

The Grumpy Baker



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In a little town with cobblestone streets stood a bakery with a blue door. Inside lived Mr. Crumble, a baker famous for his delicious bread. He was tall and broad, with flour-dusted skin and bushy grey eyebrows. His big drooping moustache hid a mouth that never, ever smiled. He had a round pink face and small dark eyes that always looked grumpy. Even his cap looked cross.



Every morning, Mr. Crumble baked bread that made the whole town's mouth water. Crusty loaves, soft rolls, and flaky pastries filled the shelves. But he never smiled, not even a little. He just grunted and thumped dough. His wooden rolling pin stayed tucked in his belt like a grumpy sword. Customers came for the bread but left without a single warm word. The bakery felt as cold as a winter morning.



One grey morning, something strange happened. As Mr. Crumble pulled a tray of bread rolls from the oven, the rolls began to change. Their doughy tops wiggled and twisted into angry frowns. Two raisin eyes popped up on each roll, glaring at him. A tiny paper baker's hat appeared on one roll's head. Doughboy, the cheeky mascot, had arrived! His mouth curved down in a grumpy line, just like Mr. Crumble's.



Granny Batty shuffled in, her wicker basket on her arm and her lilac shawl wrapped tight. She peered through her round glasses at the angry bread. 'Oh my,' she said, 'these rolls look cross!' The angry bread rolls scowled and hissed tiny crumbs. Granny Batty stepped back, her rosy cheeks pale. 'I'll come back later,' she whispered, and hurried out. Mr. Crumble's brow furrowed deeper. What was happening?



Next came the pastries. Mr. Crumble mixed and folded, but the dough felt heavy and sad. The croissants drooped like wilted flowers. The cinnamon buns sighed and refused to rise. Doughboy's raisin eyes drooped, and his dough mouth turned down. Mr. Crumble grumbled, 'Rise, you lazy lumps!' But the sad pastries just sank lower. The whole bakery seemed to sigh with them. Even the flour dust looked gloomy.



Then the cakes began to tremble. A tall sponge cake wobbled on its tray, its layers jiggling with worry. A chocolate cake shivered so hard its icing cracked. Doughboy's mouth opened in a tiny worried 'O'. Mr. Crumble stomped his boots. 'Stop that shaking!' he barked. But his loud voice only made the cakes tremble more. The bakery shelves rattled. Everything felt upside-down and topsy-turvy.



Customers peeked through the blue door, but the angry bread scared them away. The sad pastries made them sigh. The worried cakes made them nervous. One by one, they turned and left. Mr. Crumble stood alone among his quivering baked goods. His round pink cheeks drooped. For the first time, he looked not just grumpy, but also a little sad. Doughboy's raisin eyes looked up at him, mirroring his gloom.



Just then, the bell above the door jingled. In skipped Pip, a cheerful child in a bright yellow raincoat and red boots. Curly chestnut hair bounced in two puffs, and a gap-toothed grin lit up her freckled face. She carried a small paper bag and a blue backpack with a star patch. 'Hello!' she chirped. 'I'm Pip. Your bakery smells wonderful! Can I help?' Mr. Crumble blinked. No one had ever asked to help before.



Pip looked at the angry bread and the sad pastries. She didn't seem scared at all. 'Maybe they're just copying your feelings,' she said gently. 'When you're grumpy, they're grumpy too.' Mr. Crumble's drooping moustache twitched. 'That's silly,' he mumbled. But Doughboy's raisin eyes widened, and his dough mouth made a tiny 'oh!' Pip smiled. 'Let's try something. Can you show me how to knead dough?'



Mr. Crumble shrugged and handed Pip a small lump of dough. She kneaded it with a big smile, humming a happy tune. 'Like this?' she asked. Her warm hands and cheerful voice seemed to make the dough soft and light. Doughboy's mouth curved up just a little. Mr. Crumble watched, his bushy eyebrows lifting. He tried a tiny smile, but it felt strange on his face. Still, something inside him began to soften.



Pip kept helping every day. She talked to the bread kindly and patted the pastries gently. 'You can rise, little buns,' she whispered. And they did! Slowly, Mr. Crumble began to copy her. He said 'please' and 'thank you.' He even tried a small smile. It felt wobbly at first, like a newborn chick. But Doughboy's dough mouth stretched into a wide grin, and his raisin eyes sparkled.



Granny Batty came back, her wicker basket ready. She saw Pip and Mr. Crumble working together. Mr. Crumble greeted her with a nod and a nearly-smile. 'Fresh bread today, Granny,' he said softly. Granny Batty's round glasses twinkled. 'How lovely!' she said. The angry bread rolls had turned into cheerful rounds with happy faces. The sad pastries puffed up proudly. The worried cakes stood tall and steady. The bakery felt warm and welcoming.



Word spread that the bakery had changed. Customers returned, drawn by the smell of fresh bread and the sound of laughter. Mr. Crumble's smile grew wider each day. His big drooping moustache curved up at the corners. He gave extra rolls to children and warm words to everyone. Doughboy's happy face beamed from the counter, his paper baker's hat perched just right. The bakery was full of kindness.



One morning, Pip arrived to find a special bread roll waiting for her. It had a smiley face made of raisins and a tiny dough heart on top. Mr. Crumble's round pink cheeks were rosy with pride. 'For you,' he said. 'Thank you for helping me.' Pip's gap-toothed grin stretched from ear to ear. 'You did it yourself,' she said. Mr. Crumble's small dark eyes crinkled with joy. 'Maybe I did,' he chuckled.



Now the bakery is the happiest place in town. Mr. Crumble still bakes delicious bread, but now he smiles all day long. The bread rolls smile back, and even Doughboy wears a permanent grin. Granny Batty comes every morning for a warm loaf and a friendly chat. Pip visits often, her yellow raincoat bright against the blue door. And everyone knows that kindness can turn a grumpy baker into a happy friend.



So if you ever pass the bakery with the blue door, peek inside. You'll see bread with smiling faces, cakes standing proud, and a baker with a twinkle in his eye. Mr. Crumble learned that a little kindness goes a long way—and that even the grumpiest heart can soften with patience and warmth. The bread smiles, and so does he. And maybe, just maybe, you'll smile too.