



CINNAMON CRUMB

BAKING DETECTIVE

“*Cinnamon Crumb* is a choux-in to be a smash hit of a series! I devoured it in one sitting.” **Emma Swan**

“A funny and fabulous read with a mouthwatering mystery to boot! What more could a reader want?”

Serena Patel

“Sweet and delectable with a wonderful cast of diverse characters and a story you want to sink your teeth into.” **LD Lapinski**

“Joyful, hilarious, and totally brilliant... A chaotic, charismatic, cake-filled classic made from the very best ingredients.”

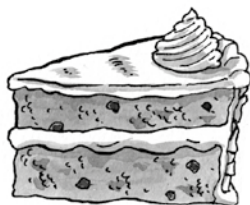
Lizzie Huxley-Jones

“An unputdownable and brilliantly-plotted mystery.” **Niyla Farook**

“Rip-roaring adventure.”

Ian Eagleton





First published in the UK in 2026 by Usborne Publishing Limited, Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT, England, usborne.com

Text and Illustrations © Harry Woodgate, 2026

The right of Harry Woodgate to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

The name Usborne and the Balloon logo are Trade Marks of Usborne Publishing Limited.

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems (including for text or data mining), stored in retrieval systems or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior permission of the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN 9781805075660 9586/1 JFMAMJJ SOND/26

Printed and bound using 100% renewable energy
at CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY.



CINNAMON CRUMB

BAKING DETECTIVE



HARRY WOODGATE

THE TOWN OF

MARZIPAN

MAP

Matcha
Meadows

NORTH
GATE

St. Honoré's
Secondary
School

Marzipan
Cakemakers
Association

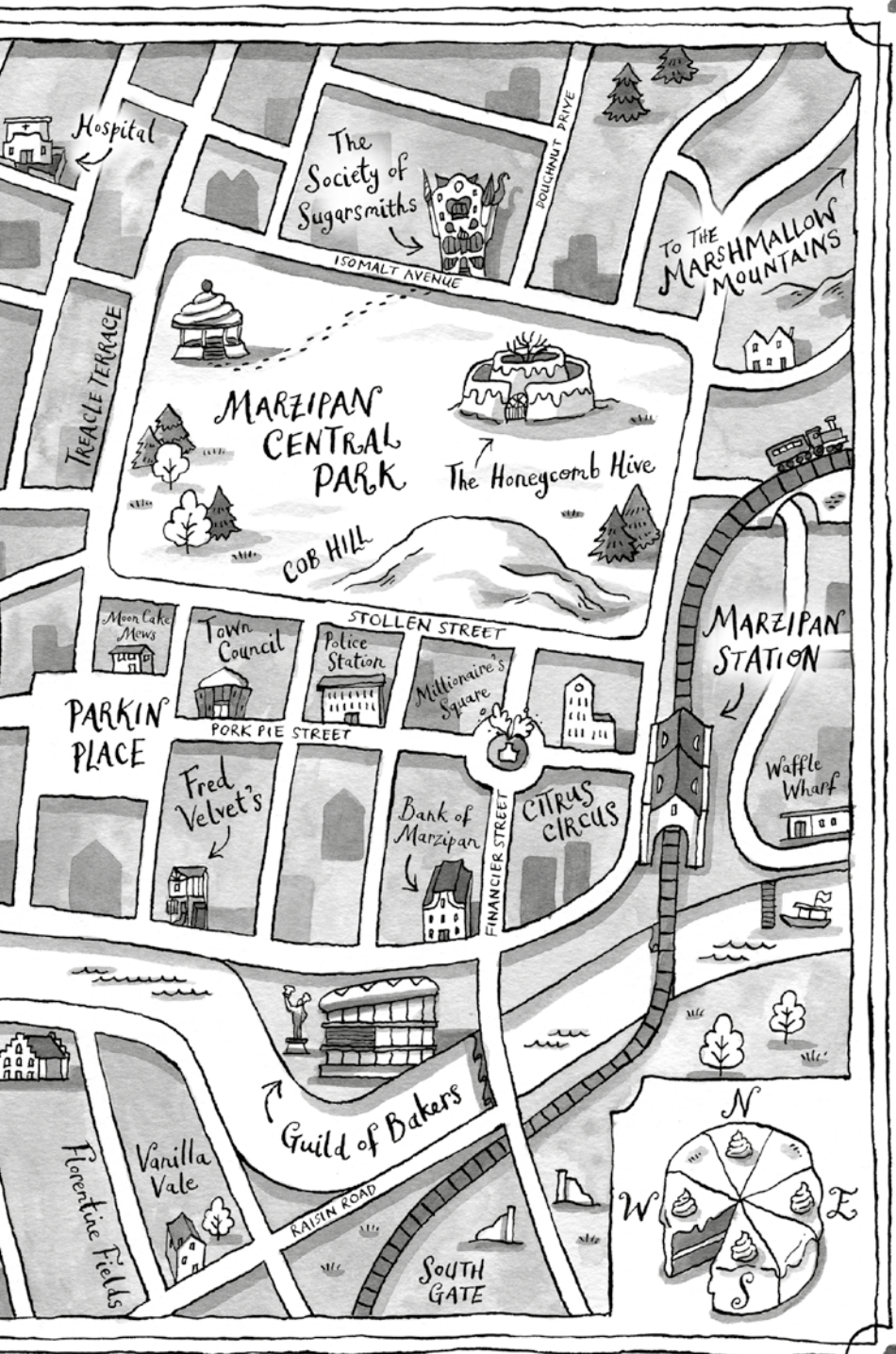
DOUGH ROSE

OXYMORON AVENUE

COCOA CRESCENT

Almond
Alley

Rafi's House







A good story is a bit like a cake. Okay, bear with me here.

First, you need the right ingredients:



You'll need a plucky hero to stir everything up (that's me, Cinnamon), and of course any story needs to be packed to bursting with adventure.

You'll need a spoon. It's got to be a long spoon.

Then, when you're ready, it's time to bake your story into a fabulous feast of fiction and fantasy. Remember, just like baking, things might go wrong.

But every now and then, the terrible mishap you thought would ruin your recipe might actually lead you to an amazing discovery: a whole new creation that nobody has ever made before.





The first thing I should tell you about Aunt Tatin is that she isn't one to, well, sugar-coat things. I guess my latest cupcake is one amazing discovery that isn't going to catch on after all. Oh well. At least Snickerdoodle enjoys my creations.

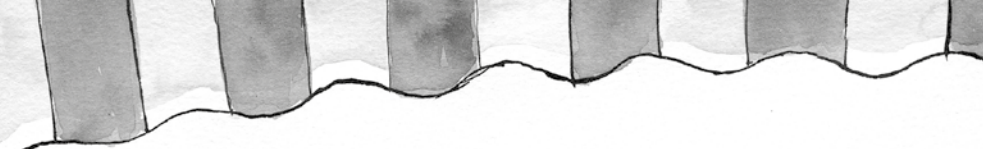
Don't you, Snickerdoodle?

Don't you, boy?*

The second thing I should tell you is that Aunt Tatin is not actually my aunt. She's more like a nanny/housekeeper/scary schoolmistress with eyes



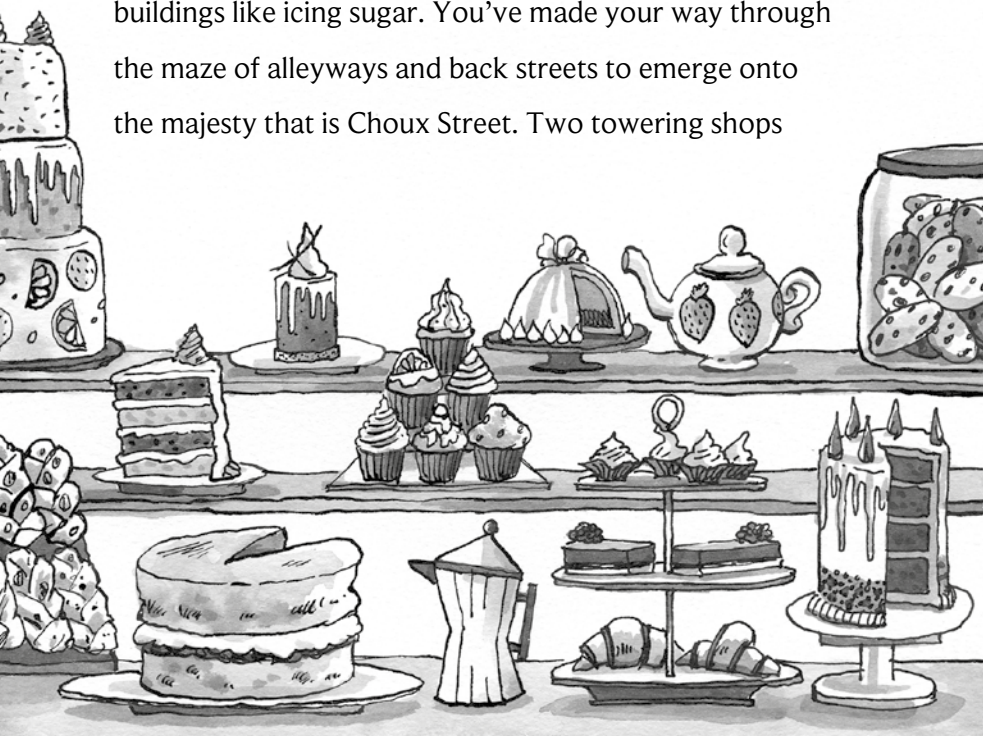
***Snickerdoodle does not enjoy my creations, and in fact makes every effort to avoid them, which is probably sensible, being a dog and all. There are lots of foods that make dogs unwell, like chocolate, grapes and coffee.**



in the back of her head, and a nose that is very good at sniffing out trouble. My parents employed her to take care of me while they went off on quests to discover rare and precious ingredients for bakeries across Marzipan. Sometimes they send postcards, but they can be away for months at a time, so mostly it's just Aunt Tatin and me.

Anyway, it's about time that I stop blabbering on about stories and cakes and give you the full tour, seeing as you're new here and all.

So you've arrived in the town of Marzipan. You've trudged through the snow, which frosts the tops of the buildings like icing sugar. You've made your way through the maze of alleyways and back streets to emerge onto the majesty that is Choux Street. Two towering shops





face you from across the road, tempting passers-by

Victoria Sponge's Tea Emporium is run by – you guessed it – Victoria Sponge (and her many assistants). It sells every kind of sponge cake you can imagine: Victoria sponge, Genoese sponge, and lots more that you probably haven't even heard of, like angel food cake and devil's food cake and chiffon cake and who knows what else.*

Meanwhile, *Madeleine Macaron's Mouthwatering Delights* offers every kind of patisserie that has ever existed, and others that don't exist at all — not yet, at least. From millefeuille, whose main ingredient is vowels, to profiteroles, éclairs, croissants and everything in between: Maddie's does it all. And they do it perfectly.

* A fun fact is that if you say the word “sponge” as many times as it appears on Victoria’s menu, it stops sounding like a real word at all. Go on, try it. You won’t be able to say it in the same way again. Sponge. Spoooooonge. Spooooooooooooooooonnnnnnggggeeee. See. I told you.

Then, sandwiched between these two magnificent establishments like the thin layer of icing in a building-shaped cake, is a little town house with a wonky sign that most people would miss if they didn't know it was there.



I know what you're about to say – “But the icing’s the best bit!” Nope. Not this time.

CRUMB & SONS is the now-rather-dishevelled home of the once-respected Crumb bakery, whose breads, buns, cakes and confections were the pride of all Marzipan.





Not that there are any sons, these days. My dad was the last Crumb son, but of course he and Mum are away all the time.

Really, the shop ought to be called just “Crumb”, because I’m the only one left.

To make matters worse, neither Aunt Tatin nor I have the baking skills to compete with our neighbours Maddie and Victoria. For generations, the Crumbs were brilliant bakers, but that legacy ended with me. Somehow, I manage to burn almost every cake I make (including the ones that don’t even go in the oven). Sometimes I wonder if I’m a real Crumb at all. It’s no wonder that any customers opt for the treats either side of us.

Here at **CRUMB & SONS**...well, we’re left with the crumbs.

Or at least, we were — until something rather wonderful happened...

What was I saying about good stories?

Follow me.





You can leave your coat on the coat stand. And take off your boots, too. The snow makes the floor all sticky, you see. Some townsfolk will pretend it's actually sugar, but I wouldn't recommend eating it. The yellow patches are definitely not sugar. Snickerdoodle will happily tell you that.

Can I get you anything? Tea? Coffee? Hot chocolate? Of course it's got to be hot chocolate, hasn't it? With all the trimmings? Marshmallows? Sprinkles? Yes, yes, yes. Wait there. Don't mind Snickerdoodle. He likes sweaty socks even more than he likes biscuits. And he likes biscuits a lot.

Right, where was I? Of course, the story.



Imagine a vanilla-frosted morning in the middle of December. It was going to be a very good day, for three flan-tastic reasons.

ONE: it was the first day of the school holidays, which meant two whole weeks of sledging down Cob Hill in Marzipan Central Park with my best friend Rafi.



Two whole weeks of building snowmen in Caramel Square whilst Snickerdoodle terrorized the local pigeons, or maybe the pigeons terrorized him, I can never tell. Two whole weeks of freedom, fun, and not a slice of homework in sight.

Of course, Aunt Tatin tried to insist I memorize my school textbooks, because apparently too much “silly frolicking” rots the brain faster than sugar rots your teeth, but then “Aunt Tatin” and “fun” go together about as well as sardines and toffee.



I was not about to waste my precious holidays on nine-times-tables when there were snowmen to be built and sledges to be raced.

TWO: as we hurried onto Choux Street, Rafi and I charged headlong into Maddie and her assistant chef Sylvester, causing an avalanche of freshly baked madeleines — the little shell-shaped cakes Maddie is famous for — and scoring us a free second breakfast in the process.

“My perfect madeleines!” Maddie cried. “Oh, *mes chéris*. Sylvester, weren’t you looking where you were going?”

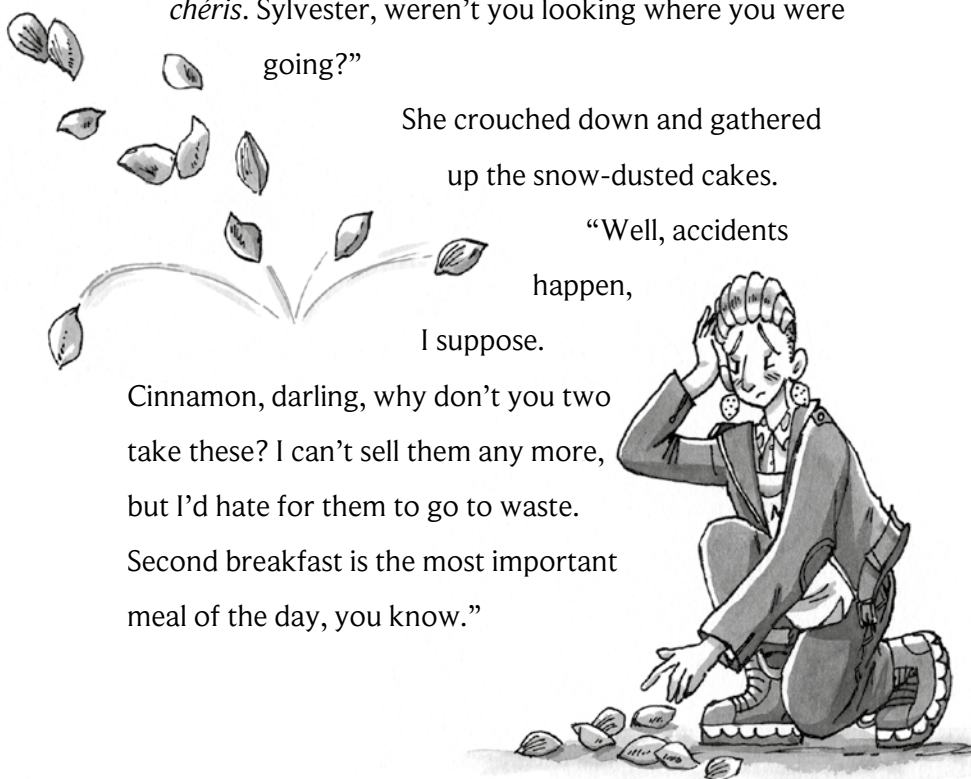
She crouched down and gathered up the snow-dusted cakes.

“Well, accidents happen,

I suppose.

Cinnamon, darling, why don’t you two take these? I can’t sell them any more, but I’d hate for them to go to waste.

Second breakfast is the most important meal of the day, you know.”



I should have felt bad for Sylvester — after all, we bumped into him, not the other way round. But the madeleines tasted *really* good. And I've never entirely forgiven him for secretly injecting fish sauce into my and Rafi's chocolate éclairs after we came into Maddie's shop carrying a *Victoria Sponge's Tea Emporium* bag.

And finally, flan-tastic reason **THREE**, the most important of them all: this particular morning marked the beginning

of



— the biggest and most tastebud-tingling celebration in all of Marzipan.

For ten spectacular days each year, the **Croissant Council, Guild of Bakers, Marzipan Cakemakers Association** and the **Society of Sugarsmiths** come together to stage an amazing array of events, stalls, sideshows, masterclasses, tasting sessions and competitions dedicated to all things sweet (and some savoury, too, because we do care about healthy eating, despite what it

looks like). It's a tradition that goes back nearly a hundred years, way back to when Marzipan was just a small cluster of buildings and a dream shared by a handful of ambitious gastronomists.*

And of course, who can forget the Carnival's famous **Twelve-Tiered Crown**, presented to the baker of the most mind-blowingly beautiful and delicious cake in the whole festival?



For as long as I can remember, I've imagined how it might feel to lift the trophy myself — to bake something not just worthy of the Crumb name, but the Crown, too. But that would be like expecting bread to rise without yeast: it'd never happen. You see, only two bakeries have won the Twelve-Tiered Crown in Marzipan's entire history: *Madeleine Macaron's Mouthwatering Delights*, and *Victoria Sponge's Tea Emporium*.

***A gastronomist is what fancy people call a connoisseur of food. A connoisseur is what fancy people call an expert. You're welcome.**



It's true: for almost a whole century, Maddie and Victoria, along with their parents before them, and their grandparents before them, and their great-grandparents before — you get the idea — have battled it out in a frenzied fight of flour and icing to seize the coveted prize. No other bakery has got a look-in.

On Choux Street, interviewers were already flocking like pigeons swarming a discarded baguette, eager to quiz the two famous chefs. In the window of **Tart's Tattlers** newsagents, newspaper headlines predicted this year's winner. Stalls sold pin badges

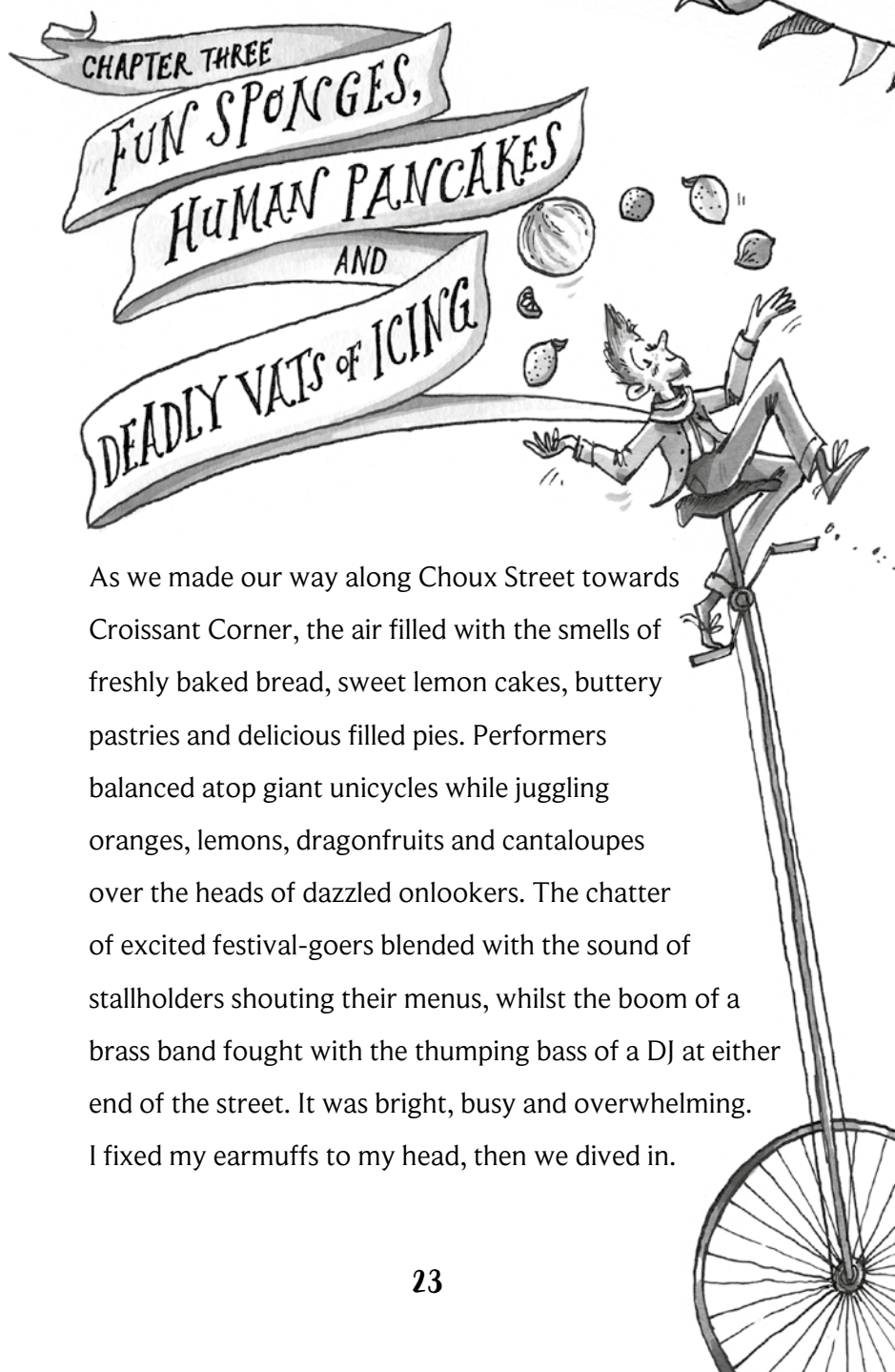
and scarves in support of *Team*

Macaron and *Team Sponge*.

As you can imagine, excitement was coursing through the air like a sugar rush.

It was going to be a very good day.





As we made our way along Choux Street towards Croissant Corner, the air filled with the smells of freshly baked bread, sweet lemon cakes, buttery pastries and delicious filled pies. Performers balanced atop giant unicycles while juggling oranges, lemons, dragonfruits and cantaloupes over the heads of dazzled onlookers. The chatter of excited festival-goers blended with the sound of stallholders shouting their menus, whilst the boom of a brass band fought with the thumping bass of a DJ at either end of the street. It was bright, busy and overwhelming. I fixed my earmuffs to my head, then we dived in.





“This is my favourite time of year,” said Rafi, beaming and tugging me towards a stall selling a rainbow of wispy candyfloss.

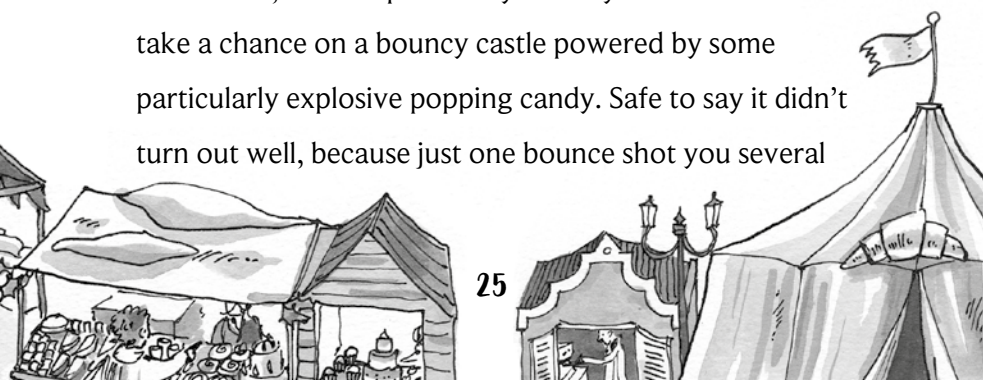
“Remember, you can’t survive the holidays on sugar alone,” I said, mimicking Aunt Tatin.

“She makes it sound like we’ll spontaneously combust if we eat even a single chocolate chip,” said Rafi, pretending to explode into a sludgy heap of chocolatey smithereens. “What does she think we’ll do? Go straight to the Chocolate Fountain and bathe in it like elephants in a mud bath?”

“I think that’s an excellent idea and I suggest we do so immediately.”

Candyfloss secured, we weaved through the stalls. “What next? Oh! Maybe they’ll still have last year’s popping candy bouncy castle!”

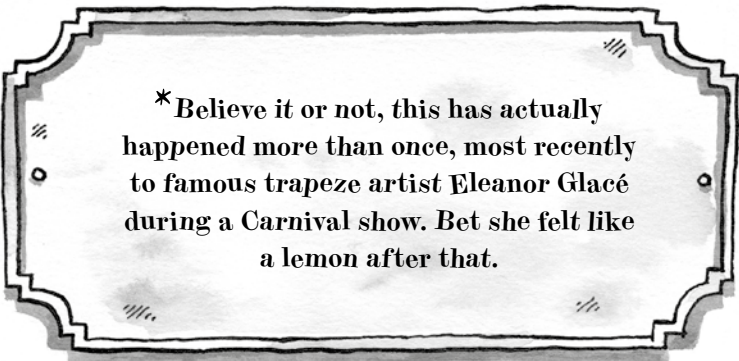
Each year the organizers introduce a few new attractions, and the previous year they had decided to take a chance on a bouncy castle powered by some particularly explosive popping candy. Safe to say it didn’t turn out well, because just one bounce shot you several



metres into the air, and the fire department eventually had to rescue Elle Éclair when she got catapulted onto the roof of Mister Biscotti's. Rafi and I were devastated when they took it down, because we thought it was the best addition to the festival since the marshmallow bouncy castle three years previously, which floated away and was never seen again. Honestly, we're still not over the tragedy.

"I don't know, Cin. I think the Council will want to play it safe, because after all, they're very boring and they hate fun."

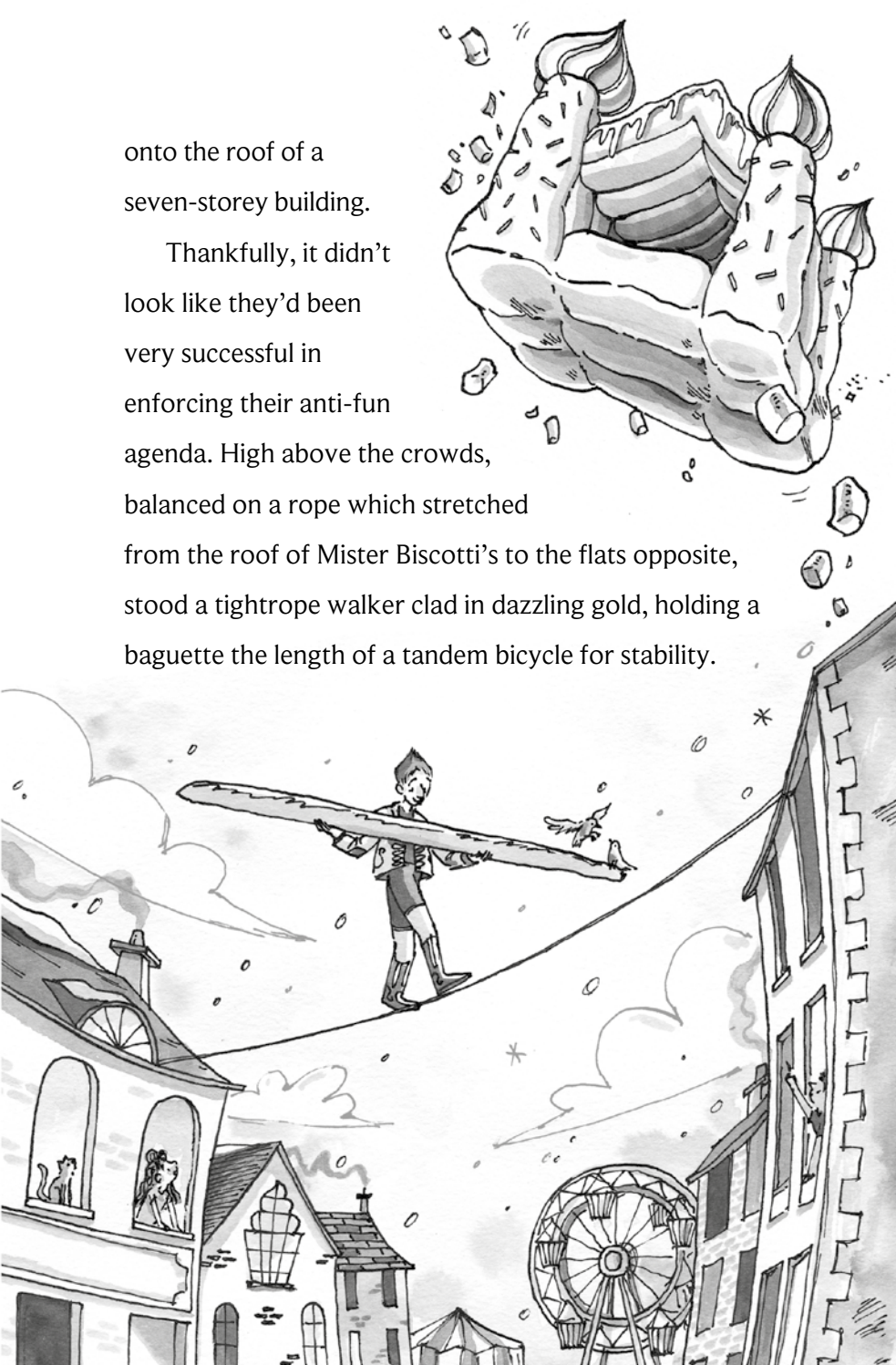
The Council do have a reputation for trying (and failing) to limit the festivities, usually in the interests of "safety", whilst the various guilds and baking societies pitch their increasingly madcap ideas. This is probably because the Council are the ones who get the blame whenever anyone falls into a giant vat of lemon icing*, gets whopped over the head by a sugar snowball, or, like Elle, is bounced



***Believe it or not, this has actually happened more than once, most recently to famous trapeze artist Eleanor Glacé during a Carnival show. Bet she felt like a lemon after that.**

onto the roof of a
seven-storey building.

Thankfully, it didn't
look like they'd been
very successful in
enforcing their anti-fun
agenda. High above the crowds,
balanced on a rope which stretched
from the roof of Mister Biscotti's to the flats opposite,
stood a tightrope walker clad in dazzling gold, holding a
baguette the length of a tandem bicycle for stability.





“Okay, that beats bouncy castles. Do you think anyone can have a go? And by anyone, I mean me.” Rafi’s face gleamed with excitement.

“NO. Nope. Absolutely no chance. We are not doing that.” A **lemon sherbet shudder** fizzled down my spine. A few metres off the ground was one thing, but looking at the person above us, nothing but seven storeys of air stopping them from becoming a human pancake, I felt rather dizzy indeed.

“Oh come oooooon. Think of the view!”

I did not want to think of the view. In fact, I wanted to think of almost anything else. “**La la la la la**. Not listening.”

“Ugh, you should join the fun sponges at the Council. Come on, let’s see what else there is.”

There was so much to try and so little time. We played **Pin the Cherry on the Cupcake**, where I won a plushie avocado, complete with tiny, knitted hat. We behaved like absolute menaces on the Doughnut Dodgems, until the supervisor told us our time



was up, and to please leave. Then, a lady beckoned us into her darkened tent and insisted on predicting our future by reading our tea leaves.



“I predict...” She took a sip before spitting it out in disgust. “What flavour is this?”



She inspected her teacup. “Clementine?! I can’t predict the future with clementine tea. Clementines are far too unreliable.”

Back outside, we headed towards a food stall with a brilliant-green awning, piled high with a delicious-looking array of salads, pastries and vegan meze dishes. Behind it stood a teenager dishing out dolmas into compostable takeaway boxes. They looked just like Rafi, with the same mischievous smirk and mop of curly hair, only they were a few years older and, at that moment, a great deal sweatier.

“Hi, goblins. Not causing trouble, I hope.” Rafi’s older sibling, Roman, winked at us from behind the counter.



“Rafi wants to risk his life crossing a tightrope with a three-metre baguette, but apart from that we’re fine.”

“Oh, standard. Raf, you know if you fall off one of those tightropes, they scoop up what’s left of you and bake it into the pies they serve in the school canteen.”

“What’s all this about pies and falling off tightropes?”
Rafi’s mum barged past, carrying another giant stack of freshly baked treats.





“Roman says they cook children into the pies in the school canteen. They said—”

Rafi’s mum fixed both him and Roman with a look like Aunt Tatin’s whenever I offer to make dinner, then thrust an apron in Rafi’s direction. “I’ve heard enough. Ro, take these trays back to the kitchen and stop tormenting your brother. Rafi, stay here and help me before you turn yourself into a Rafi-shaped drop scone. Cinnamon, you will tell me if he’s being a bad influence, won’t you?”

Rafi quickly disguised his snort as a cough (we call this a **snough**, and it is very useful in avoiding trouble around parents and teachers). As if I’d go along with any of Rafi’s hare-brained ideas. No, I’m perfectly capable of coming up with them myself. His mum is clearly forgetting who started last year’s infamous **Sugar Snowball Showdown**, the largest and most chaotic snowball fight in Marzipan history. (**Spoiler: it was me.**)

“You wouldn’t believe the appetite for plant-based alternatives to Marzipan’s usual fare this year,” Mrs Ekmekçi remarked while Rafi began serving the growing line of customers. “I can’t keep up with the demand.



I've been cooking day and night, the whole kitchen is overflowing with spinach..."

I could feel the clamour and noise of the Carnival all around me. Crowds and busy places were nice for a while, but I often found them exhausting. So before Mrs Ekmekçi launched into a full rundown of all the vegan recipes she'd been trying, I said goodbye to Rafi and headed towards the squished facade of **CRUMB & SONS**. But just as I reached the top step, I heard a voice. Behind me was Victoria Sponge, all glammed up in her fluffy coat and sparkly leggings and strawberry-pink boots, grinning slightly too widely and panting slightly too heavily.

"Hello, Cinnamon, lovely. I was just looking for you. I hope you won't mind me bumping into you like this. I just wanted to ask for your help with something. Don't worry, you're not in trouble, it's just...well, you see... I wondered if...well, what it is, is that I have a secret mission for you. It's only a very small favour, I promise. Will you follow me?"



