



THE BAKER'S DAUGHTER

A long, long time ago, in a small town in Hertfordshire, there lived a baker who was very, very greedy. He sold breads and pastries, but he also knew every trick in the book when it came to cheating customers out of their money. Every night he would sit at his kitchen table and count how much money he had made that day, cackling gleefully.

The baker had a daughter who helped him in the shop, and she was just as rotten as her father. One day, when she was working alone, an old woman came into the shop.

“Please, my dear,” the old lady said, “would you be so kind and give me a bit of your dough? I haven’t eaten for three days and I don’t have two farthings to rub together.”

The girl was very reluctant to give anyone anything for free, but the old lady wouldn’t go away and she thought it would be bad for business if there was a beggar in the shop for too long. Finally, she agreed and gave the woman a teeny tiny bit of dough, just to get rid of her.

The old woman took it, but then she got the girl’s attention again.

“Please, my dear girl, I hate to be a bother, but would you be so kind as to bake this tiny bit of dough you gave me in your oven? You see, I don’t have an oven, and I’m so terribly hungry.”

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“Fine,” the girl snapped, “give it to me.” She took the tiny bit of dough and put it in the oven.

The old woman sat happily down and waited.

After a while, the baker's daughter went to check on the dough, expecting to see the world's teeniest, tiniest loaf of bread. But how could it be? The tiny piece of dough had turned into a huge loaf of bread!

The greedy girl couldn't believe her luck. Quickly, she took the bread out of the oven and hid it in a basket right next to her. Then she turned to the old woman. “I couldn't find your bread in the oven, it must have fallen through the slats and into the flames!”

“Oh dear,” the old lady said, “could you please try once more, love? I can wait a little longer.”

The baker's daughter didn't know what else to do, so she took another little bit of dough, even tinier than before, and put it in the oven while the old woman waited. But when the girl looked in the oven again, she discovered another loaf that was even larger and prettier than the first.

“Oh, you wouldn't believe this,” she called out to the old woman. “The dough must have fallen into the flames again. It's gone!” And she hid the second loaf in the basket as well.

“Well, my dear, maybe the third time will be lucky. Can we try one last time? I beg you. I'm starving!”

This time, the girl used a piece of dough so tiny it was almost invisible. She put it in the hot oven, and once again it turned into a gorgeous loaf of bread.

This time, however, the old woman had stood up so she could have a good view of the kitchen, and when she saw the girl trying to hide the loaf in the basket, she shouted: “Hey! That's my bread!”

The baker's daughter protested, but of course the old woman knew about all three of the loaves the girl had stolen for herself.

What the girl didn't know, you see, was that this was no ordinary old woman. This was a fairy in disguise! She'd hoped that the girl would begin to be kind, but instead she'd watched over and over as the girl tried to steal the bread for herself.

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Angry, the fairy decided to punish the girl for her greediness. She took her magic wand out of her cloak and quickly tapped the girl's back three times. And, just like that, the baker's daughter turned into a owl. The bird flapped around the bakery for a moment, then flew outside through the open door, and no one since has ever seen the baker's daughter again.