

The Bakery

Light crept through the bedroom window and woke Josh up. At first he was a bit disoriented and did not recognize the room, but he quickly remembered where he was. Yesterday had been moving day, and this was his new home.

“Today, I’ll explore my new neighborhood and, with any luck, I’ll make some friends,” he said to himself.

Josh jumped out of bed and pushed open the window. He stretched and took a long, deep breath, and that’s when he noticed it. The air was filled with the most wonderful aroma.

“I’ve got to find out where that incredibly delicious smell is coming from!” exclaimed Josh, as he threw on his clothes and ran down the stairs.

In the kitchen, his stepmother and dad were conversing about their plans for the day over breakfast.

“Did you notice that wonderful aroma?” his stepmother asked.

“Absolutely,” replied Josh, “and I’m going to investigate where it’s coming from as soon as I finish breakfast.”

“That’s not necessary,” Dad said, “because I can tell you it’s the smell of fresh bread from a nearby bakery. In fact, I bought these breakfast muffins there just a little while ago. You should stop by and introduce yourself. Mr. Lee, the baker, really wants you to meet his son.”

After he had devoured his breakfast, Josh ambled down the sidewalk toward the bakery. He found it at the corner where his street intersected the main road. Inside the bakery, Josh saw a

counter where loaves of bread were stacked alongside muffins, cookies, and sweet rolls. They all smelled and looked mouthwateringly delicious.

Mr. Lee came out and welcomed Josh to the bakery. After they chatted for a while, he introduced Josh to Li-Young, his son. The two boys began talking and soon found they had many things in common. Li-Young offered to show Josh around the neighborhood, and they spent the morning roaming around together.

Josh headed home for lunch with a good feeling. He had, indeed, made a new friend, and what could be better than waking up each day to the smell of fresh-baked bread? He couldn't wait to learn more about his new neighborhood and meet more friends.

The Woodsman and the Lost Ax

A Woodsman was chopping wood beside a deep, blue lake. He whistled as he chopped, happy to work in such a beautiful place. Without warning, he stumbled over a root and lost his balance. When he reached to steady himself, his axe slipped from his hand and into the depths of the lake.

The Woodsman tried desperately to recover the axe, but he was unsuccessful. Recognizing that his means of earning a livelihood was lost, the Woodsman began moaning in desperation.

Just then, Mercury, the messenger of the gods, appeared and asked the Woodsman why he was despondent. After the Woodsman described what had happened, Mercury plunged into the lake and retrieved a gleaming, golden axe.

“Is this the axe you lost?” demanded Mercury.

The Woodsman assured him it was not, and Mercury disappeared beneath the surface again. Soon he returned with a silver axe in his hand.

“Is this the axe you lost?” demanded Mercury.

The Woodsman said it was not, and Mercury dived beneath the surface yet again. This time, he returned with the Woodsman’s axe.

“That’s it!” exclaimed the Woodsman. He embraced Mercury and thanked him profusely. Mercury was impressed with the Woodsman’s honesty, so he presented him with the golden and silver axes, as well as the one he had lost.

When the Woodsman returned home that evening, he told his coworkers what had happened. One of them decided he wanted to experience similar good fortune. He hurried to the lake and

threw his axe into it. Then he sat down beside the lake and pretended to cry. As before, Mercury appeared and inquired why the man was crying. When he learned the reason for the man's grief, Mercury again plunged into the lake and brought up a golden axe.

"Is this the axe you lost?" demanded Mercury.

"Yes! That's it!" the man lied. He grabbed the axe greedily.

Mercury did not like being deceived so he took the golden axe away from the man and refused to recover the axe the man had thrown into the lake. Thus, the man ended up with no axe at all, but he did learn a valuable lesson about the importance of being honest.

A Tour of Jewel Cave

“Ready to explore?” asked Maria’s father. Maria, her dad, and her five-year-old brother, Carlo, had just arrived at Jewel Cave National Monument. This was the kind of outing Maria’s father loved. “You’re going to see some amazing formations,” he said enthusiastically. On the way to the cave, Maria’s dad had explained how crystals could be seen hanging from the cave’s ceilings. “That’s why they call it Jewel Cave,” he explained.

At the cave’s entrance, they each got a lantern to light their way. Maria felt her heart pounding as an elevator took them down into the cave’s depths. When the doors opened, she felt a blast of cold air.

“It’s about forty-nine degrees in here year round,” said the tour guide. Maria was glad she was wearing suitable clothing. She had chosen rubber-soled boots, long pants, and a jacket.

Leading the way, the guide advised everyone to be careful, since parts of the winding path were slippery. Then the group walked down some steep, wooden steps into a large room where the crystals made strange, waxy formations. Maria loved the way the light sparkled off them.

It was about that time that Carlo began to complain.

“I want to leave, because I’m cold and Jewel Cave is boring,” he whined.

Suddenly, there was a rush of wind accompanied by a high-pitched noise. Some of the lanterns blew out as dark shapes flew toward the group. Carlo grabbed Maria’s hand, closed his eyes, and ducked his head.

“Don’t worry,” laughed their dad. “It’s just the bats.”

“They like it here, too,” said the tour guide. The bats passed overhead, flying into another room.

“Now are you bored?” asked Maria.

“Don’t you dare tease me,” said Carlo, pulling her forward to see what was up ahead.

When they got back home, Carlo told everyone how much he enjoyed exploring the cave. He was already planning the things he would see and do the next time they went to visit Jewel Cave.