



# Baking Magic

BY PASCALE DUGUAY

“Staring out the window all day won’t make it stop snowing any faster,” Sarah’s mom said.

Sarah let out a long sigh as she reluctantly turned away from watching the big fat flakes that were covering everything in sight. School was canceled for the next two days at least because of a huge snowstorm, and everyone was happy except for Sarah. Her friends kept calling to say how great it was that they could stay home and play all day. But all Sarah could think of was that she wouldn’t be seeing her grandmother. Nana had to put her visit on hold because of the storm. She might even have to cancel her monthly visit altogether if the snow didn’t let up soon.

“But what if Nana can’t come?” cried Sarah.

“Then you’ll simply have to wait until next month to see her,” said her mom as she

kneaded a second batch of bread dough.

Sarah sighed again. “But mom, four weeks is a really long time to wait. And we had plans. She was supposed to be making bread with us today!”

“You have to look on the bright side, honey. At least Nana is safe at home and not stuck on these slippery roads. And we’ll both get to eat freshly baked bread later.” Her mom beamed as she reached out with floury fingers to pinch Sarah’s cheeks.

“At least one of us is happy to stay home today,” grumbled Sarah.

“You bet! Baking always makes me happy. I think there’s something magical about it. Now, why don’t you go outside and get some





of that snow off the porch before we get completely snowed in? When you're finished, we can turn part of this bread dough into pizza pockets. I even bought some pepperoni when I was at the store."

Sarah perked up at that. Pizza pockets were her favorite treat, and pepperoni made them even better. She rushed into the hall to put on her coat, hat, scarf and mittens.

*Maybe by the time I finish clearing the*

room window. She waved and the elderly lady waved back. Sarah always liked Mrs. Anastos. She kind of reminded Sarah of her own grandmother — they often got lunch together when Nana was in town for a visit.

Noticing Mrs. Anastos' porch was also full of snow, Sarah trudged over and got to work. When she was done shoveling, Mrs. Anastos opened the door and called out, "Come in before you turn into a snowman, child!"

When she was done shoveling, Mrs. Anastos opened the door and called out, "Come in before you turn into a snowman, child!"

*porch, the snow will have stopped falling, she thought as she slipped on her boots. She'd do such a great job that Nana wouldn't even have to struggle to get to the door. But after half an hour of steady shoveling, Sarah was starting to seriously doubt the snow would ever let up. Leaning on her shovel, she looked at the new layer of white fluffy flakes already starting to cover the porch, wishing they would just disappear.*

Sarah gazed up at her neighbor's house and caught Mrs. Anastos staring out of her living

Sarah gladly stepped indoors onto the colorful welcome mat of her neighbor's home, the warm inside air making her cold cheeks tingle. Sarah was hoping Mrs. Anastos had some more funny stories to share about her big Greek family ... she always cracked Sarah up with those. But Mrs. Anastos didn't look very cheerful today.

"Is something wrong?" Sarah asked.

"All this snow is keeping my grandkids away," she explained. "They were supposed to come all the way from Athens for a visit, but



their flight was canceled. I don't think I'll see them again for another year since their parents may not be able to take another vacation until then."

Sarah took off her mittens and gave Mrs. Anastos' hand a comforting squeeze. She and Mrs. Anastos had a lot in common today. Her neighbor's situation made Sarah realize that she was much better off. At least she wouldn't have to wait a whole year before seeing her grandmother again. Forcing a cheerful smile on her face, Sarah changed the topic to something happier by asking, "It smells good in here. Are you cooking something?"

"Dear me! I forgot I had food on the stove!"

Sarah slipped off her boots and followed her neighbor to the kitchen. Mrs. Anastos turned off the stove before removing the pot of bubbling tomato sauce from the burner.

"I had started to cook myself some lunch. But then my son called to tell me that his flight had been canceled, and I lost all interest in food."

Sarah looked at the dishes on the counter top holding chopped ham, sliced black olives and feta cheese. A brilliant idea suddenly popped into her head.

"I know what we can do! I'll be right back!"





Sarah exclaimed, feeling excited about the idea that popped into her head. She took off into the living room, jumped into her boots and rushed over to her own house. A few minutes later, she returned to Mrs. Anastos' kitchen holding a covered bowl.

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Anastos, taking the bowl from Sarah so she could take off her winter gear.

"It's dough," Sarah answered. "My mom made a whole bunch of bread dough today, and she said I could bring you some. Baking

on top of the sauce and carefully pinched the dough closed to form a pocket.

Mrs. Anastos took out a baking tray and Sarah put her filled pocket on its shiny surface. She was careful to place the seam down to keep the pocket from opening as it baked. They spent the next half hour filling pockets and telling silly stories. By the time they ran out of dough, Mrs. Anastos was chuckling away. *Yay, she's back to her regular self*, Sarah thought.

They slid the loaded tray into the oven, and

"It's dough," Sarah answered. "My mom made a whole bunch of bread dough today, and she said I could bring you some. Baking always cheers her up, so I thought it might cheer you up, too."

always cheers her up, so I thought it might cheer you up, too. We could turn it into pizza pockets. It's really easy. I'll show you!"

Back in the kitchen, Sarah broke off a small piece of dough the size of a golf ball and flattened it into a circle in the palm of her hand. She then placed a teaspoon of tomato sauce in the middle of the circle. Next, she added bits of chopped ham, olives and feta cheese

the kitchen soon filled with more delicious smells. As the pizza pockets cooked, Sarah helped clean everything up and set the table. When the timer beeped, Mrs. Anastos took the tray out of the oven and the pair happily bit into the tasty Greek-style pockets.

"Thank you, Sarah. I feel so much better now! Do you think your mother would give me her bread recipe?" Mrs. Anastos smiled.



“Sure! I can even help you make it. I make bread with my mom all the time. Since school will be out again tomorrow, we could make some then if you want. I can also show you how to make other things with it like cinnamon buns.”

“That would be lovely! By the time I see my grandchildren again, I’ll be able to treat them to all sorts of new goodies.”

Mrs. Anastos put some of the leftover pockets in Sarah’s bowl to share with her mother before seeing her off. As she walked home, Sarah kicked at the snow playfully.

The day had turned out much better than it had started. Sarah was still a little sad that she wouldn’t get to see her grandmother. But she was glad Mrs. Anastos’ smile had returned. Maybe her mom was right when she said that baking was magical! **gw**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Pascale Duguay lives in Quebec, Canada. On snowy days, she loves to bake bread and other goodies to eat and share.