

Sugar Cakes Cyril by Phillis Gershator

Since Cyril was the big brother, he was supposed to be the Big Helper. But it seemed like he was always in the way. If he poured the milk, it spilled. If he shut the door, it slammed.

And now, when he handed his mother the baby powder, he dropped it, and the top fell off. The powder spilled out onto the floor. It puffed up into the air and made them all cough.

“Go outside, Cyril,” his mother snapped.

“I thought I was your Big Helper.”

“I don’t need a helper right now,” she said, coughing. She finished diapering the baby and tried to clean up the powder with a damp rag.

“Just go outside.”

Cyril sat on the porch.

“I hate that baby,” he said. “I hate Mommy. I’ll show them. I’ll never be a helper again.”

Miss Elsie passed by. She was carrying two big shopping bags.

“Good morning, Cyril,” she said.

“Good morning,” he answered grumpily.

Miss Elsie stopped and put the bags down. “Oh, these bags are heavy,” she said.

Cyril slowly walked over to Miss Elsie and picked up a bag. The bag was heavy! He hoped he wouldn’t drop it. He looked inside. Sugar. Four bags of sugar!

“I’m making sugar cakes today,” Miss Elsie said. “I’m going to sell them in Market Square for the Food Fair next week. Would you like to help me make sugar cakes?”

Would he? Yes!

When they got to Miss Elsie’s house, she took out two big iron pots from her cupboard and put them on the stove.

“Which kind do you like best, white sugar cakes or brown ones?”

Miss Elsie asked Cyril.

“Both of them!”

“Good thing. We’ll make brown ones and white ones, with coconut, of course.”

Cyril helped Miss Elsie measure brown sugar and water in one pot and white sugar and water in the other pot.

Miss Elsie peeled the brown skin off the coconut meat with a sharp knife, and Cyril grated it.

They put half the grated coconut into one pot and half into the other.

“It’s time to add the flavoring, ginger root and orange peel,” said Miss Elsie.

“Now the sugar has to cook, cook, cook, just so — not too wet and not too dry. You stir it up, Cyril, so it doesn’t burn on the bottom.”

Cyril stirred the sugar, and it didn’t burn.

After the sugar cooked for a long time, Miss Elsie tested it. It was just right.