

The Jellybean Machine



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In the snug little town of Berrybrook, where the cobblestones smelled of warm bread, lived Professor Puddle. He had wild bushy white hair that stuck out sideways, round spectacles, and a long purple lab coat with patch pockets. Every morning he tinkered in his workshop, humming. Everyone knew him as the kindest, cleverest, most absent-minded inventor in town.



One bright Monday, Professor Puddle finished his greatest invention yet: a shiny silver machine that made magic jellybeans. It had copper pipes, spinning dials, and a little glass window. "Each jellybean does something surprising!" he told his helper, Pip, who wore bright yellow overalls and a tool belt with a tiny wrench. Pip's green eyes sparkled with excitement.



Pip loved surprises more than anything. "What do they do?" he asked, bouncing on his red sneakers. The professor held up three jars. "Red makes you hop like a frog. Blue turns your voice into a trumpet. Yellow makes everything look enormous." Pip's freckled nose twitched. "Can I help make more?" "Tomorrow," said the professor. "Carefully."



But the next morning, Pip woke up early and hurried to the workshop alone. The jars looked so inviting, all glittering and bright. "I'll just add a pinch," he whispered. He poured red, then blue, then yellow, all at once, and the machine began to wobble and giggle and shake. Sparkles burst from every pipe.



Pop! Pop! POP! Jellybeans flew out of the machine like colorful rain. They bounced down the street and landed in everybody's breakfast. Mayor Maple, tall in her forest green coat with gold buttons, stepped outside and swallowed a red one. She hopped up and down like a frog. "Oh my!" she croaked. "What is happening?"



A blue jellybean rolled past the baker, who began to sing like a trumpet. Doo-doo-doo! Her bread dough wobbled to the tune. Another landed in a teacup, and the teapot sang a waltz. Soon the whole street was hopping and tooting and trumpeting. People laughed so hard they had to sit down, then hopped back up again.



Then a yellow jellybean bounced into the florist's basket. Suddenly the daisies looked as tall as trees, and the flowerpots towered like towers. "Everything is huge!" gasped Pip, wobbling on his sneakers. Some folks giggled, but others looked worried. At the end of town, the annual invention fair was being set up. Tents rose, and a big banner fluttered.



Mayor Maple hopped up beside the professor, her black bun bouncing. "Professor Puddle!" she said, still croaking. "The invention fair begins this afternoon. We cannot have a singing, hopping, giant town!" She crossed her arms firmly. The professor's rosy cheeks went pale. "Oh dear," he said. "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear."



Back in the workshop, Professor Puddle and Pip stared at the machine. It was spluttering and puffing out purple smoke. "I mixed everything," Pip confessed, his freckles drooping. "I was too excited to wait." The professor patted his shoulder gently. "Mistakes happen, my boy. But rushing is what caused this. Now let us think slowly and carefully."



Mayor Maple stepped inside, her silver badge gleaming. "I will help," she said. "But where do we start?" The professor picked up his magnifying glass. "We look at the recipe, step by step." Pip pulled the crumpled recipe from his pocket. There were three jars, three measurements, and one important rule: add each ingredient only after the machine hums.



Pip read aloud. "One spoon of red, wait for the hum. One spoon of blue, wait for the hum. One spoon of yellow, wait for the hum." He scratched his curly ginger hair. "I added them all together. No waiting." Mayor Maple nodded. "So we empty the machine and begin again, carefully." The professor smiled. "Teamwork and careful thinking. That is the recipe."



They worked together in the humming workshop. Mayor Maple held the jar steady. Pip poured one spoon of red, and they waited. Hummmm. Then blue. Hummmm. Then yellow. Hummmm. The machine glowed softly and made a neat little ding. Out rolled perfect jellybeans, one by one, each the right color and the right size. Pip held his breath.



"Try one," said the professor. Pip popped a red jellybean in his mouth and hopped twice, then landed neatly. "It works!" he cheered. Mayor Maple tried a blue one and sang a single lovely note. The yellow one made the teacup look big and friendly, not scary. The three of them laughed with relief and hurried to the fair with baskets full of jellybeans.



The invention fair was crowded and joyful. Professor Puddle showed the machine, and Pip told everyone the important rule. "Always wait for the hum!" he said, grinning his gap-toothed grin. Children hopped and sang and squealed at enormous flowers. Mayor Maple tried a single yellow jellybean and declared the whole town wonderfully, properly surprising.



That evening, the professor and Pip sat on the workshop steps. "I learned something," said Pip. "Excitement is fun, but thinking first is better." He tightened a bolt with his tiny wrench. Professor Puddle's moustache wiggled into a smile. "And I learned to slow down and share my recipes," he said. "A good team is the best magic of all."



From that day on, a little sign hung above the jellybean machine: Wait for the hum. And whenever Pip felt that excited wiggle in his toes, he remembered the hopping mayor, the singing baker, and the towering daisies. He took a deep breath, thought carefully, and only then reached for the jars. Berrybrook was never quite the same, and that was perfectly wonderful.