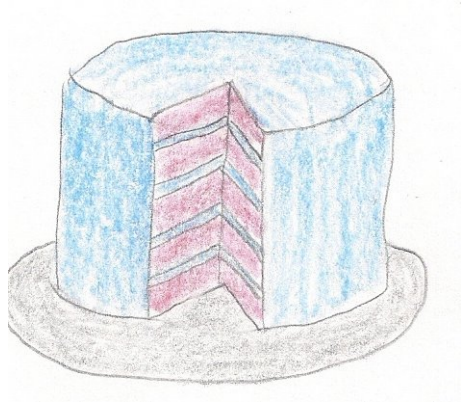


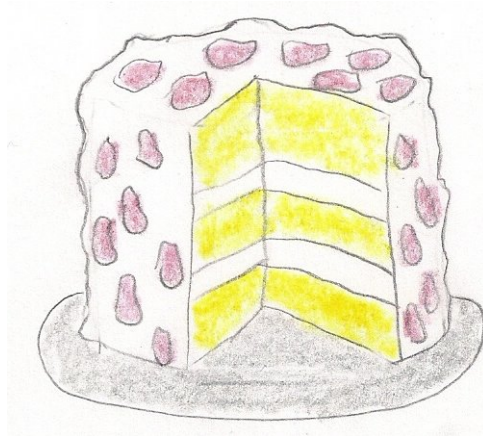
Michael Stock-Matthews

### Jimmy's Birthday Cake

Every year on Jimmy's birthday, Jimmy's mom let him have a cake. Not only that, it could be whatever cake Jimmy wanted. One year, Jimmy had a five layer coconut cake.



Another year, he had strawberry shortcake.



This year, Jimmy had decided that he wanted a triple chocolate marshmallow cake. The one condition for Jimmy to get his cake was that he had to help his mom bake it.

Jimmy woke up bright and early on the morning of his ninth birthday. Yawning, he went to his window and opened the shades. Jimmy gasped. Just across from his window was Mr. Shamusfield's house. It was a dark house with tall towers that seemed like they never ended, and windows that always creaked. Even worse than the house was Mr. Shamusfield himself. He had eyes that always looked in different directions, and a long beard that looked like it was made of horse hair. Jimmy was convinced that he was a monster.



After looking at Mr. Shamusfield's house for a while, Jimmy realized it was time to start baking his cake.

"We're behind schedule!" Jimmy thought to himself. He quickly closed his shades, ran into his parents' room and immediately started jumping on their bed.

"Wake up mom!" he shouted. "We have to start baking my cake!"

"Ok Jimmy," replied Jimmy's mom. "Let's head into the kitchen and we can start."

In the kitchen, Jimmy and his mom immediately began assembling the ingredients for the triple chocolate marshmallow cake. Jimmy grabbed the milk and butter out of the refrigerator while his mom reached up to the top shelf for the baking powder and eggs.



Soon they had all the ingredients laid out on the countertop—except for one.

“Mom, we still need to get out the sugar!” exclaimed Jimmy after viewing the ingredients. “What kind of cake is it with no sugar?”

“You’re right, Jimmy,” replied Jimmy’s mom. “But I think there’s a problem.”

“What kind of problem, mom?” Jimmy asked.



“I think we’re out of sugar,” said Jimmy’s mom.

“Jimmy, go ask Mr. Shamusfield next door for some sugar,” said Jimmy’s mom.

Jimmy’s heart sank. The last thing he wanted to do on his birthday was go to Mr. Shamusfield’s house.

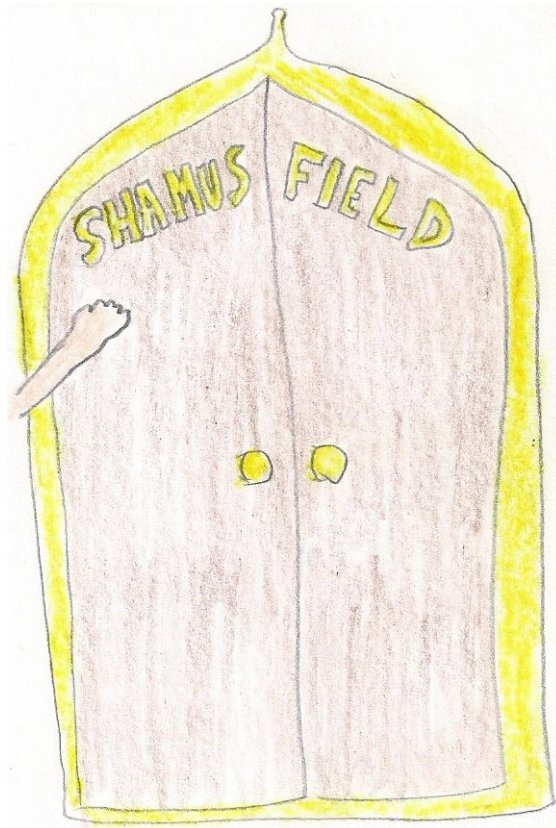
“Mom, I don’t think that’s such a good idea,” Jimmy said nervously.

“And why is that, Jimmy?”

“Me and my friends have been talking and, well, we think Mr. Shamusfield is a monster.”

“Don’t be silly, Jimmy. Do you want to bake your cake or not? You said yourself, we’re already behind schedule. Now run over to Mr. Shamusfield’s house and grab two cups of sugar.”

Jimmy took a deep breath, and slowly walked over to Mr. Shamusfield’s house. His heart was pounding. He walked up to the door and lifted his arm. Finally, Jimmy worked up the courage to knock.



After a minute or so, Jimmy heard a slow pounding and a creaking. His heart began to beat even faster. Finally the door creaked open. There stood Mr. Shamusfield.

“Hello Jimmy,” said Mr. Shamusfield. “What can I do for you?”

Jimmy looked at Mr. Shamusfield. He wanted to run, but his fear made him stuck where he stood. “Um, h- h- hi, Mr, Mr, Mr Sh-” he stammered. Jimmy couldn’t take his eyes off of Mr. Shamusfield’s wildly shifting eyes.

“Call me Robert,” said Mr. Shamusfield.

Jimmy was still terrified. Why was Mr. Shamusfield telling him his first name? Jimmy thought Mr. Shamusfield would have tried to eat him by now.

“O- ok Ro- Robe- Robert...” Jimmy said, still stuttering uncontrollably.

“Good,” said Mr. Shamusfield. “Now, what can I do for you?”

Jimmy took a deep breath. He decided he would just say his message as quickly as possible. “I was just wondering if I could borrow some sugar,” he said, barely stopping to breathe.

“What was that Jimmy?” asked Mr. Shamusfield.

“I was just wondering if I could borrow some sugar,” Jimmy said, his confidence slowly returning. He guessed at this point that Mr. Shamusfield wasn’t going to eat him.

“Sure Jimmy,” said Mr. Shamusfield. “In fact, I was just using my sugar on these.” Mr. Shamusfield handed Jimmy a chocolate chip cookie. “Try one.”



“Uh, ok,” replied Jimmy. He took a bite of the chocolate chip cookie. It was the best cookie he had ever tasted. “Wow Mr. Shamus-, uh, Robert, these are really good.”

“I’ve been perfecting the recipe for the past twenty years,” said Mr. Shamusfield. “I guess you could call me a baking expert.”

Just then Jimmy decided to take a chance. “Hey Robert, I’m baking a cake over at my house right now for my birthday,” he said. “Do you want to come help out?”

Mr. Shamusfield smiled. “Sure Jimmy, I would like that,” he said. “Happy birthday, by the way.”

Jimmy and Mr. Shamusfield went back to Jimmy’s house and into the kitchen, where Jimmy’s mom was waiting.

“Mom, this is Robert,” Jimmy said. He’s gonna help us with the cake.”

“Ok Jimmy,” replied Jimmy’s mom. “Let’s get started.”

Now that they had all the ingredients, the baking went perfectly smoothly. A few hours later, Jimmy had his triple chocolate marshmallow cake.

Later, when they were all enjoying the cake, Jimmy spoke up. “This is the best birthday cake ever. Thanks for helping me make it, Mr. Shamusfield.”

“No problem, Jimmy,” said Mr. Shamusfield. “Just one thing. Remember to call me Robert.”

