

Half of Nothing

The smile on Gilly's face stretched from one ear to the other as he walked home from school. He had on his backpack and in his arms Gilly was carrying, oh, so carefully, a big piece of chocolate cake covered in orange frosting.

"Hello, Gilly," said Mrs. Greene, the crossing guard. "What is that you have there?"

"We had a party in school today," Gilly answered.

"Was it someone's birthday?" Mrs. Greene asked. They were standing on the corner, waiting for the cars to drive by.

"No. We finished Reading Around the World today," Gilly said. The smile on his face grew even bigger. "I read seven books all by myself. Each time we read a book, Mrs. Stone moved our pin to another country on the map."

Mrs. Greene smiled too. "Well, that sure looks like a tasty prize," she said. Mrs. Greene held up her stop sign as she walked Gilly across the street.

"I'm taking it home so that I can give half of it to my mom," Gilly told Mrs. Greene. "But since it is such a big piece, you can have some too."

"Oh, thank you, Gilly. I would love some cake," she said. Gilly took a plastic fork out of his backpack and cut a piece of cake for Mrs. Greene. Then, swinging his backpack over his shoulder again, he continued on his way, carrying his cake oh, so carefully as he walked down the sidewalk.

As he neared his street, Gilly saw Benny, the four-year-old Gilly's big sister would sometimes babysit.

"Hi Benny," Gilly said to the little boy.

“Hi Gilly,” said Benny. Benny was riding his tricycle around on the grass. “What are you carrying?” Benny asked. He rode his tricycle up to where Gilly was leaning against the fence.

“We finished Reading Around the World at school today,” Gilly said. “So we had a big party. I’m bringing this piece of cake home to give half to my mother.”

“Oh,” said Benny. “I want to go to school and eat cake.”

“We don’t have cake every day,” said Gilly. “Just on special days, like today when we finished Reading Around the World.”

Benny nodded and, looking at Gilly’s cake, said proudly, “I know how to spell the word ‘cake’.”

Gilly looked at his cake too. It wasn’t as big as it had been when he left school but it wasn’t too small yet either. “Well, if you spell it correctly now, I can give you some of mine,” Gilly said.

“Okay!” Benny said. He quickly got up off of his tricycle and, squinting his eyes and scratching his head as he thought, he said, “C-A-K...” Benny paused for a moment. “E! C-A-K-E!” Benny shouted excitedly. Gilly cut a piece of the cake for Benny, making sure his little friend got a big glob of the orange frosting.

“Thank you,” Benny said as he happily accepted his prize.

“You earned it,” Gilly said. He waved good-bye to Benny as he started down his street, carrying the rest of his cake oh, so carefully.

Gilly could now see his house. Still holding onto his cake oh, so carefully, he began to walk a little faster, then a little faster still, until he was running excitedly past his neighbors’

homes. He was almost to his gate when he realized one of his shoelaces had become untied. Gilly started falling forward, cake-first, towards the hard sidewalk.

“Oh, no!” Gilly yelled as he fell.

Suddenly, Gilly felt a tug on his backpack. He stopped falling, the plate with his cake only inches from hitting the sidewalk.

The hand on his backpack helped Gilly regain his balance as he straightened himself up.

“Are you all right, Gilly?” a voice asked.

Gilly turned around. His fourteen-year-old neighbor Sarah was standing behind him. Sarah and Gilly’s sister were best friends.

Gilly nodded his head. “That was close, Sarah. You probably saved my life,” Gilly said.

Sarah laughed. “I don’t know about that, but I may have saved your cake.”

Gilly smiled. “You sure did,” he said. Gilly looked at his cake again. There really wasn’t a whole lot left, and he still wanted to give half to his mother, but if Sarah hadn’t caught him as he fell then there may not have been any cake left to share with anyone. “Would you like a piece of my cake?” he asked her.

“Sure,” Sarah said. Gilly cut a piece with his fork and handed it to her. “Thanks, Gilly.”

Gilly looked up at his house. He was almost home now. “I better get inside,” he said. “I still want to give half of my cake to my mother.”

“Okay, see you later, Gilly,” Sarah said. “And don’t forget to tie your shoes next time.”

Gilly nodded and waved as he headed up the walkway to his front door.

“Gilly?” called his mother from the kitchen. “Is that you?”

“Hi, Mom,” Gilly said. He put his backpack by the door and hurried into the kitchen, carrying his cake oh, so carefully.

Gilly’s mother turned to greet her son as he set the plate down on the table, oh, so carefully.

“What do you have there?” she asked him.

Gilly looked at the plate. There was now only a small piece of cake left. It was now hardly big enough to even pick up with the fork. “We finished Reading Around the World in school today,” Gilly said. “So we had a party and everyone got a piece of cake. I brought mine home because I wanted to give half of it to you. But on my way home, I gave a piece to Mrs. Greene, the crossing guard, when she helped me across the street. Then I gave a piece to Mr. Alexander, the one who gives me cookies whenever we go to buy bread. I saw Benny in his yard and since he spelled ‘cake’ all by himself, I gave him a piece too. Then Sarah saved the cake when I almost fell outside so I also gave her a piece. But now it looks like there is not enough cake left to cut in half.” Gilly looked sadly at his mother and then at the cake.

Gilly’s mother smiled and took her son in her arms, giving him a big hug. “I think that you saw today that there is always enough cake, or anything you may have, for you to share a little piece with everyone.” Gilly’s mother took the plastic fork and, oh, so carefully, cut the tiny piece of cake in half.