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"DEE-LICIOUS!" "Yum-mm-m!" "A real treat!" Shweta's twin brothers burst in, yelling loudly.

"What's delicious? What's yummy?" Shweta asked, her bright eyes curious. She was twelve, with wavy, shoulder length hair. Amit and Sumit were ten, with matching grins and an uncontrollable tendency to tease Shweta.

"Neha's chocolate cake, what else!" they replied together.

"Neha! That girl's really talented!" said Ma.

Sumit repeated. "Please don't, Shweta! Remember the time you tried to make tea? And fry an egg? Ple-ase! You can't bake a cake!"

"Shut up," Shweta glared. "I can—and I will!"

"Of course you can," Ma said. "I'll help you."

"No," said Shweta. "I want to do it on my own. And I can! I've watched you do it many times. Just give me the recipe."

"All right," Ma sighed.

Her brothers shrugged their shoulders and ran out to

Shweta flushed. "I-I can't remember...I think, I didn't..."

Just then, the door burst open.

"Where's the cake?"

"What a yummy smell!"

The twins were back.

Shweta dashed to her room and locked the door. But she could hear them screaming with laughter as one said, "Get an axe!" and the other shouted in reply, "A hammer will do!"

That did it. "I'm not going to give up," she vowed. "I'll bake a

play, and Shweta got busy. "One cup flour...four tablespoons cocoa..." she read. "How easy! Any dummy can do it."

She felt very efficient as she measured and mixed, humming under her breath. So busy was she that she didn't even go out to cycle!

Bake for half an hour, the recipe said. At the exact time, Shweta took the cake out from the oven.

But...somehow...it didn't look right. Was it a little flat and hard?

"Ma!" she called out anxiously. "Take a look at this."

Ma took one look. Her brow puckered as she pressed the cake with her finger. "Hmm...you put baking powder, didn't you?"

"Baking—powder..."



perfect cake. Better than any Neha can!"

The next afternoon, she was back in action, ignoring the twins' knowing smiles and her mother's trying-to-be-understanding looks. This time, she double-checked to make sure that nothing was left out. While the cake was getting baked, she decided to call Rashi and tell her that cycling was out again. They got talking... about the maths teacher's new hair-do... about the coming basketball match... about Rashi's birthday party the following week...

When the smell of burning

became really strong, it reached Shweta. "NO-O!" she yelled, banging the phone down.

But the cake was already scorched! And the twins had to return home just then!

"Charcoal-ate cake!" Sumit grinned.

Shweta kicked him—really hard, before Amit got ideas.

She was getting desperate now, though. She knew they'd never let her forget it. And that would be quite unbearable. So...the next afternoon found her back in the kitchen.

This time, she sat there and watched the cake like a hawk while it was getting baked. There were just six minutes left for it to be done when the bell rang. It was Neha, of all people. She looked worried and scared.

"Shweta! Please help me!" she said breathlessly. "My cousin's locked himself in the bathroom. He's only two—and he's howling and screaming like mad. There's no one at home and...I don't know what to do!"

"Oh...uh..." Shweta hesitated.

"Please, come quickly! I'm really scared he'll hurt himself!" she wailed frantically.

"O—kay," Shweta sighed. My cake's jinxed, she thought, as she switched off the oven.

Neha's cousin was yelling loudly enough to bring the house down.

"Get a screwdriver," she

told Neha and ran to calm him down.

In two seconds flat, Neha's cousin was out. Shweta had just unscrewed the door latch!

"Wow, that was clever!" Neha exclaimed. "I'd never have thought of it. Thanks so much. I was out of my mind."

Shweta couldn't help laughing now.

"What's the joke?" Neha frowned.

"Nothing...well...I thought you were the smart one," Shweta burst out impulsively. "I'm no good at cooking and I was trying to bake a cake when you came. I left it half done—"

"Oh-h!" Neha's eyes grew round. "Come along!" She grabbed Shweta's arm. "Maybe we can still rescue it."

They dashed back. But to Shweta's surprise, they found the cake nicely baked!

"Perfect!" Neha cried. "There must have been enough heat in the oven to finish baking it."

They'd just completed the icing when the twins arrived. "It's scrum-a-licious!" they yelled, gobbling down huge chunks.

"Mmm!" said Neha. "It's better than any of mine."

Shweta smiled. She knew it was not an empty compliment—it actually was!

— Story by Deepa Agarwal
and illustrations by our reader
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The Shishukunj International
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A Happy Day

I love to rise on a summer morn,
When birds sit on every tree,
And a skylark sings with me.
O! What sweet company!
But to go to school on a summer morn,
Oh! It drives all joy away!

– R.Mathangi, Std. 10-A, G.K. Shetty
Hindu Vidyalaya, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.



I Love Cricket

My favourite game is cricket,
When I bowl I always get a wicket.
When I bat I hit sixes or fours and
make a big score.



Up and down the ball goes,
I like the way it rolls and rolls.
It's fun to run to get runs
And getting runs is always fun.

I run and run after the ball,
And field it before it reaches
the wall.
I am the best
cricketer...
The best
of them all!

– Pranav Goyal,
Std. 2, GHS-Baliestier,
Singapore.



Dreams and Reality

In my dreams, I'm a rockstar.
In reality, I can't even tune a guitar.

In dreams, I've topped the Boards,
In reality, I have yet to master the heavy loads.

In dreams, I perform with a band
But in reality, I sit chin in hand.

In dreams, I am a millionaire.
In reality, my five-year-old cycle badly needs
repair.

Dreams are so much more fun
In reality, things are easier said than done!

– Gargi Binju,
Std. 10-D, Bhavan's
Mehta Vidyalaya,
K.G. Marg,
New Delhi.



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