
A Picnic
by the Maple Tree

Contents

About This Book 2
About the Story 3
Chapter 1: Ten Years 4
Chapter 2: A Big One and a Big Zero 11
Chapter 3: Little Cards 18
Chapter 4: The Question 26
Chapter 5: Twenty and Three 33
Chapter 6: Lemonade 41
Chapter 7: Rain 48
Chapter 8: Surprise! 55
Chapter 9: Ten Years under the Maple Tree 61
Copyright & License 67

About This Book

At a Glance

- **Reading level:** English level A1 (CEFR)
- **Age:** 7+
- **Length:** 9 chapters · ±7,400 words

Edition

This is the **first edition** — version 1.0, published October 2026.

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 June in Maple Falls. The sun is warm. The big maple tree by the square is full of green leaves.

Rosie's Bakery is ten years old! Dad has a plan: a picnic for Mom under the maple tree, on Saturday. The whole town comes. But Mom does not know.

Every child has a job. Tess draws a big one and a big zero. Mrs. Hill writes little cards for every house. Billy must not tell — not before Saturday. Twenty cupcakes, three jugs of lemonade, three old blankets.

Then Mom asks Evie a question: "Where do you go every afternoon?"

How do you keep a surprise — and still tell the truth?

Chapter 1: Ten Years



It is June in Maple Falls.

June is summer.

The sun is warm.

The big maple tree by the town square is very tall.

In summer it is full of green leaves.

Under the tree there is cool, dark shade.

The grass under the tree is soft.

A bird sings in the leaves.

Across the street from the bakery is the Lee house.

It has three wooden steps.

Five children sit on the steps.

Evie and Sara sit on the top step.

Tess sits on the next step.

She has her purple apron on.

Billy and Sam sit on the last step.

Crumble lies on the grass.

“It is hot,” says Billy.

“It is summer,” says Sara.

“Summer is hot.”

Sam looks down the street.

“Look at the maple tree,” he says.

“It is very green.”

Evie looks at the bakery.

The bell on the door rings.

Dad comes out and walks across the street.

Today he does not go to the mill.

He has a big smile.

“Hello, children,” says Dad.

“Hello, Dad!” says Evie.

“Where is Mom?” says Sara.

“In the shop,” says Dad.

“She has a big order today.”

“A big order?” says Billy.

“Thirty cupcakes for Mr. Green,” says Dad.

“She is busy all day.”

Dad sits on the steps with the children.

“Good,” he says. “Mom is busy.”

"Now we can talk about the plan."

Billy sits up.

"The plan!" he says.

"What plan?" says Sam.

"Shhh," says Sara.

She puts a finger on her lips.

Evie smiles.

She knows the plan.

Sara and Billy know it, too.

Now Tess and Sam can know it.

"Listen," says Dad.

"Rosie's Bakery is ten years old."

"Ten years!" says Sam.

"Ten years is very old," says Billy.

"I am seven."

Tess laughs.

"On Saturday the bakery is ten years old," says Dad.

"We will have a picnic for Mom."

"A picnic?" says Sam.

"What is a picnic?"

"You eat outside," says Sara.

"You sit on a blanket on the grass."

"You eat sandwiches and cake."

"Outside?" says Sam.

"With the birds?"

"With the birds," says Dad.

"Where is the picnic?" says Tess.

Dad points down the street.

"There," he says.

"Under the big maple tree."

They all look at the big green tree.

Under it there is a lot of shade.

"In the shade," says Evie.

"Not in the sun."

"Yes," says Dad.

"Mom loves that tree."

"Who comes to the picnic?" says Sara.

"Our family?"

"Our family," says Dad.

"The Lees. Grandpa and Mrs. Hill."

"The Greens. Sara and her mom."

He smiles a big smile.

"The whole town comes."

"The whole town!" says Billy.

"The whole town," says Dad.

"And Mom does not know."

The children look at the bakery.

"Mom does not know," says Tess.

"No," says Evie.

"It is a surprise."

"On Saturday she will know."

"A surprise with a date," says Tess.

"Saturday."

"Yes," says Dad.

"On Saturday Mom will see it."

Billy jumps up.

"Can I tell her?" he says.

"No!" they all say.

Billy laughs.

"Not before Saturday," he says.

"Not before Saturday," says Dad.

Crumble barks one time.

"Crumble, you do not tell," says Billy.

Crumble wags his tail.

"Now," says Dad.

"A picnic is a lot of work."

"Every child has a job."

"I know my job," says Sara.

"I check the list."

"I measure," says Tess.

She points at her purple apron.

"I decorate," says Evie.

"One red cherry on top."

"Good," says Dad.

"I taste!" says Billy.

"I always taste first."

They all laugh.

"Of course," says Dad.

Sam looks at Dad.

"And me?" he says.

"Billy tastes first."

"I taste second."

"Today you have a new job," says Dad.

"A big job."

"What job?" says Sam.

"You carry," says Dad.

"You are fast."

"You are strong."

Sam stands up.

He holds up his arms.

"I carry!" he says.

"I am very strong!"

"Good," says Dad.

"Five children. Five jobs."

"And what is your job, Dad?" says Evie.

Dad laughs.

"On Saturday morning I take Mom out," he says.

"So she does not see the picnic."

"Then we walk to the tree."

"Now the big thing."

"What do we bake?"

The children look at each other.

"A cake," says Billy.

"A big cake."

"A cake for the ten years," says Sara.

"Yes," says Evie.

"A cake for the ten years."

"But what cake?" says Tess.

"A cherry cake?" says Billy.

"A blue cake?" says Sam.

"Mom makes cakes every day," says Sara.

"This cake is for Mom," says Evie.

"It is a special cake."

"Not a cake for every day."

They all think.

Crumble puts his head on his paws.

The bird sings in the maple tree.

Evie looks at the big tree.

She looks at the green leaves.

"Ten years," she says.

"A cake for the ten years."

"But what kind of cake?"

Nobody knows.

Not yet.

Chapter 2: A Big One and a Big Zero



It is Monday afternoon.

The sun is hot.

They all go into the Lee house.

The kitchen is at the back.

It is small and warm.

A real table stands in the middle.

By the wall stands the little oven.

Mrs. Lee is at the table.

She has a cup of tea.

“Hello, children,” she says.

“Hello, Mrs. Lee,” says Evie.

“Can we sit at your table?”

"Of course," says Mrs. Lee.

"I know your plan."

"Evie's dad came here this morning."

"The picnic under the maple tree!" says Sam.

"It is a surprise!"

Mrs. Lee smiles.

"We will be there," she says.

They sit around the table.

Crumble lies under it.

Sara has paper and a pencil.

She puts them on the table.

"Now," says Sara.

"What do we bake?"

"Not a big cake," says Evie.

"We bake something special for Mom."

Sam jumps up.

"Cupcakes!" he says.

"A hundred cupcakes!"

"We made a hundred cupcakes one time," says Billy.

"For Mr. and Mrs. Green."

"A hundred is a lot," says Sara.

"A hundred is a lot of work," says Evie.

Sam sits down again.

Tess does not talk.

She looks at the paper.

"Tess?" says Evie.

"What do you think?"

"Cupcakes are good," says Tess.

"But not a hundred."

"Then how many?" says Billy.

"The bakery is ten years old," says Tess.

"Ten is a number."

"We make that number with cupcakes."

"A number?" says Billy.

"With cupcakes?"

Tess takes the pencil.

She draws a long line on the paper.

"This is a one," she says.

Next to the line she draws a big round shape.

"And this is a zero."

"A zero?" says Sam.

"What is a zero?"

"This round number," says Tess.

"A one and a zero make ten."

Sam looks at the paper.

"Ten!" he says.

"I see it!"

"Now the cupcakes," says Tess.

She draws little circles on the line.

One, two, three, four, five, six.

"Six cupcakes for the one," she says.

Then she draws little circles on the zero.

She draws a lot of circles.

They go all the way around.

"Count them, Billy," she says.

Billy puts his finger on the paper.

He counts slow.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen!"

"Fourteen for the zero," says Tess.

"Six and fourteen," says Sara.

"That is twenty."

"Twenty cupcakes," says Tess.

"Not a hundred. Twenty."

Sam claps his hands.

"A big one and a big zero!" he says.

"I can eat a zero!"

Evie looks at the paper.

She smiles a big smile.

"It is a good shape," she says.

"The shape of ten."

"With white icing on every one."

"And a red cherry on every one."

Mrs. Lee looks at the paper, too.

"Where do they stand?" she says.

"On a plate?"

"A plate is too small," says Tess.

"We need a board."

"A long, flat board."

"Then you can see the one and the zero."

"We have a long board," says Mrs. Lee.

"You can have it."

"Thank you, Mrs. Lee!" says Tess.

Sara writes on the paper.

"A long board," she says.

"Where do we bake?" she says.

"In the bakery!" says Billy.

"No," says Evie.

"Mom is in the bakery."

"Mom will see them."

"Then it is not a surprise," says Tess.

"Oh," says Billy.

"Then not in the bakery."

They all look at the little oven.

Then they look at Mrs. Lee.

Mrs. Lee looks at the little oven, too.

She laughs.

"Our oven," she says.

"Again."

"We baked pies in it!" says Sam.

"For Thanksgiving!"

"Yes," says Mrs. Lee.

"They were very good pies."

"It is a small oven," says Tess.

"Two pans fit in it."

"When do you bake?" says Mrs. Lee.

"On Thursday," says Tess.

"Then they are fresh on Saturday."

"On Thursday I am home," says Mrs. Lee.

"Now the list," says Sara.

She writes the list.

Then she reads it out loud.

"Flour, sugar, eggs, butter and milk."

"Twenty paper cups."

"Paper cups?" says Sam.

"For the cupcakes," says Tess.

"Every cupcake sits in a little paper cup."

"And cherries," says Evie.

"Twenty red cherries."

Sara writes it on the list.

Crumble puts his head out from under the table.

"No, Crumble," says Billy.

"No cupcake for you."

"Later you get a cookie."

Crumble wags his tail.

Sara looks at her list.

“The list is good,” she says.

“The oven is good.”

“The shape is good.”

Then she looks up.

“But the whole town comes.”

“How do they all know?”

They look at each other.

Billy jumps up.

“I can tell them!” he says.

“You can tell the town,” says Sara.

“But not Mom.”

“Not Mom,” says Billy.

“Not before Saturday.”

They all laugh.

Evie looks out of the kitchen window.

Down the street stands the big maple tree.

It is green in the sun.

“The whole town,” she says.

“Every house in Maple Falls.”

“But how do they all know?”

Chapter 3: Little Cards



It is Tuesday.

The sun is hot again.

Sara has a white box with little cards in it.

“They are from my mom’s store,” says Sara.

“Thirty-one houses are on my list.”

“Our house too?” says Billy.

“No!” says Evie.

“Mom is in our house!”

They all laugh.

“Then thirty cards,” says Tess.

“Thirty cards for thirty houses.”

“But what do we write on them?” says Evie.

"And who writes?"

Evie has an idea.

"Mrs. Hill!" she says.

"She has good writing."

Billy pulls his little red wagon.

Sara puts the box in it.

Sam pushes the wagon from behind.

Crumble walks next to it.

The wagon goes bump, bump.

They walk to the town square.

They walk past the big maple tree.

Behind the tree is a little street.

That is Pine Lane.

It has only one house.

The house is small and blue.

It has a white door and three steps.

Evie knocks on the white door.

Mrs. Hill stands at the door with her cane.

She has her round glasses on.

"Hello, all five of you," she says.

"And a red wagon."

"And a dog."

"Hello, Mrs. Hill," says Evie.

"We have a plan."

"It is a surprise for Mom."

Evie tells her the plan.

On Saturday the bakery is ten years old.

A picnic for Mom under the maple tree.

The whole town comes.

Mom does not know.

Mrs. Hill smiles a big smile.

“A surprise for Rosie,” she says.

“Good.”

“We have little cards,” says Sara.

“A card for every house.”

“It is an invitation.”

“A what?” says Sam.

“What is that?”

“A card,” says Sara.

“The card says: come to my party.”

“Oh,” says Sam.

“A come card!”

Mrs. Hill laughs.

“Show me the cards,” she says.

Sara gives her the box.

They all sit at her little kitchen table.

“Who writes the cards?” says Mrs. Hill.

“I can write,” says Billy.

“Slow.”

“I write,” says Mrs. Hill.

"You walk."

"My legs are old."

"My hand is young."

They all laugh.

Mrs. Hill writes on the first card with a pen.

Her letters are small and neat.

They are all in a straight line.

She reads it out loud.

"A picnic for Rosie."

"Ten years of Rosie's Bakery."

"Saturday, under the maple tree."

"Do not tell Rosie!"

"That is good writing," says Evie.

Mrs. Hill writes the next card.

"Now you fold them," she says.

"One fold. In the middle."

Tess folds the first card.

The fold is very straight.

Sam folds a card, too.

His fold is not straight.

"It is a little crooked," says Sam.

"A crooked card is a good card," says Mrs. Hill.

"It says the same thing."

Mrs. Hill writes.

They all fold.

The pen does not stop.

The box fills up.

Then Tess counts the cards.

“Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty,” she says.

“Thirty cards.”

On the back of every card Mrs. Hill writes one more line. Evie sees it. She smiles.

Evie gives one card to Mrs. Hill.

“For Pine Lane,” she says.

“Thank you, Mrs. Hill,” says Evie.

“On Saturday I will be there,” says Mrs. Hill.

“On a chair. In the shade.”

They go out.

Billy pulls the wagon.

Sam pushes it.

The wagon goes bump, bump.

They go to Main Street.

The bakery is on Main Street, too.

“Be quiet,” says Evie.

“Mom is in the bakery.”

“Quiet,” says Sam.

He walks on his toes.

“Very quiet.”

They walk on the other side of the street.

They do not look at the bakery.

They stop at the bread store.

Evie knocks.

A man opens the door.

Evie gives him a card.

“Saturday,” she says.

“Under the maple tree.”

“Do not tell Mom!”

He smiles.

“I will not tell,” he says.

They go to the next door.

“Saturday,” says Sara.

“Under the maple tree.”

“Do not tell Mom!”

Every door is the same.

They knock.

They give a card.

They say the words.

Then they come to house number eight.

Mr. Green opens the door.

Mrs. Green stands behind him.

Tess gives him a card.

“Saturday,” she says.

“Under the maple tree.”

“Do you like picnics?” says Sam.

“I do!” says Mr. Green.

"Do not tell Mom!" says Billy.

Mr. Green looks at Billy.

He looks at the card.

"I do not tell," he says.

"I do. I do not."

Mrs. Green laughs.

"He says that a lot," she says.

The last house is Grandpa's house.

Grandpa sits on a chair by his door.

He has his cap on.

Evie gives him the last card.

"Saturday," she says.

"Under the maple tree."

"Do not tell Mom!"

"Rosie's Bakery," he says.

"Ten years."

He winks at Evie.

"I will not tell."

The box in the wagon is empty.

"Thirty cards," says Tess.

"Thirty houses."

"The whole town knows," says Sara.

"But not Mom," says Billy.

They walk back to the bakery.

The bell on the door rings.

Mom stands at the door.

She has flour on her hands.

She looks at the five of them.

She looks at the empty wagon.

“There you are,” she says.

“Where are you all every day?”

Chapter 4: The Question



Evie looks at Sara.

Sara looks at Tess.

Tess looks at Sam.

Nobody says a word to Mom.

“I go home now,” says Sara.

“See you, Evie.”

“We go home, too,” says Tess.

She takes Sam by the hand.

Sam waves at Mom.

“Bye!” he says.

“Bye, Sam,” says Mom.

Billy pulls the empty wagon to the back.

Crumble runs after him.

Now Evie and Mom are at the door.

The shop is quiet.

The bell does not ring.

Mom has flour on her hands.

She has flour on her apron, too.

She looks at Evie.

Her eyes are kind.

“Evie,” she says.

“I have a question.”

“A question?” says Evie.

“Yes,” says Mom.

“Every afternoon you go out.”

“You, Sara, Tess, Billy and Sam.”

“With the red wagon.”

“Where do you go every afternoon?”

Evie stops.

She does not say a word.

She looks at her shoes.

She wants to say, “Nowhere.”

That is one small word.

It is an easy word.

But it is not true.

They go to the Lees’ house.

They go to Mrs. Hill.

They go to every house on Main Street.

"Nowhere" is not true.

Evie does not say it.

Evie only says true things.

She looks up at Mom.

"I cannot tell you now, Mom," she says.

"On Saturday I can."

"Is that OK?"

Mom looks at Evie.

She looks at her for a long time.

Then she smiles.

It is a big smile.

"A surprise?" says Mom.

Evie does not answer.

She smiles, too.

"Then I will not ask," says Mom.

"Saturday."

"Saturday," says Evie.

Mom puts a hand on her head.

But the hand has flour on it.

Now Evie has flour in her hair.

Mom and Evie both laugh.

"Sorry," says Mom.

"Now you are a real baker."

Evie feels light and happy.

The question is not a problem.

Mom does not ask again.

She goes back to the oven.

She sings a little song.

Evie goes up the stairs to their home.

She sings, too.

It is evening.

Dad comes home from the mill.

He has flour on his shirt.

“Hello, all of you,” he says.

“Hello, Dad!” says Billy.

Mom puts soup on the table.

Evie puts bread on the table.

Billy puts the spoons on the table.

He puts one spoon on the floor, too.

Crumble looks at the spoon.

“No, Crumble,” says Billy.

“That is not a cookie.”

They all sit at the table.

The soup is hot.

The bread is fresh.

“Good soup, Rosie,” says Dad.

“Thank you,” says Mom.

Dad looks at Evie.

He winks.

Evie winks back.

Mom sees it.

She looks at Dad and at Evie.

“Dad!” she says.

“You know it, too?”

Dad smiles.

“I know it,” he says.

“But I will not tell.”

“Not before Saturday.”

“The two of you,” says Mom.

She shakes her head.

But she smiles.

Billy puts his spoon down.

He has a big smile.

“Mom,” he says.

“On Saturday we —”

Evie is very fast.

There is a plate of cookies on the table.

She takes a cookie from the plate.

She puts it in Billy’s hand.

Billy stops talking.

He looks at the cookie.

“Oh,” he says.

“A cookie.”

He eats the whole cookie.

He does not say a word.

Dad and Evie laugh.

Billy laughs, too.

His mouth is full.

Mom laughs the most.

She puts her hands over her ears.

“I hear nothing!” she says.

“Nothing!”

“I hear nothing at all!”

They all laugh again.

Crumble barks one time.

He looks at Billy and at the plate.

“No cookie for you, Crumble,” says Billy.

“Later you get a cookie.”

Mom takes her hands off her ears.

“Can I hear now?” she says.

“Yes,” says Evie.

“Now you can hear.”

“Good,” says Mom.

“Who wants more soup?”

“I do!” says Billy.

“I do!” says Dad.

It is late in the evening.

Evie is in her room.

Her hair is clean now.

There is no flour in it.

She looks out of the window.

Down the street is the town square.

She can see the big maple tree.

It is dark outside now.

The tree is very tall.

On Saturday there is a picnic under it.

A picnic for Mom.

Mom comes to the door.

“Good night, Evie,” she says.

“Good night, Mom.”

Mom smiles at her.

“Saturday,” she says.

“Saturday,” says Evie.

Mom goes out of the room.

Evie lies in her bed.

Two more days.

Then it is Thursday.

On Thursday they bake.

Twenty cupcakes in the Lees’ kitchen.

A big one and a big zero.

Can they do it?

Chapter 5: Twenty and Three



It is Thursday.

The sun is hot again.

The five of them go to the Lee house.

Crumble walks with them.

Sam carries a big bag from Sara's store.

"It is heavy," says Sam.

"But I am strong."

Mrs. Lee opens the door.

"Come in," she says.

"The kitchen is ready."

The kitchen is small and warm.

The long board is on the table.

Crumble lies under the table.

Mrs. Lee stands by the little oven.

“Today I watch the oven,” she says.

“Your mom is busy.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Lee,” says Evie.

Sara takes out her list.

“Now I check the list,” she says.

“Flour? Sugar? Eggs?”

“Yes,” says Billy. “Yes and yes.”

“Butter? Milk?”

“Yes and yes,” says Sam.

“Paper cups?”

Tess counts the paper cups.

“Twenty,” she says.

“Good,” says Sara.

“Twenty cupcakes. Twenty cups.”

Tess puts on her purple apron.

She takes a big bowl.

“Now I measure,” she says.

She measures the flour and the sugar.

She does it slow.

Evie puts in the eggs.

Billy puts in the butter.

Sam puts in the milk.

He puts in a little too much.

Tess looks at the bowl.

"OK," she says.

"Almost right."

They all laugh.

Evie mixes the batter.

It is soft and yellow.

"I taste first," says Billy.

He tastes the batter with a little spoon.

"Mmm. Very good."

"I taste second," says Sam.

"Mmm. Very, very good."

Mrs. Lee has two pans.

Every pan has ten little holes.

Evie puts a paper cup in every hole.

"Ten and ten," says Billy.

"That is twenty."

Tess puts batter in every cup.

Not too much.

Not too little.

Just right.

Mrs. Lee opens the oven.

"Two pans fit in here," she says.

Sam carries the first pan.

Evie carries the other pan.

Mrs. Lee shuts the oven door.

"Twenty minutes," she says.

They wait.

The kitchen is very hot now.

Evie looks in the little oven window.

The cupcakes go up slow.

They turn golden.

Mrs. Lee takes out the two pans.

Twenty golden cupcakes!

They smell very good.

Tess counts them.

"Six for the one."

"Fourteen for the zero."

"Twenty."

Then she looks in the bowl.

"There is more batter," she says.

"Then we bake extra," says Evie.

"A baker always bakes extra."

"Mom says that a lot," says Billy.

Sara looks at her list.

"But we have no more cups," she says.

Mrs. Lee smiles.

She opens a box by the oven.

"I have paper cups, too," she says.

"One, two, three."

"Three extra cups!" says Sam.

"Then we bake a second round," says Tess.

"A round?" says Sam.

"What is a round?"

"Round one is the first time," says Tess.

"Twenty cupcakes in round one."

"Round two is the next time."

"Three cupcakes in round two."

"I like round two," says Sam.

The three cups go in a pan.

The pan goes in the oven.

They wait twenty minutes again.

Then there are three more golden cupcakes.

"Twenty and three," says Billy.

"Twenty-three!"

"Now the icing!" says Evie.

"Now the cherries!"

"No," says Tess.

"Not now."

"Why not?" says Evie.

Tess looks out of the window.

The sun is very hot.

"Hot day," says Tess.

"Soft icing."

"Soft?" says Evie.

"Very soft," says Tess.

"The icing goes down the side."

"The cherry falls off."

Evie thinks.

Tess is right.

"Tomorrow morning," says Tess.

"Early. The morning is not hot."

"Tomorrow morning," says Evie.

"Icing and cherries."

Mrs. Lee opens the fridge.

It is a big white fridge.

Inside it is cold.

"They go in here," she says.

"In the fridge they stay fresh."

The twenty cupcakes go on two big plates.

Sam carries the plates to the fridge.

He walks very slow.

He does not drop a cupcake.

"Good job, Sam," says Evie.

Three cupcakes are still on the table.

Billy and Sam look at them.

"Three extra," says Billy.

"Who gets them?"

"One for the first taster," says Sara.

She gives one to Billy.

"One for the second taster."

She gives one to Sam.

“And one for the oven.”

She gives one to Mrs. Lee.

“For the oven?” says Mrs. Lee.

“For the oven watcher,” says Sara.

The three cupcakes have no icing.

They have no cherry.

But they are warm and good.

“Mmm,” says Billy.

“The best plain cupcake in Maple Falls.”

Crumble puts his head out from under the table.

“No cupcake for you, Crumble,” says Billy.

“Later you get a cookie.”

“No cupcake for us?” says Evie.

Sara smiles.

“Our cupcakes are on Saturday.”

“Under the maple tree,” says Tess.

Evie looks out of the kitchen window.

Down the street is the big maple tree.

It is green in the sun.

“Tomorrow is Friday,” says Sara.

“Icing in the morning.”

“And after that?” says Billy.

“Then we go to my mom’s store.”

“For what?” says Sam.

"Lemons," says Sara.

"A lot of lemons."

"Lemons are not sweet!" says Sam.

Sara smiles.

"Not yet," she says.

"Tomorrow we make lemonade."

Chapter 6: Lemonade



It is Friday.

It is very early in the morning.

The sun is not hot yet.

The five of them go to the Lee house.

Crumble walks with them.

Mrs. Lee opens the door.

“Good morning,” she says.

“You are very early!”

“It is icing day,” says Evie.

Mrs. Lee opens the big white fridge.

There are the twenty cupcakes.

They sit on two big plates.

Sam carries the plates to the table.

He walks very slow.

Tess puts on her purple apron.

“Now I measure,” she says.

She takes the butter and the powdered sugar.

Evie mixes the icing in a bowl.

It is soft and white.

“I taste first,” says Billy.

“Mmm. Very sweet.”

“I taste second,” says Sam.

“Very, very sweet!”

Evie takes a spoon of icing.

She spreads it on the first one.

She does it slow.

Smooth and white.

“One,” says Billy.

Evie does the next one.

“Two,” says Billy.

Billy counts all the way to twenty.

Sara takes out her list.

“Now the cherries,” she says.

Evie puts a hand in her apron pocket.

She takes out a little jar.

“Twenty red cherries,” she says.

Tess counts them.

"Twenty."

Sara makes a little mark on her list.

"Yes! Now the list is done."

Evie puts one cherry on every cupcake.

One red cherry in the middle.

Mrs. Lee looks at the table.

"They look very good," she says.

"Can I taste one?" says Billy.

"No," says Tess.

"Twenty is twenty."

Crumble puts his head up.

"No cupcake for you, Crumble," says Billy.

"Later you get a cookie."

The plates go back in the fridge.

"Here they stay fresh," says Mrs. Lee.

After lunch they walk down Main Street.

Sara's mom stands by the door of her store.

"Hello, Sara," she says.

"Hello, girls. Hello, Billy. Hello, Sam."

"Hello!" says Sam.

"Where are the lemons?"

"Come in," she says.

On the counter is a big box.

It is full of lemons.

"Lemons are not sweet," says Sam.

"Not yet," says Sara's mom.

"Now we make lemonade."

She counts on her fingers.

"Lemons. Water. Sugar. Ice."

"Four things. It is easy."

She takes a knife.

She cuts every lemon in half.

The knife is for her.

The halves are for them.

"Now you squeeze them," she says.

"Hold a half over the bowl."

"Then squeeze. Hard!"

Evie squeezes a lemon.

The juice falls in the bowl.

Sara does one, too.

Tess does one.

Sam uses two hands.

"It is hard work," he says.

Billy squeezes very, very hard.

A drop of juice goes on his nose.

They all laugh.

Then Billy tastes the juice.

He shuts his eyes tight.

"Oh! Not sweet!" he says.

"Not sweet at all!"

They squeeze lemon after lemon.

Soon the bowl is full.

Sara's mom brings three big jugs.

"Tess, you measure," she says.

Tess measures the sugar and the water.

Not too much.

Not too little.

Just right.

It all goes in the three jugs.

Sam stirs with a long spoon.

"Now taste again," says Sara's mom.

Billy tastes first.

"Mmm! Now it is sweet!"

"Very, very sweet," says Sam.

"And the ice?" says Evie.

"The ice goes in on Saturday," says Sara's mom.

"Then it is cold."

The jugs go in a big fridge at the back of the store.

"Three big jugs," says Sara.

The door opens.

It is Grandpa!

He has his cap on.

In his arms are a lot of old blankets.

There is a red one.

There is a blue one.

There is a green one.

“Hello, all of you,” says Grandpa.

“Blankets for the picnic.”

“They are old. But they are clean.”

“And soft,” says Evie.

“I can carry them!” says Sam.

Grandpa gives them to him.

They are very big.

Sam is very small.

Now there is no Sam.

There are only blankets with two little legs.

“Where is Sam?” says Billy.

“Here!” says a little voice.

They all laugh.

Sara’s mom puts the blankets on a chair.

“They can stay here,” she says.

“On Saturday they go in my red wagon,” says Billy.

Sara’s mom gives Grandpa a cup of lemonade.

He tastes it.

“Good,” he says.

“Sweet. But not too sweet.”

Sara looks at her list again.

“The cupcakes? At the Lees’. Yes.”

“The lemonade? Here. Yes.”

“The blankets? Here. Yes.”

"It is all ready," says Tess.

"And Mom?" says Billy.

"Dad has a plan for Mom," says Evie.

"Early on Saturday he takes her for a walk."

"A walk to the mill."

"A long walk," says Grandpa.

He winks at Evie.

Then he looks out of the window.

Far away there is a cloud.

It is not white.

It is gray.

"Look," says Grandpa.

"A gray cloud."

"Is that rain?" says Sam.

"Maybe," says Grandpa.

"Maybe not."

"The cupcakes are in the fridge," says Tess.

"The lemonade is in the fridge."

"But the picnic is on the grass."

Evie looks at the gray cloud.

Rain on Saturday morning?

Chapter 7: Rain



It is very early on Saturday.

The bakery is not open yet.

Mom and Dad stand by the door.

“Come, Rosie,” says Dad.

“A walk to the mill.”

“Now?” says Mom.

“But the bakery!”

“The bakery can wait one morning,” says Dad.

Mom looks at Dad and Evie.

She smiles.

“A walk. Yes. I like that.”

Dad winks at Evie.

Mom and Dad walk to the mill.

Soon they are far away.

“Now!” says Evie.

The five of them meet at the Lee house.

Billy has his little red wagon.

Mrs. Lee opens the big white fridge.

There are the twenty cupcakes.

Every one has white icing and a red cherry.

Mrs. Lee puts them in two big boxes.

“Slow,” says Tess.

“Do not drop them.”

Sam carries the boxes to the wagon.

Mr. Lee comes out with the long board.

Mrs. Lee gives Evie a white cloth.

“For the table,” she says.

Then they go to Sara’s store.

Sara’s mom puts ice in the three big jugs.

“Now it is cold,” she says.

Grandpa is there with his cap on.

The blankets go in the wagon.

A red one, a blue one, a green one.

Now the wagon is full.

Billy pulls the wagon.

Sam pushes it from behind.

Bump, bump.

"Slow, Billy!" says Tess.

"The cupcakes!"

Evie, Sara and Tess carry one jug each.

"I will come later," says Sara's mom.

They walk down Main Street.

There is the big maple tree.

It is very tall and very green.

Under it there is deep shade.

Mr. Lee and Grandpa go to the bakery.

They come back with Dad's long table.

"Where?" says Grandpa.

"Under the tree," says Evie.

They put it down in the shade.

Evie puts the white cloth on the table.

Mr. Lee puts the long board on it.

The three jugs go on the table, too.

Then Grandpa walks to Mrs. Hill's house.

He comes back with Mrs. Hill.

She walks slow with her cane.

Mr. Lee brings a chair for her.

She sits down in the shade.

"Good morning," she says.

"I am early. Old people are always early."

The wagon stands on the grass in the sun.

Tess opens a box.

"Now the one and the zero," she says.

Sara looks up.

"Wait," she says.

"Look at the sky."

There are big gray clouds.

The sun is gone.

A drop falls on Billy's nose.

"Lemon juice?" says Sam.

Billy laughs.

"No. Water!"

Then a drop falls on the box.

Tess shuts the box fast.

"Rain!" says Sam.

Then a lot of drops come.

"The cupcakes!" says Evie.

"Under the tree!" says Grandpa.

They all run.

Evie and Tess take the boxes.

Billy and Sam take the wagon.

Crumble runs with them.

Under the tree it is dry.

They stand close together.

The rain falls on the square.

It falls on the street.

It falls on the grass.

It does not fall on them.

Mrs. Hill does not move from her chair.

“I do not run,” she says.

“I sit. I am dry.”

They all laugh.

Tess opens the boxes again.

“Dry,” she says.

“Twenty dry cupcakes.”

“Can I count them?” says Billy.

“Count. Do not taste,” says Tess.

Billy counts all twenty.

Then they wait.

The raindrops fall and fall.

Sam puts out his hand.

A raindrop falls on it.

“Will the rain stop?” says Sam.

“It is a summer rain,” says Grandpa.

“I think it is short.”

“It will stop soon.”

Billy looks up at the leaves.

The leaves are big and green.

“The tree is very big,” says Billy.

“It is a good tree,” says Grandpa.

“An old tree,” says Mrs. Hill.

“Old and good. Me too.”

Grandpa laughs.

They do not wait long.

The rain stops.

The gray clouds go away.

The sun comes back.

Now the square and the grass are wet.

“My shoes are wet!” says Billy.

Sara puts a hand on the blankets.

“Dry!” she says.

“The blankets are still dry.”

“Good,” says Grandpa.

“But the grass is wet.”

“Not here,” says Evie.

“Under the tree the grass is dry.”

They put the blankets under the tree.

The red one, the blue one and the green one.

Now the cupcakes.

Tess opens the boxes.

Evie gives her one cupcake at a time.

Tess puts them on the long board.

Six for the one.

Fourteen for the zero.

She puts them close together.

“Twenty,” says Tess.

Sara looks at her list.

"Cupcakes? Yes."

"Lemonade? Yes."

"Blankets? Yes."

Mrs. Hill looks at the board.

"A one and a zero," she says.

"A ten. A very good ten."

Now people come to the square.

Mr. and Mrs. Green come.

Sara's mom and Mrs. Lee come, too.

More and more people come.

They all stand under the maple tree.

Crumble barks.

Sam looks down Main Street.

"Look!" he says.

A man and a woman walk in the sun. The man has a baby.

Evie claps her hands.

Here come Mom and Dad!

Chapter 8: Surprise!



Mom and Dad walk across the square.

Dad has baby June in his arms.

June has a little yellow hat on.

They walk slow in the warm sun.

Mom does not look at the tree yet.

Under the maple tree, they all wait.

Nobody under the tree talks.

Billy puts both hands over his mouth.

Sam stands very still.

Crumble sits by Evie.

“Now?” says Billy.

“Not yet. Wait,” says Evie.

Mom and Dad come close to the tree.

Now Mom looks up at all the people.

“Now!” says Evie.

“SURPRISE!” they all say.

Crumble barks at Mom and Dad.

Mom stops on the grass.

She does not move or talk.

She looks at all the people under the tree.

She looks at the long table with the white cloth and the three jugs.

Then she looks at the board.

A one and a zero make a big ten.

Mom puts a hand over her mouth.

Her eyes are wet.

But she is not sad at all.

She is very, very happy.

“Oh, oh, oh,” she says.

Dad smiles at Evie. “Go,” he says.

Evie runs to Mom.

Mom gives her a big, long hug.

“So this is your plan! Every afternoon!” says Mom.

“Yes, Mom. Now I can tell you,” says Evie.

Mom laughs with wet eyes.

“A very big surprise,” she says.

Billy runs to Mom and Evie, too.

“I did not tell, Mom! Not one time!” he says.

"Not one time," says Mom.

"Good boy, Billy."

She gives Billy a big hug, too.

Now Billy is very proud.

"It was very, very hard," he says.

They all laugh.

Sara, Tess and Sam come, too.

Mom gives a hug to Sara, to Tess and to Sam.

"Who made this?" she says.

"We did. We made it with Dad," says Sara.

"You, too?" says Mom to Dad.

Dad winks at her. "Me, too."

Mom looks at the wet square.

Then she looks at Dad's hair.

His hair is a little wet, too.

"The rain!" says Evie.

"Did you get wet?"

"A little," says Mom. "We were on the road. Then the rain came."

"Then we were in the mill," says Dad. "In the mill it was dry."

"June was dry, too," says Mom. "Dad had her in his arms."

June laughs in Dad's arms.

"We had rain here, too. We were all under the tree," says Sam.

"Under the tree it is dry. It is a good tree," says Grandpa.

Mom walks to the long table.

She looks at every cupcake on the board.

Every one has white icing and a red cherry on top.

“Can I count them?” says Mom.

“Count. Do not taste. Not yet,” says Tess.

They all laugh.

Mom counts the one and the zero. “One, two, three…”

“Twenty,” says Mom.

“Twenty for ten years,” says Tess.

“Who measured?” says Mom.

“I did,” says Tess.

“Who did the cherries?”

“I did,” says Evie.

“Who tastes first?”

“I do!” says Billy.

“And me second!” says Sam.

Mom laughs. “A good team. The best team.”

“Now you, Mom. You take the first one,” says Evie.

Mom takes one cupcake from the top of the one.

It is the first cupcake of the day.

She takes a bite.

They all wait.

“Mmm. Very good,” says Mom.

“Soft?” says Tess.

“Soft,” says Mom.

“Sweet?” says Billy.

“Sweet,” says Mom.

"Good!" says Billy.

Now Mom looks at all the people.

Grandpa is there with his cap.

"Grandpa!" says Mom.

Grandpa gives Mom a hug.

"Ten good years," he says.

Mrs. Hill sits on her chair in the shade with her cane by her side.

"Mrs. Hill! You are here, too!" says Mom.

"I came early. Old people are always early," says Mrs. Hill.

"Mrs. Hill made the little cards for all the houses," says Evie.

Mom bends down to give Mrs. Hill a hug.

"Thank you," says Mom.

"There is more. You will see," says Mrs. Hill.

Mr. and Mrs. Green are there, too.

"Do you like it?" says Mrs. Green.

"I do!" says Mom.

Mr. Green laughs.

"Rosie says it, too! I do. I do."

Mrs. Lee and Mr. Lee are there, too.

"The cupcakes were in our oven," says Mrs. Lee.

"Your oven again! Thank you," says Mom.

Sara's mom is there with a stack of cups.

"Lemonade from the store?" she says.

"Yes, please," says Mom.

Sara's mom gives Mom a cup.

Mom drinks. “Cold and sweet,” she says.

Mom looks at the blankets on the green grass.

A red one, a blue one and a green one.

She looks at all her friends and all her neighbors.

She is very quiet.

Dad gives June to Evie.

June pulls at Evie’s hair. Evie laughs.

Then Mom stands by the long table.

She puts down her cup of lemonade.

“Ten years,” says Mom. “Now I have something to say.”

Chapter 9: Ten Years under the Maple Tree



They all look at Mom.

Nobody talks.

Then Mrs. Hill puts up her cane.

“Wait, Rosie,” she says. “First the town. Then you.”

“The town?” says Mom.

“Here is my surprise,” says Mrs. Hill.

“On the back of every little card there is one more line.”

“What line?” says Billy.

Evie smiles. She knows the line.

“Bring one memory,” says Evie.

“What is a memory?” says Sam.

“Think of a good day. A day from before. That is a memory,” says Tess.

"Who has one?" says Mrs. Hill.

Grandpa puts up his hand.

"Me. I am first. I am old," he says.

They all laugh.

"I remember a cake," says Grandpa.

"A cake for my birthday. Evie made it. It had red cherries on top."

"My first cake!" says Evie.

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

Mrs. Green puts up her hand.

"I remember a hundred cupcakes," she says.

"A hundred cupcakes for our party. Fifty years married."

"I do!" says Mr. Green.

"He says that a lot," says Mrs. Green.

They all laugh again.

Mrs. Lee puts up her hand.

"I remember bread," she says.

"We were new here. We had a lot of boxes. You gave us warm bread."

"Fresh bread says welcome," says Mr. Lee.

Mom smiles. That is her line.

"Six candles!" says Sam. "A big blue cake! Blue is my color."

"I remember too much flour," says Tess.

Evie laughs. "My flour. The first cake was very hard."

"Then I measured," says Tess.

"I remember pie!" says Billy. "I ate a lot of pie."

"A lot," says Dad.

Mrs. Hill puts up her cane again.

"I remember a knock on my door," she says.

"A bag of cookies. Then salt on my steps. Billy gave me his own bag."

Billy is very proud.

"Forty buckets!" says Grandpa.

"Forty buckets of sap. For one big jar of syrup."

"And one small jar for me," says Mrs. Hill.

Now Mom is very quiet.

Her eyes are wet again.

But she is happy. Very happy.

"Now me," says Mom.

She stands by the long table.

"Ten years ago I opened the bakery," she says.

"I started with one oven and one table."

"Evie was two years old. She was on the floor with a spoon."

"And me?" says Billy.

"No Billy yet," says Mom.

"No Billy? No taster?" says Billy.

They all laugh.

"Now look," says Mom.

She looks at the big green tree.

She looks at all her friends and all her neighbors.

Then she looks up at the green leaves.

"Ten good years. Thank you, God," she says.

Grandpa takes off his cap.

"Rosie's Bakery," says Grandpa. "The best bakery in Maple Falls."

They all clap.

"Now the cupcakes!" says Mom.

"Now I can taste!" says Billy.

Mom gives out the cupcakes. One for Grandpa. One for Mrs. Hill.

Sara's mom pours lemonade in the paper cups.

The cupcakes go fast. The lemonade goes fast, too.

Then Sara's mom takes a paper out of her bag.

"Look. This is from the store," she says.

"In August there is a big fair. The county fair."

"What is a fair?" says Sam.

"A fair is a big day out in the fields," says Sara's mom.

"There are animals, games and food."

"This year the fair has a contest," says Sara's mom. "A baking contest. For boys and girls."

"What is a contest?" says Billy.

"You bake a cake. Other kids bake a cake, too," says Tess.

"Then people taste all the cakes. The best cake wins."

Evie looks at Sara.

She looks at Tess.

She looks at Billy and Sam.

Sara takes out her pencil. "A new list," she says.

"I can measure," says Tess.

"I can taste!" says Billy.

"I can carry!" says Sam.

"I can do the cherries," says Evie.

"Can we win?" says Sam.

They all look at Mrs. Hill.

Mrs. Hill smiles. "You will see," she says.

Now the board is empty.

Only one cupcake is left.

Billy and Sam eat it. Half each.

A little crumb falls on the grass.

Crumble looks at the crumb.

Then he looks at Billy.

"Later you get a cookie. Every day I say it," says Billy.

"Later is now, Crumble."

Billy gives him the last crumb.

Crumble eats it in one bite.

They all laugh.

Evie sits on the red blanket in the shade.

Baby June is in her arms.

June sleeps.

The sun is warm. The leaves are green.

Mom sits down by Evie.

Mrs. Hill sits on her chair in the shade.

The big maple tree stands over them all.

"Ten years," says Mom.

"Ten years," says Evie.

"And the next ten?" says Mom.

Evie looks up at the green leaves.

"The next ten start today," says Evie.

Mom gives her a hug.

It is a good day under the maple tree.

The best day in Maple Falls.

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