

Annie and the Strawberry Dilemma

Annie woke up on a bright Saturday morning. She got dressed and went downstairs. "Good morning, Mom!" Annie said cheerfully. "Where's Dad?" "Out with Piper and Sam, setting up the stand," Mrs. Lopez replied.

The Lopez family lived on a strawberry farm in San Maria, California. Annie had two siblings: Piper, her sister, who was thirteen, and her brother Sam, who was fifteen. Annie was nine years old. Her birthday was in three weeks, and that's what she was thinking as she watched her siblings set up the stand. In Annie's family, when you turned twelve, you got to work at the family strawberry farm stand. And even better, this year for Annie's birthday, her grandma was coming! Annie, Sam, and Piper loved their grandma. Sometimes she came in the summer to help bake things for the stand. Annie's grandmother made everything from strawberry jam to pink-frosted strawberry cupcakes. She had one secret recipe: an amazing strawberry shortcake. She had only shared it with Annie, but Annie still had to perfect it.

Annie went out and watched Dad, Piper, and Sam sell strawberries at the stand, being asked if she could carry this box or that bin. It was like that for the next week. Then Annie's grandmother arrived! But the week before Annie's birthday, something terrible happened. One day, the Lopez family found out that their strawberry farm was going to get shut down. That meant no more strawberries, no more baking, and no more strawberry stands.

"No!" Annie said when she heard the news. "How could that happen?"

"Business has been slowing down," Mrs. Lopez said sadly.

"And even more bad news," Mr. Lopez added, "I just got off the phone with the hospital. Your grandmother came down with a pretty bad sickness, and they said she's not getting any better."

Annie couldn't believe it. The last time she saw her grandmother, she was totally fine.

"She'll probably get better soon, honey," Mrs. Lopez said. "And she will be able to help us save the farm."

Days passed. Annie's birthday was only two weeks away. Luckily, her grandmother came to visit and was starting to get better. One day, Annie's grandmother led her to the kitchen.

"Start baking," her grandmother said.

"Uh, sure," Annie replied.

“You’re going to bake my strawberry shortcake, Annie.”

“But Grandma, I can’t,” Annie started to say.

“But you can, Annie. I know you can.”

“Okay,” Annie said. “I will.”

So Annie got out everything she needed. An hour went by. Then two. Finally, she was done. “Mom! Dad! Piper! Sam! I made it!” Annie shouted. “Grandma’s strawberry shortcake! Set up the stand! We can sell it!”

Sam, Piper, Mr. and Mrs. Lopez all rushed outside and set up the stand. For a while, nobody bought much shortcake. Just when Mr. Lopez was about to say, “Let’s pack it up and head in,” a truck screeched to a stop right in front of the Lopez’s stand.

“Well, look at this!” a voice from inside the truck said. “Homemade strawberry delights, closing soon!”

“Who is that?” Annie asked.

“I don’t know, Annie,” said Mrs. Lopez.

“Who am I?” the voice asked. A figure stepped out of the truck.

“I’m a professional food taster, and your strawberry stand looks like the perfect place to shoot my new episode!”

“Auguste Dubois?” Mr. Lopez asked, surprised.

“Yep! That’s me! Auguste Dubois!” he said, excited. “Now, let’s get to tasting, shall we?”

The tasting began! Auguste Dubois tasted every last bit of food the Lopez family had.

“This strawberry shortcake is revolutionary!” Auguste said. “Which one of you made this delicious cake?”

“I did, Mr. Dubois. Well, me and my grandma. She’s the one who made the recipe in the first place.”

“Well, this cake certainly is delicious, young lady. Cheers to you, your family, and your grandma!” Auguste said, smiling.

“I would like to say that I believe your strawberry stand and farm are saved! I’d love to come back here for special episodes, if you’d let me, of course.”

“Well, I think we’d all love for you to come back here and shoot your show!” Mr. Lopez said, smiling big.

So, Auguste Dubois and the Lopez family agreed to have him shoot episodes there. And he did! The farm was saved! Annie knew this was her greatest birthday ever. She and her grandma had saved the farm!