Molly's pan.

"Then make your cake smaller," said Tess. "Two eggs, and a smaller cake. I can measure it for you."

"Smaller?" said Molly.

"A little smaller," said Tess. "It is still a cake."

Molly looked at Tess. Then she looked at Evie. Her eyes were still wet.

"Wait," said Evie. "First I will ask Mr. Brook."

Mr. Brook stood by the door of the tent. He had his notebook in his hand. Evie walked to him. Her hands were cold again.

"Mr. Brook?" she said.

The judge looked down at her. He was very tall.

"Molly's eggs are broken," said Evie. "She has no eggs now. But we have two extra eggs. Can kids help kids?"

Mr. Brook looked at table three. He saw the eggs on the floor. Then he looked at Evie again.

"The rule is about grown-ups," he said. "Kids may help kids."

"Thank you!" said Evie.

Mr. Brook wrote in his notebook. He did not smile, but his eyes were kind.

Evie ran back to table four. "Yes!" she said. "Kids may help kids. Mr. Brook said so."

"Good," said Sara.

"Sam," said Evie. "Two eggs for Molly, please."

Sam opened the small egg box. He took one egg in his left hand and one egg in his right hand. He walked to table three, and he walked very slowly. Very, very slowly.

"Do not run, Sam," said Billy.

"I never run with eggs," said Sam. "I carry. That is my job."

He put the two eggs on Molly's table. Not one broke.

Molly looked at the two eggs. Then she looked at Evie.

"Why are you helping me?" she said. "We are in the same contest."

Evie did not have to think about it.

"Because you need eggs," she said. "And we have eggs."

Molly laughed a little. Her eyes were still wet, but now she smiled, too.

Tess went back to table four. She came back with her cups and her spoons.

"Your recipe, please," said Tess.

Molly gave her a little card. Tess read it, and then she pushed up her glasses.

"Three eggs and three cups of flour," said Tess. "But you have two eggs now. Then you need less flour. Not three cups. Two cups."

"Only two?" said Molly.

"Two," said Tess. "It is the same cake. Only smaller."

Tess took the cup. She put in the flour, and she made it flat on top. One cup. She did it again. Two cups. Then she stopped.

"And the sugar?" said Molly.

Tess looked at the card again. "Here it says one and a half cups," she said. "Now it is one cup. One cup is right."

Molly watched her. "You are very fast," she said.

"And she is never wrong," said Sara. "Tess measures for us."

At table four, the others waited. Billy sat on the floor by the table. Sam stood at the little oven door. Sara held her list. Evie looked at the flour.

"Line one," said Sara. "Flour. Tess measures the flour."

"I can do it," said Evie. She took the cup.

Then she stopped. She thought of Sam's birthday cake. She was in a hurry that day. Too much flour, and the cake was hard.

Evie put the cup down. "No," she said. "Tess measures. That is her job."

"We wait for Tess," said Sara.

"We can count the eggs," said Sam. He opened the small box. "One, two, three, four. Four eggs!"

"Four eggs," said Sara. She looked at her list. "Four is right."

On the back wall of the tent there was a big clock. Evie looked at it, and the big hand moved on and on.

At table five, the Carter twins cut their red apples. At table two, a boy poured milk into a bowl. In every bowl in the tent, a cake began. But not at table four.

Evie looked at table three. Tess was still there. She held a cup of milk up to her eyes.

“How long, Tess?” called Evie.

“Not long,” said Tess. “One more cup.”

Evie looked at the clock again. The big hand moved on.

Chapter 7: Nobody Opens the Door



Tess came back to table four. She put her cups and her spoons on the table.

“Molly has her flour and her sugar,” she said. “Now she can bake.”

Evie looked at the big clock on the back wall.

“We are late,” said Evie.

“Late?” said Sam. “What is late?”

“Late is after the right time,” said Tess. “We wanted to start at the bell. But we started after the bell.”

“How late are we?” said Billy.

Tess looked at the clock. “Five minutes,” she said.

Sara looked at her list. “We had fifteen minutes extra,” she said. “Now we have ten.”

“Ten is good,” said Tess. “But we have to be fast.”

“Fast, but not wrong,” said Evie.

Sara held up her list. “Line one,” she said. “Flour.”

Tess took her cup. She put in the flour, and she made it flat on top. One cup. Two cups. She was fast, but every cup was right.

“Line two. Sugar and butter.”

Tess measured the sugar. Evie put the butter and the sugar in the big bowl. She mixed and mixed. Her arm went round and round.

“Line three. Eggs.”

Sam opened the small egg box. He gave Evie the eggs, one at a time. Evie cracked them on the side of the bowl. One egg, two eggs, three eggs, four eggs.

“No eggs on the floor,” said Billy.

At table three, Molly heard it. She laughed, and Billy laughed, too.

“Line four. Milk,” said Sara.

Tess poured the milk into her cup. She held it up to her eyes.

“And now the jar,” said Sara.

Evie opened Mrs. Hill’s jar. The syrup was thick and golden. It smelled of maple. Tess measured it with a big spoon.

“Half for the cake,” she said. “And half for the icing.”

“Mrs. Hill kept it for a big day,” said Sam. “Today is the big day.”

Evie mixed again. The batter was soft and light brown. Billy looked into the bowl.

“Can I taste?” he said.

“At the end,” said Sara. “It is on the list.”

“I know,” said Billy. “I only asked.”

Tess looked at the clock. “Twenty minutes,” she said. “The mixing is done.”

Evie poured the batter into the two thin pans. Each pan got half. Tess looked at them.

"The same," said Tess.

Evie put the two pans in the little oven. Then she closed the door.

Sam stood at the oven door. He did not move.

"Sam is the door guard," said Sara.

"What is a guard?" said Billy.

"A guard stands at a door," said Tess. "He watches it. Nobody can get in."

"Nobody opens it!" said Sam.

"Twenty-five minutes," said Tess.

They waited. The tent was very hot. The sun was on the white tent, and ten little ovens were hot, too. Billy's face was red.

After five minutes, Billy walked to the oven.

"Just one time!" he said. "One little look!"

Sam did not move.

"Nobody opens it!" he said.

"But I want to see the cake," said Billy.

"Then the cold air goes in," said Sam. "And the middle goes down. You know that, Billy."

Billy laughed. "I know," he said. "I was there."

He sat down on the floor by the table. Then he put his hands under his legs. He sat on his hands.

"Now my hands cannot open the door," said Billy.

Sara laughed. Evie laughed. Even Tess smiled.

They looked at the other tables. At table three, Molly opened her oven. She put her cake in. It was a small cake in a small pan. Then she closed the door, and she looked over at table four.

"It is in!" she called. "Thank you!"

Evie waved to her.

At table five, the Carter twins had their apple cake in a pan. The girl put red apples on top, in a ring. The boy put it in the oven, and he closed the door. Soon the tent smelled of apples.

"Their cake smells good," said Billy.

"Our cake smells good, too," said Sam.

And it did. The smell of maple came out of the little oven. Sam stood at the door, and he did not move.

Evie looked at the big clock. The big hand moved on. She looked at the oven door. It was hot in the tent, but her hands were cold again.

"What if the cake goes down?" she said.

"It will not go down," said Tess. "Nobody opens the door."

"Nobody," said Sam.

"Nobody," said Billy from the floor. "I am sitting on my hands."

Evie looked at the back of the tent. Mom sat on a long bench, with June on her lap. Dad sat next to her, and Mr. and Mrs. Lee, too. Mom did not come over. She only smiled at Evie.

Evie smiled back. At home, Mom watched the oven on most days. Today Sam watched the oven, and that was right.

"Twenty minutes," said Tess. "Five more."

"Can I stand up now?" said Billy.

"No," said Sam and Sara.

Billy laughed. He did not move.

The big hand moved on. Evie did not look at the clock now. She looked at Sam. Sam looked at the oven door. Sam did not move. Not one time.

"Twenty-five minutes," said Tess. "Now."

Sam moved at last. He stepped back from the door.

Evie opened the oven. Hot air came out on her face. She took out one pan. Then she took out the other pan. She put them on the table.

They all looked at the two cakes.

The cakes were high. They were high at the sides, and they were high in the middle. They were light brown and soft on top.

“They did not go down!” said Billy. He jumped up. His hands were red.

“Because nobody opened the door,” said Sam.

“Sam was the door guard,” said Sara.

“And I sat on my hands,” said Billy.

Evie laughed. “Two good cakes,” she said. “Thank you, Sam. Thank you, Billy.”

Sam stood a little taller.

Then Evie put her hand over the first cake. It was very warm. She put her hand over the second cake. It was very warm, too.

Tess looked at the clock. “Now they have to cool,” she said. “Forty minutes.”

Sara looked at her list. Then she looked at the tent. The air was hot and still. There was no wind.

“But the tent is hot,” said Sara. “How can a cake cool in a hot tent?”

Nobody said a word.

Evie looked at the two warm cakes. Then she looked at the big clock on the wall. The big hand moved on.

Chapter 8: Cool, Cake, Cool!



Evie took the first cake out of its pan. She put it on the rack. Then she took the second cake out. She put it on the rack, too.

“Two cakes on the rack,” said Sara. She checked it off her list.

Tess looked at the big clock. “Seventy minutes left,” she said. “The cakes cool for forty. The icing takes twenty. Then we have ten minutes extra.”

They waited. The tent was very hot. The air did not move. Billy sat on the floor again, but not on his hands.

“Can I taste now?” he said.

“At the end,” said Sara and Tess.

Billy laughed. “I know,” he said. “I only asked.”

The big hand moved on.

“Fifty minutes left,” said Tess.

Evie touched the top of the first cake. She touched it with one finger, very softly.

"It is still warm," she said.

Tess touched it, too. "Very warm," she said. "At home a cake cools fast. Here it cools slow, because the tent is hot."

Sara looked at her list. Then she looked at the clock. Her face was a little white.

"Forty minutes to cool," she said. "Twenty minutes for the icing. That is sixty. But we have fifty."

Nobody said a word.

Evie looked at the two warm cakes. She felt her hands. They were cold again. She knew that icing on a warm cake melts. She did not want a cake with runny icing.

Then Billy stood up. He took the list out of Sara's hand.

"Billy!" said Sara. "That is my list!"

"Just one minute," said Billy.

He held the list over the cakes. He moved it up and down, up and down. Fast.

"What are you doing?" said Sam.

"I am fanning the cakes," said Billy. "A fan makes wind. Wind makes a cake cool."

"A fan?" said Sam. "What is a fan?"

"Look at Billy," said Tess. "His list is a fan. He moves it up and down. Then the air moves, too."

"It is a good idea," said Evie. "Billy, it is a very good idea!"

Billy smiled a big smile. He fanned and fanned.

"But one list is a small fan," said Tess. "We need more fans."

Sara had a small notebook in her pocket. She took it out. She opened it, and she fanned with it. Up and down.

Evie looked at the box. There were no plates in it.

Then Molly came over from table three. She had a stack of paper plates in her hands.

"I saw you," she said. "You need fans. I have plates. A lot of plates."

She gave a plate to Evie and a plate to Sam. Tess took a plate, too. Then Molly took a plate. She stood at the table, and she fanned with it.

The five kids and Molly fanned the two cakes. Up and down. Up and down. The paper plates went flap, flap, flap.

Molly laughed. Billy laughed. Then they all laughed.

At table five, the Carter twins looked over. The boy smiled. The girl waved.

"Cool, cake, cool!" said Billy.

Evie fanned, and she laughed. But she looked at the clock, too. The big hand moved on.

Tess stopped. She looked at the front of the tent. The front of the tent was open. The sun was on the grass outside. But by the door, under the tent, there was shade.

"What is shade?" said Sam.

"Shade is a place with no sun," said Tess. "It is cool there."

Tess walked to the front. She held up her hand. Her hair moved a little.

"There is a breeze," she said.

"A breeze?" said Billy.

"A breeze is a little wind," said Tess. "Not a big wind. Only a little one."

Tess came back to the table. She took the rack with two hands. She carried it to the front of the tent, very slowly. She put it on an empty bench by the door, in the shade, in the breeze.

"Good, Tess!" said Evie.

Billy and Sam ran after her with their fans. They fanned, and the breeze came in, too.

"A breeze and two fans," said Billy. "Cool, cake, cool!"

Molly went back to table three. "My cake is cool now," she called. "Good luck!"

"Thank you, Molly!" said Evie.

Evie and Sara made the icing at the table. Tess came back and measured the butter and the sugar. Evie poured in the rest of Mrs. Hill's syrup. She poured out every last drop.

"The jar is empty," said Sara.

"Half for the cake," said Sam. "And half for the icing. All of it is in our cake now."

Evie mixed it. The icing was soft and light brown. It smelled of maple.

Billy looked into the bowl.

"At the end," said Sara.

"I did not say a word!" said Billy.

The big hand moved on.

"Twenty-two minutes left," said Tess.

She walked to the front of the tent. She touched the middle of each cake.

"Now," said Tess.

They carried the rack back to table four. Molly came over with one big paper plate.

"For your cake," she said.

"Thank you," said Evie.

Evie put the first cake on Molly's plate. She put icing on it. Then Tess and Evie put the second cake on top. Evie put more icing on top of it all.

The icing did not run. It stayed on the cake.

"It stays!" said Billy.

"Cherries," said Sara. "The last line on my list."

Evie took the cherries. She put one red cherry at the edge of the cake. Then one more. And one more. One cherry at a time, she made a ring.

"What is an edge?" said Sam.

"The edge is the end of the top," said Tess. "Here, where the cake stops."

Evie made the ring at the edge. Then she took one more red cherry. She put it in the middle.

"One in the middle," she said. "Done."

They all looked at the cake. It was round and light brown. It had a ring of red cherries, and one cherry in the middle.

Then there was a big sound at the door. Ding, ding, ding! Mr. Brook rang the bell.

"Stop!" he said. "Hands off the cakes!"

Evie stopped. Sam put his plate down.

Evie looked at the cake. At the edge, the icing was a little soft. It went down the side, just a little. Her hands were cold.

The icing did not run. It stayed.

"It stays," said Evie softly.

"The cake is cool," said Tess. "We did it."

Mr. Brook walked to table one. He took the fork out of his pocket. Then he opened his little notebook.

Chapter 9: Blue, Red, White



Mr. Brook stood at table one. A boy and a girl stood behind their cake. It was a round cake with pink icing.

Mr. Brook cut a small piece with his fork, and he ate it slowly. Then he looked at the boy and the girl.

“Who made the pink icing?” he asked.

“I did,” said the girl.

Mr. Brook wrote in his little notebook. Then he walked to table two.

“He talks to every team,” said Tess softly.

“And what does he write?” said Sam.

“We do not know,” said Sara. “We will see.”

At table two, Mr. Brook tasted a lemon cake and looked at the boy behind it.

“How long did it bake?” he asked.

“Thirty minutes,” said the boy.

Mr. Brook nodded, and he wrote it down.

"Write it down?" said Sam. "What is that?"

"You put it on paper," said Sara. She held up her list. "Then you do not forget it."

Then Mr. Brook went to table three. Molly stood very straight. Her small yellow cake was on a plate, with white sugar on top.

Mr. Brook cut a piece and ate it.

"A small cake," he said. "Did you bake it alone?"

Molly looked over at table four. Then she looked at Mr. Brook.

"I baked it," she said. "But my eggs broke. The eggs in this cake are from Evie's team. And Tess measured for me."

Evie looked at Sara. Sara's eyes were big.

"Mr. Brook did not ask about the eggs," said Sara softly. "She just told him."

Mr. Brook looked at Molly for a long time. Then he smiled. It was a small smile, but it was a smile.

"I know," he said. "I saw it this morning. It is in my notebook." He wrote one more line. "And now you told me, too. Thank you, Molly."

Molly's face was a little red, but she smiled a big smile.

Then Mr. Brook came to table four.

He was very tall. He looked down at the maple cake for a long time. He looked at the ring of red cherries and at the one cherry in the middle.

Evie felt her hands, and they were cold again.

Mr. Brook cut a piece from the edge, with one red cherry on it. He ate it slowly. Nobody said a word, and Billy did not move.

"Maple," said Mr. Brook. "Real maple."

"It is Grandpa's syrup," said Sam. "From his trees."

Mr. Brook nodded and looked at the five kids.

"Who made this cake?" he asked.

"I read the list," said Sara. "Line by line."

"I measured," said Tess. "Every cup."

"I carried the eggs," said Sam. "And I watched the oven door."

"I mixed," said Evie. "And I did the cherries on top."

Billy stood up very tall. "I tasted first," he said. "At home, with the test cakes. And I did not open the door!"

Mr. Brook looked down at Billy. "Not one time?" he said.

"Not one time," said Billy. "I sat on my hands."

Mr. Brook did not laugh, but his eyes smiled.

"Good hands," he said. Then he wrote it down.

"There are five of us," said Evie. "We are a team."

"I see that," said Mr. Brook. He wrote one more line and walked to table five.

The Carter twins stood behind their apple cake. It had a ring of red apples on top. Mr. Brook ate one piece, and then he ate one more piece.

"One more piece," said Billy softly. "That is not good for us."

"It is good for the twins," said Tess.

Mr. Brook went on to tables six to ten. The big hand moved on.

At last he walked to the front of the tent. He had three long, thin things in his hand: one blue, one red and one white.

"What are those?" said Sam.

"Ribbons," said Tess. "A ribbon is a long, thin piece of cloth. At a fair, a ribbon is a prize."

Mr. Brook rang the bell. Ding, ding, ding!

"Kids and grown-ups," he said. "Here are the ribbons. Blue is first. Red is second. White is third."

Sam counted on his fingers. “First, second, third,” he said. “One, two, three.”

“Yes,” said Tess. “First is the best cake. Then second, then third.”

“Third,” said Mr. Brook. “The white ribbon. Table three. Molly!”

At the back, Molly’s dad stood up from his bench. He clapped and clapped. Molly ran to the front and took the white ribbon with two hands.

Evie clapped, too. A white ribbon, she thought. With our two eggs in it.

“Second,” said Mr. Brook. “The red ribbon. Table four. The kids from Rosie’s Bakery!”

Sara jumped. Tess pushed up her glasses. Sam threw his hands up.

“Red!” said Sam. “We are red!”

Evie walked to the front, and Mr. Brook gave her the red ribbon. On the bench at the back, Mom stood up. Dad held June up high. Mr. and Mrs. Lee clapped.

Evie came back to table four. Billy looked at the ribbon, and then he looked at his shoes.

“Red,” he said. “Not blue.”

“First,” said Mr. Brook. “The blue ribbon. Table five. The Carter twins and their apple cake!”

The twins jumped up and down. The girl gave her brother a big hug. All the kids in the tent clapped. Billy clapped, too, but he clapped slowly, because he wanted the blue one.

Evie looked down at the ribbon in her hand. It was red, the same red as a cherry.

She put it on the table, next to the maple cake. Red ribbon, red cherries.

“Look, Billy,” she said. “It is cherry red.”

Billy looked at the ribbon, and then at the cherries. A little smile came to his face.

“Cherry red,” he said. “But not blue.”

"No," said Evie. "Not blue."

Mr. Brook rang the bell one more time.

"One more thing," he said. He looked at table three, and then at table four. "This morning a girl's eggs broke. A team gave her two eggs, and a girl measured for her. Then she told me so herself. Good bakers. And good friends, too."

Molly looked over at table four and waved her white ribbon.

Evie felt warm inside. Her hands were not cold now.

Sara looked at her list. "There is no line for that," she said softly. "But it was the best part."

Then Molly came to table four with her white ribbon. Behind her came a tall man with a cap in his hand.

It was Molly's dad.

Chapter 10: The Best Cake in Maple Falls



Molly stood at table four with her white ribbon. Her tall dad stood behind her, with his cap in his hands.

“This is my dad,” said Molly.

“Hello,” said Evie. “I am Evie.”

“I know,” said Molly’s dad. He smiled. “Molly told me all about you. And about the eggs.”

Molly looked at the five kids. Her face was a little red.

“Thank you,” she said. “For the two eggs. And thank you, Tess. You measured every cup for me.”

“That is my job,” said Tess. She pushed up her glasses.

Then the grown-ups got up from the benches. Mom came first. Dad came after her, with June in his arms. Mr. and Mrs. Lee came, too.

Molly’s dad turned to Mom. He put out his hand, and Mom shook it.

"Thank you," he said. "Your kids helped my girl today."

"They are good kids," said Mom. "And your girl is a good baker."

"Is your mom here, too?" Evie asked Molly.

"No," said Molly. "She is at home in bed. It is only a cold. But she will be glad about the ribbon."

Then Sam ran to the door of the tent.

"Look!" he said. "Look who is here!"

Two people came in through the door. One was an old man in a cap. One was an old woman with a cane.

"Grandpa!" said Billy. "Mrs. Hill!"

"We are late," said Grandpa. "We walk slowly."

"Very slowly," said Mrs. Hill. Her eyes smiled behind her round glasses.

Grandpa looked at the table. He saw the maple cake, and he saw the red ribbon next to it.

"A red ribbon!" he said.

Evie took something from the table. It was a small glass jar, and it was empty.

"Mrs. Hill," she said. "This is your jar. I want to give it back."

Mrs. Hill took the jar in her hand. She looked at it for a long time.

"It is empty," said Evie. "Every last drop is in the cake. Half in the cake, and half in the icing."

"An empty jar," said Mrs. Hill softly. "I kept it for a big day. And it was a big day."

She put the jar in her bag, and she smiled at Evie.

"Can we eat the cake now?" said Billy.

"Not in the tent," said Mom. "Let us go out."

Outside the tent, there was a picnic table in the shade of a tree. A picnic table is a long table for outside, with benches on two sides.

Sam carried the cake out on Molly's big paper plate. He put it in the middle of the table. They all sat down. Molly sat next to Evie, and her dad sat next to Grandpa.

"Look," said Sara. "A piece is gone."

It was true. There was a hole at the edge of the cake.

"Mr. Brook ate it," said Billy. "He ate our piece!"

"It is OK," said Mom. "We cut small pieces. Then there is a piece for all of us."

Mom took a knife from her bag and cut the cake. Evie gave out Molly's paper plates, one by one. Mrs. Hill got a piece with a red cherry on top.

Grandpa took off his cap.

"Thank you, God, for good food and good friends," he said.

Then they began to eat.

Billy ate his piece fast.

"It is a good cake," he said. "But it is second."

Grandpa ate his piece slowly. Then he put down his fork and looked at the five kids.

"At the fair, it is second," he said. "In Maple Falls, it is the best cake."

Billy looked up. "The best cake in Maple Falls?"

"The best cake in Maple Falls," said Grandpa.

Billy smiled a big smile. "Cherry red," he said. "And the best cake."

Mrs. Hill put down her fork, too.

"Sam," she said. "Do you remember? At the picnic, you asked me a question. 'Can we win?' And I said, 'You will see.'"

"I remember," said Sam.

"And now you see," said Mrs. Hill.

Sam looked at the red ribbon, and he laughed. "Now we see," he said.

Then Billy looked at Mom.

"Mom," he said. "This morning you said, 'After the contest, Billy.'"

"I did," said Mom. "And the contest is over."

Dad stood up with June. "Come, Billy," he said. "And Sam, too. Popcorn for the whole table."

They came back with three big bags of popcorn.

Molly took some popcorn, and then she looked at Evie.

"We have a farm with apple trees," she said. "In the fall, we pick apples. Come and help!"

"The fall?" said Sam. "What is the fall?"

"The fall is after the summer," said Tess. "The leaves go red and yellow. And then they fall off the trees."

"And pick?" said Sam.

"You take the apple off the tree," said Molly. "With your hand." She put up her hand and closed it. "Then the apple is in your hand."

Evie looked at Mom. Mom looked at Dad, and Dad nodded.

"Come in September," said Molly's dad. "Then the apples are red. Bring a basket."

"We will come," said Mom.

"A new list," said Sara. She opened her notebook.

"And apple pie," said Billy.

All of them laughed.

Late in the day, they went home in Dad's truck. Billy's red wagon was in the back, with the big box in it. Evie sat in the back seat, and the red ribbon was on her lap.

At home, Dad opened the door of the bakery. The bell rang.

Crumble ran to the door. He looked at the box.

Mom took a little pin from the kitchen. Evie held the red ribbon on the wall by the door, and Mom pinned it there.

"There," said Mom.

They all looked at it. The ribbon was red, cherry red.

"Every morning, people come in through this door," said Evie. "And they will see it."

Billy opened the big box and took out Molly's paper plate. There was one crumb of maple cake on it. Only one.

"The last crumb," said Billy.

Crumble sat down. He looked up at Billy, and he did not move.

"Who gets the last crumb?" said Billy.

"Crumble," said Evie. "It is his job."

Billy put the plate on the floor. Crumble ate the last crumb, and then he licked the plate clean.

"Next year," said Billy, "we bake a blue cake."

Evie laughed. "Next year," she said, "we bake a maple cake. With Grandpa's syrup. And one red cherry on top."

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