

HALF BAKED

Written by

Sara Phillips

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Boxes of perfectly iced cupcakes, multicolored, line the counter in neat stacks.

YOUNG BAKER, teens, scrawny and ruffled, leans against a cleared section of the counter with his chin cupped in his hands. He focuses on the other side, where...

GRANDMOTHER, 60's, short and plump, plucks the last cookie from a sheet tray in front of her and puts it into a paper treat bag. She folds the top of the bag over and seals it shut with a fifty cent sticker.

Grandmother places the treat bag into a large tote full of other individually-wrapped cookies and wipes her hands on her flour-stained apron.

She takes the apron off and replaces it with a clean, dark green one with a bakery logo on the front. Young Baker eyes it longingly.

He perks up like he has an idea and gathers the cupcake boxes into his arms. The tall stack--almost up to his nose--sways.

He moves with the boxes to stay under them, but the tower only waves more, threatening to collapse.

Grandmother glances up after sliding the tote's straps over one arm and jolts. She rushes around the corner and steadies the boxes. Everything stills--she lets out a relieved sigh.

Young Baker smiles his thanks and heads for the door. Before he can get there, Grandmother slides in front of him and shakes her head.

Young Baker's shoulders slump, and Grandmother offers him a patient smile. She takes the cupcake boxes from him.

He watches as she opens the door and exits the kitchen, the boxes staying perfectly balanced the whole time.

Young Baker, alone, turns away from the door, head bowed.

His gaze falls upon the counter. A single plated cupcake remains, vanilla with pristine mint green frosting. He pulls the plate closer, scrutinizing.

He looks up at containers of flour and sugar on the other end of the counter, then back to the cupcake.

His brow furrows in determination.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Young Baker now dons a clean apron. A piece of paper with Grandmother's bakery logo drawn on it is pinned on it. He slams a large bowl onto the counter next to a hand mixer.

From his pocket, he pulls out a folded piece of paper. He unfolds it, eyes scanning over a "vanilla cupcake recipe."

Measuring cups and ingredients cover the surrounding counter space: flour, sugar, a gallon of milk, a carton of eggs, sticks of butter, and small, unmarked bottles and jars.

MONTAGE - YOUNG BAKER MAKES CUPCAKES

-- Young Baker creams the butter, but it's too hard and launches out of the bowl when he turns the mixer on. It bounces off a cabinet and rebounds into his face with enough force to knock him over.

-- He cracks an egg on the side of the bowl so hard that it bursts wide open. Half of the egg misses the bowl and plops onto the counter. Shell fragments stick to his hand.

-- Young Baker dumps a cup of flour into the bowl. When he mixes it, the flour puffs up in a cloud in his face.

-- He scoops batter into a cupcake pan, face still white from the flour.

-- The oven door closes.

-- Young Baker squeezes a green food coloring bottle over a bowl of loose, uncolored frosting. A stream of dye squirts out all at once. He stirs it in.

-- A kitchen timer RINGS. A hand smacks it.

BACK TO SCENE

Young Baker opens the oven door. His eyes widen and, in a panic, he scrambles to get an oven mitt.

Young Baker pulls burnt cupcakes out of the oven and drops the pan on the stove with a clatter.

He drags his hands down his face as smoke pools around him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Young Baker finishes icing the cupcakes just as Grandmother walks in.

Limp, runny, dark green frosting drips off the side of the cupcakes with incomplete coverage, showing off the charred edges.

Young Baker rubs his brow, eyes downcast. He pushes the plate of cupcakes towards Grandmother.

She glances from his cupcakes to the one she left for him.

It sits abandoned on the edge of the counter, its frosting still light and fluffy.

Grandmother turns back to Young Baker with a soft frown. She pats his head and walks past him, deeper into the house.

Young Baker's shoulders slump. He throws his cupcakes away.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (DAY 2)

A reinvigorated Young Baker rubs his hands together as he pours over the recipe on the counter.

MONTAGE STARTS - YOUNG BAKER MAKES CUPCAKES... AGAIN

-- He levels a cup of sugar.

-- Cracks an egg into the bowl.

-- Turns the hand mixer on, moves it around the bowl.

-- The oven door shuts.

-- The kitchen timer RINGS. A hand smacks it.

-- Young Baker pulls the pan out of the oven. The cupcakes are lopsided, but not burnt.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (DAY 2)

Young Baker puts a piping bag down to appraise his work.

The green frosting, lighter than before, flops over, unable to maintain its piped shape.

Young Baker frowns, drums his fingers against the counter.

Grandmother walks in, stares at the cupcakes.

Young Baker looks at her and straightens up, averts his gaze after a moment.

Grandmother presses her lips together, shakes her head. She walks past him.

Young Baker stares after her. He looks back down at his cupcakes, scowls, then throws them away.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (DAY 3)

Grandmother frosts a batch of cupcakes. Her hands move in quick, confident swirls.

Young Baker watches from the side. He mimics her hand motions, then scribbles notes on a sheet of paper.

When his head lowers to write the note, Grandmother shakes her head with a sigh and looks down.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (DAY 4)

MONTAGE STARTS - THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM?

-- Young Baker sets a bowl on the counter.

-- Scoops batter into the pan.

-- The oven door closes.

-- He mixes frosting, a perfect mint green.

-- The kitchen timer RINGS.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (DAY 4)

Young Baker pushes a plate of perfectly iced cupcakes towards Grandmother.

She looks from them to him. He's not smiling. Grandmother shakes her head.

Young Baker throws his arms up and opens his mouth to complain, but Grandmother holds a hand up to stop him.

She walks past him, pauses at the edge of the room, but leaves without a word.

Young Baker turns to the cupcakes. He picks up one of his in one hand, Grandmother's in the other.

He holds them up side-by-side.

They're identical.

Young Baker looks between them several times. His grip tightens with each glance.

He sets them down. His hands curl into fists.

He lifts one fist into the air, smashes it down on top of his cupcake with a shout. Or was it his?

He looks between the other cupcakes on the counter, searching, but they all look the same. He can't tell. His glances grow more fervent, frustrated.

Young Baker throws them all away.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (DAY 5)

Young Baker holds the cupcake recipe in both hands. He clenches it so hard his hands shake. He throws it behind him.

The paper catches on the air and loops back towards him, smacking him in the back of the head. Young Baker spins around, snatches it out of the air, and shreds it to pieces.

The bits of paper all flutter to the ground around him.

Young Baker turns back around and stares into an empty bowl on the counter.

He pulls the piece of paper with Grandmother's bakery logo off of his apron and holds it between his hands like he's about to tear it, too. But he hesitates.

Smooths the paper out, touches the logo.

His jaw tightens, and he looks up. His eyes burn with newfound determination.

MONTAGE STARTS - CARVING HIS OWN PATH

-- Young Baker creams butter with the hand mixer.

-- Cracks an egg with one hand into the bowl.

-- Dumps in a cup of cocoa powder.

-- Folds in chocolate chips with a wooden spoon.

-- Scoops the batter into a cupcake tin.

-- The oven door closes.

-- The kitchen timer RINGS. A hand hits it.

END MONTAGE

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (DAY 5)

Grandmother walks in.

Young Baker pushes a plate of chocolate cupcakes with shiny white frosting towards her.

She blinks down at them, then looks at Young Baker.

He beams at her with a wide, proud smile.

Grandmother pauses, then smiles back. She picks up one of the cupcakes and hands it to Young Baker, who takes it without hesitation, then selects a new one for herself.

At the same time, they both bite into their cupcakes and grin. Frosting frames Young Baker's mouth as he lowers his.

Grandmother gives him a single, deep nod. Young Baker pumps a fist into the air as she turns and rummages through her bag. She pulls something out, dark green fabric.

Young Baker doesn't notice yet, too busy celebrating. He settles down as Grandmother extends the gift towards him.

He takes it and holds it up. The fabric unfolds. An apron, with Grandmother's bakery logo on it.

Young Baker's eyes widen. He grins again and peers around the apron at Grandmother, who smiles back, eyes crinkling.

The pair heads out of the room side-by-side, full of joy.

Two cupcakes remain on the counter--one chocolate, one vanilla. Completely different, but both look delicious.

THE END