

Darcy, Dawn and Doughnuts!

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The familiar rumble echoed down the empty city street of this 1950s small tract of homes, many a variation of each other's rectangle house and long driveway leading to a free-standing one-car garage in the back corner of their lot. On the front porch at the center of a white house with decorative dark green shutters sat two sisters, eleven and ten years old, Darcy and Dawn. It was a typical Southern California coastal day, the marine layer of fog slowly burning off exposing peeks of the beautiful blue skies and puffy clouds just above, background for the best part of the day...the arrival of the Helm's Doughnut Truck.

"I want a maple bar. Yep, that's the one!" declared Darcy, taking the red rubber-band off her wrist and wrestling her curly mop of hair into an explosive ponytail.

"Oh, so many choices. I can't wait to see him open the drawers." Dawn was looking up with her elbow on her knees envisioning the choices from the bakery truck's visit to their tiny one block long street, mashed between bustling boulevards at the edge of Los Angeles.

The rumbling was getting closer. The yellow delivery-style truck looked like a rectangle box on top of four wheels with a medium blue lid and matching stripe around its belly as it turned the corner onto their street. The girls had their coins in their hands and started to stand. And...

"Boom!" The front door flew open behind them. "Boom, boom," yelled their little brother Dominic as he stormed onto the porch. This time he was running from imagined exploding mudpots in a National Park as he had a flat brimmed park ranger hat on from their Halloween box of costumes, always available.

"Boom! Duck and cover!" he yelled again, jumping off the bottom step and crawling between the overgrown daisy bushes in front of the taller porch where the girls were standing.

Then he stopped, turned, as if sniffing the air for clues, and heard the jingle of the truck coming around the corner.

“Doughnuts!” he said in his loud, outside voice. “Mom!” he yelled and went screaming back into the house letting the door slam behind him. “Can I have some money for the doughnut man...” came through the open window of the kitchen part of the house facing the street.

“*May* I have some money, please,” they heard their mom correct the six-year-old.

“What? We have to earn our money doing chores. All he has to do is ask,” Darcy said shaking her head.

“But politely,” Dawn said and they both laughed.

“Here it comes!”

“I’m sending Dominic out with enough for a dozen. Would you help him pick out twelve?” Mom’s voice followed the returning brother.

“Yes, Mom,” the two middle kids of the five Chase children answered in unison.

“Twelve! I’m in heaven! Six maple bars and then whatever you want.”

“Darcy, um no, I think they should be powdered sugar,” Dawn said knocking into her sister as they jostled down the three concrete steps onto the matching path bordered by their grassy front lawn.

“Oh, and Darcy, would you turn on the sprinklers after you have your doughnut? The ones for the front lawn, please?”

“Sure Mom,” Darcy replied. But her mind was firmly on the delights headed their way.

The yellow truck had avoided the trashcans set out on the street and stopped in front of the Antonuccio family’s light green house at the far end of the street. Round Mrs. Antonuccio was slowly making her way down, her heavy body rocking back and forth with every step. She stopped midway and waved to the girls, then continued steps to the open center slide-door of the delivery truck and talked with Mr. Garrett.

“Come on, come on,” Darcy said pacing on the neat concrete sidewalk separated from the curb by a long stretch of grassy parkway. She looked back over her shoulder and checked that the sign in the small front window of the extended kitchen pantry/laundry room was clearly visible for The Helms Bakery driver to see.

“He can’t miss our sign!” Darcy said. “He knows that means he has to stop here.”

Dawn was hopping over every line that created squares on the sidewalk as she waited. Little Dominic was hiding, peeking around the box hedge of tiny oval green leaves bordering the property, as if the truck was an oncoming possible enemy. And Darcy was struggling with anticipation, dreaming of treats soon to be hers.

The truck was moving around the next metal cans with the metal lids.

Then the truck stopped...in front of the Fisher's Salmon pink house only two houses closer.

"This is killing me!" Darcy said, salivating at the thought of the sweets, just beyond her reach.

The truck moved again, and stopped again, this time at the Adam's gray house. Just two doors away from the Chase home. Mrs. Adams waved at the three of them and leaned her head in to see Mr. Garrett pull open the flat drawers with the single layer of donuts Darcy knew so well.

"Oh, I know we're supposed to be polite and wait our turn but..."

"Wave back," Dawn said lightly as Mrs. Adams returned up her path to her three steps, concrete porch and front door.

And the truck was coming.

"Me first," the youngest kid stood at the edge where the parkway met the curb, right by the single tree planted there.

"Nickel," Dawn said, "Wait until Mr. Garrett comes to a complete stop."

"I know, I know," Dominic who was often called Nickel as he was the fifth child answered, licking his lips and the small wad of dollar bills crushed in his hand.

And then the small vehicle just taller than a mailman's delivery truck stopped in front of the Chase house. Nickel, then Dawn, then Darcy all lined up, showing Mr. Garrett just where to stop.

"Hi, Nickel," Mr. Garrett said as the 'ranger' took the wide step into the center. "Girls," he said with a nod. "What will it be today?"

He turned his engine off and stood up ready to open heaven. The full wall of wood and glass spaces took up the whole height and width of the center wall separated from his driver's area at the front by an empty landing in the middle. The center of the polished wall held two side-by-side banks of four short, wide drawers each. And those doughnut drawer fronts outlined

in wood, had an equally wide panel of glass and only as tall as the donuts themselves displaying their treasure brilliantly, teasing the kids with the sneak peek.

“Oh boy, I want everything. One dozen,” Nickel said tapping the pile of folded boxes.

“If you please. Powdered sugar for me,” Dawn said stepping in next to her brother.

“Maple bars. It’s a dire necessity!” Darcy said joining the others.

“Oh. So that’s how it is. We’ll have to make some adjustments I think,” Mr. Garrett said with a smile, and the door magically closed. “Hang on,” he said as he sat down in the driver’s seat.

“Whoa!” Darcy yelled trying to find something to hang on to.

The delivery truck rocked and then smoothly took off . . . The next thing the three knew, was Mr. Garrett was flying the yellow truck above the tree in front of their house, above their street, above their city and into the clouds, as comfortably as if he did this every day.

“I want this!” A voice called from outside, and the truck was jerked solidly to the right.

“NO, its my turn. I want that one,” and the nose of the truck was pulled into the direction of the new voice.

“What about . . . the others,” Mr. Garrett looked at the Chase kids over his shoulder.

“You are just as important, but you can put others first. What would they want?” Mr. Garrett saw a banner flying nearby with those very words printed in big bold script, and pointed it out to the siblings.

“I don’t care. I want the biggest one you have!” demanded a third floating voice. The doughnut truck dropped abruptly, and that face grew big like a glazed donut, then flat as a painting, then faded, becoming the face of a cloud and disappeared.

Faces popped out of the clouds as they passed, blowing into the shape of different doughnuts the size of the clouds and disappearing everywhere they looked.

Mr. Garrett watched his passengers staring out the windows just as he had hoped.

“Let me turn the sound up a bit,” he said reaching for a big square button with the word NOISE printed on it. The new volume was deafening.

“I want...” was cut off by “I deserve...” “Me first!” “Me, me, me!”

Dawn was no longer excited by the new magical adventure. She drew her light blue jacket up over her ears.

“Where did all these voices come from?” Nickel said, amazed as different faces came into focus then disappeared as fluffy gray clouds over and over again.

“I think I get it,” Darcy said, turning red in the face, not able to shift her eyes from the sight as they flew.

“And what would that be Darcy?” Mr. Garrett altered their direction to hold the little truck upright through the recoil from the demands of each voice.

“Um ... the ‘just for me’ thing doesn’t really work, does it?”

“Why not?” asked Ranger Nic. “Mom sent us out to pick.”

“Yah, but to pick for the family, not just our own favorites,” Darcy said cramming her hands in her pockets, letting her legs move back and forth with the jog of each call.

“Is there a way out of this?” Dawn said. “I’m starting to feel sick.”

“Nickel, any idea on how to change this flight?” the kindly doughnut driver asked.

“Oh, I get it. Like thinking about what Dallan or Deanna would want. I can do that. Right?”

The yellow delivery truck started to drift a bit lower and the voices lessened.

“I know Mom’s favorite is a Jelly-filled,” Dawn offered seeing a positive result after Nickel’s first suggestion.

And the voices were softer and the jerk of the truck was not as strong with each call.

“And Dad’s is a glazed one,” Darcy offered.

And the magical vehicle smoothed out just below the clouds, and was buffeted by uplifts in the air current with new calls reaching the three.

“Aunt Lucy likes custard filled doughnut . . .” they heard a young man say.

“Uncle Herman and Bobby, they love cinnamon twists . . .” another voice said.

The ride was smooth as they soared, floating across town after town.

“They like . . .” echoed across the skies.

The next thing they knew, their magical ride was skimming the treetops and landing right in front of the Chase home. The NOISE button disappeared, and the center door slid open by itself. . . . Just as if their adventure had never happened.

“Now, what can I get for you,” Mr. Garrett was standing in the cramped space with a completed box in hand and tongs ready to reach into the drawers.

Nickel squinted up at the doughnut man from under his ranger hat. “Do you take all kids on an adventure like that?”

But Mr. Garrett only smiled. “I travel these same streets every day.” Then his wink gave him away. “What will it be?”

He pulled out each drawer at the children’s request and gently picked up their selection placing it neatly in the box, the last three being the original first choice of the three.

“Now that’s what I call a family selection!” he said nodding as he folded the lid over the top.

Mr. Garrett gave Nickel the change which the ranger promptly stuffed into his pocket and reached for the box.

“Do you think,” Nickel said looking back up at the man, “That we could do that again?”

“Do what exactly?” Mr. Garrett said as the three exited the truck.

“Fly like that,” Darcy said stopping on the grassy strip next to the curb.

“Just not with the NOISE button,” added Dawn.

“You did notice that every word has an affect, right? Good or bad. Jerky or smooth. Every single thing you say ...”

“I get it!” Darcy said as if a lightbulb went on above her head.

“Words have power,” Dawn said nodding accepting the idea.

“*They* before ‘me’,” Nickel said. “Thanks Mr. Garrett.” Then the young boy called to the house, “Your doughnuts are here,”

The two sisters watched the doughnut man wave as he moved the truck down the street and around the corner.

“Come on Darcy, our doughnuts await.

“I’ll be in in a minute,” Darcy said sitting back down on the porch swinging her legs over the edge as she heard the door close behind her sister.

“*They* before me,” Darcy said grasping all that it could mean.

“Mom wanted the sprinklers on. Ok, my doughnut can wait.” Darcy hopped down the steps and dragged the hose and the connected long pipe with three sprinkler heads attached, across the lawn and maneuvered it into the very center. Then she wove her way into the garden to the hose bib attached to the house just under the kitchen front window.

'Swoosh.' And the sprinkler heads erupted into tall shoots of water, then dropped down as she adjusted the metal flower-shaped handle on the hose bib so the whole lawn would be reached.

“Hi Mrs. Adams,” Darcy dried her hands off on her red plaid shirt and jeans as she rose from behind the flowers and waved to the neighbor. “Let me help you with your trashcans.”

“Thank you, Darcy. How kind. You just made my day!” Mrs. Adams answered.