

# Love is the Reward A Modern Day Parable

Our local high school decided to hold a student bake-off to celebrate the town's 100th Anniversary. The Grand Prize would be \$100 cash and a spot on the cooking segment of a local TV station. Their recipe would also be used as the featured dessert for the upcoming Centennial Festival. The whole town was excited about this event!

All the young pastry chefs were invited to bring in their finest, most delicious desserts for the preliminary rounds. After a few weeks, they made it to the final two. In an effort to remove bias, the school administration decided to bring in three guest judges from the neighboring college. The two students were to wear masks and no names would be displayed. Instead, they would only be identified as "Student A" and "Student B." They would be required to bake and decorate their cakes on-site, within an allotted time period.

The big day finally arrived. "Student A" bought a new outfit, with matching apron and mask. She also bought new mixing bowls, pans, and all the latest gadgets for cake decorating. She wanted to win for the 15-minutes of fame on TV! The \$100 meant little to her since her family was one of the wealthiest in the area. She was in it for the glory, and was very accustomed to coming in first and getting what she wanted!

"Student B" arrived in clean, but worn clothes. They were hand-me-downs from his older brother, and his mask was an old bandana tied around his face. He looked at his reflection and felt like a bank robber in an older Western movie. He brought his grandmother's baking dishes and canisters. She began teaching him to bake when he was only 3-years-old. They made the best cakes together! "Student B" was raised by his Grandmother who had taken in the family when his mom got cancer and couldn't work anymore. His dad couldn't hand the stress of it all, and had walked out on them. They hadn't seen or heard from him since. The \$100 prize would be very helpful to the family, and wouldn't Granny be so proud if he won and made it on TV!

A small crowd gathered in the auditorium to watch the final round. The students were set at their stations, the timer was set, and the bake-off began! "Student A" had planned an elaborate decorating theme, so she rushed to get her cake in the oven. In her haste, she accidentally poured salt into the batter instead of sugar. She didn't bother tasting the batter. It would taste good enough and it would look absolutely beautiful! That is all she needed to win.

“Student B” carefully measured and poured his ingredients from the old tin canisters. He tasted and tweaked the batter until he had it just like Granny makes it. His cake was nicely done and neatly frosted. He placed it on a simple plate and put a nice little bow on the side. His competitor’s final product looked like a garden had sprouted from the top, spiraled down the cake, and spilled onto the beautiful display stand. She had worked feverishly, finishing with only seconds to spare before the buzzer. She hadn’t even looked up to check out “Student B’s” creation. When she glanced at his cake, she let out a little chuckle. “Ha!” she thought to herself. “I’ve got this win for sure! I’m gonna be a TV sensation!”

The students laid out three slices, one for each judge, then they were seated off to the side. The judges inspected the cakes. To the eyes, the two just didn’t compare, so they naturally hovered over “Student A’s” elaborately decorated cake. Taking their seats at the Judges Table, the panel congratulated the two students competing here today, and assured them they were both winners. “Now, let us put them to the final test. Let the tasting begin!” the announcer rang out.

All eyes were on the judges. They glanced at each other and lifted “Student B’s” slice to sample first, as if to get it over with and move on to the obvious victor. That first bite literally melted in their mouths and took them all by great surprise. One bite wasn’t nearly enough. This cake tasted better than any they had eaten at the local restaurants, for sure. It tasted like home and history. It tasted like caring and comfort. It tasted like love. Each judge savored bite after bite until not a morsel was left on their plates.

Beneath his bandana, “Student B” smiled. He never doubted they would love it. A job well done in the spirit of love was reward enough. “Student A” remained stoic and confident. Her presentation outshined his by far. Hers was better received, and more worthy of the win. As the judges bit into her beautiful but salty cake, each jumped up and ran for a cup of cold water. After recovering from the shock, the prize was handed to “Student B” with a handshake and a knowing look of remorse and sincere admiration from each judge. This little one had taught them much today. The upcoming celebration would indeed be grand!

