

Learn English Through Story

The Thief of Smells

LEVEL 2



A TALE FROM AMERICA

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ELEMENTARY LEVELS**

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There was once a baker who had a shop in a small town in America. This baker was not a very kind man. He never gave his customers any more bread than necessary for their money, and he never smiled. But he was a very good baker. His bread was the softest bread that you could imagine. Sometimes customers paid for their bread and started eating it there in the shop. And his cakes... mmmmm!! His cakes were really delicious. People came to his shop from all over town. When they walked down the street they smelled the baker's wonderful bread and his delicious cakes, and they walked right into his shop. But not everyone came inside. Some people just stood outside the shop, smelling, and looking in through the windows. The baker didn't like this.

'Their stomachs are full of the smell of my bread. I'm giving them a free lunch! And I get nothing for my hard work,' he said to himself. 'Perhaps there's some way to put those delicious smell in bottles. Then I can sell them, just like I sell my bread.'

One winter morning, very early, the baker was in his shop, making bread. He wasn't singing happily while he worked. He was complaining to himself about getting up early, about the cold weather, and about anything that came into his head. In the middle of all this, he looked up and saw someone looking in through the window. It was a young man wearing an old coat. He was looking at the baker's bread and he was hungry. He was smelling the fresh bread and smiling. When the baker saw him, he felt very angry.

'That thief outside my shop has a stomach full of the smell of my bread! It's a free breakfast! I get nothing for my hard work, while he steals my smells.'

The man didn't move, he just stood there, closed his eyes, and smelt the fresh bread happily. The baker was really angry now.

He walked across the shop, opened the door and shouted at the man, 'Pay me!'

'Pay you for what?' asked the young man in great surprise.

'For the smells that you've stolen,' replied the baker.

'But I've stolen nothing. I'm only smelling the air. Air is free,' said the hungry young man.

'It's not free when it's full of the smells from my shop,' replied the baker. 'Pay me now, or I'll call the police.'

When the young man didn't pay, the baker took him by the coat and pulled him through the snow to the judge's house. He knocked on the door. After a long time, the judge opened the door in his night clothes. He looked at the baker and the hungry

young man standing outside in the street. It was six o'clock in the morning. What could be so important so early in the day?

'This man is a thief. He stole the smells from my shop,' said the baker.

The judge was surprised. But all he said was, 'Come in and tell me your story. But first give me time to dress myself.'

He went back into the house. After a few minutes he came back, and he took them inside. They all sat down together round a large table.

'All right, tell me everything. Baker, you start,' said the judge.

He listened quietly. First the baker told him all about the hungry man who stole all his smells. The judge went on listening. Then the young man told him that air was free, and that any man could have as much as he wanted.

When they finished telling their stories, the judge was silent for a few minutes. The baker started telling him again of how the other man took all his smells without paying.

'Stop! Be quiet! I've decided what we'll do,' said the judge. 'Young man, do you have any money?'

The young man put his hand in his pocket and took out a few coins. He showed them to the judge, and said, 'Sir, this is all the money that I have in the world.'

'Give those coins to me,' said the judge.

The young man put them into the judge's hand.

'I've listened carefully to both your stories,' began the judge. 'It's true that the smells were coming out of the baker's shop. And these smells belonged to the baker. And it's also true that this young man took those smells without paying for them.'

And so I say that the young man has to pay the baker for the smells that he took.'

The baker smiled, perhaps for the very first time in his life. He held out his hand at once for the money. But the judge didn't give him the coins.

'Baker, listen and listen carefully,' he said. He shook the coins in his hands and they clinked together. 'That can pay for the smells,' he said to the baker.

'Give me my coins, sir,' said the baker, not smiling any more.

'No,' said the judge. 'I've decided that the sound of money is the best way to pay for the smell of bread.'

And with that, he gave the coins back to the poor young man and told him to go home.

— THE END —

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