

SECRET RECIPE

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A cookbook recipe shows a pancake with a happy-face of bacon. CARA (30s), all smiles but anxious eyes, studies the recipe carefully. She pours batter into a griddle.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

MIKE (30s), suit and tie, sips his coffee across the table from EDGAR (10), dressed in his school uniform. Little ZOE (2), fusses in her toddler chair.

Cara serves them breakfast. Blackened, misshapen pancakes sport crumbling bacon grimaces. Mike and Edgar smile as graciously as they can. Zoe coughs up a piece of char.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cara reads another cookbook - HEALTHY LUNCHESES FOR KIDS! She cracks two eggs; the shells fall right into the pan. She groans in despair. Zoe watches her, happily sucking ink out of a purple marker.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mike works through lunch in his cubicle. He slides a sandwich out of a brown bag. He takes a bite, and stops mid-chew. He opens the sandwich: it's nothing but two pieces of bread.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Edgar sits alone at a long table marked NUT FREE ZONE. He checks his lunch box: at least thirty carrot sticks, and nothing else. He sighs and chomps one.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mike and Edgar exchange worried glances at the dinner table. Cara serves them a neon-orange goulash over burnt rice. Tears stand in her eyes.

CARA

It's stew. Well. It's supposed to be. I just want to make one good meal for my family, you know?

Cara runs from the dining room. Zoe dumps her rice on her head and laughs. Mike sighs; Edgar sits in miserable silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

On TV, chefs scream at each other. Cara sits on the couch, flipping through cooking magazines. She finds an odd insert, with only a web address, a code, and the words SECRET RECIPE!

INT. STUDY - LATE NIGHT

Cara types furiously at her laptop. A poorly-constructed web page with rainbow-colored text pops up. It displays one recipe, claiming with way too many exclamation points to be THE WORLD'S BEST COOKIE!! CAN'T FAIL!!! IRRESISTIBLE!!!!!!

INT. KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

Cara empties out the entire contents of her pantry. She whips up a wild mess of flour, sugar, chocolate chips, raisins, and walnuts, grinning like a mad scientist birthing a monster.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Morning light peeks through the window. Mike slips down the stairs, a look of surprise on his face. He is followed closely by Edgar.

MIKE

What is that smell?

EDGAR

I think...that's what "good" smells like.

They find Cara at the stove, wielding a spatula, standing proudly over a plate full of cookies.

MIKE

Were you up all night baking?

EDGAR

Are those cookies? Can I try one?

CARA

Oh, I'm sorry, sweetie, they have nuts. I'll make them without nuts for after school.

Edgar frowns glumly. Mike still stands shocked as Cara slips the cookies into a bag and hands it to him.

CARA (CONT'D)

Take them to the office. Enjoy!

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The kitchen is a mess of cooking equipment and flour. Stacks of cookies fill the counters. Zoe sucks on the spatula.

CARA

Is it good? Yes! Mommy made something good, didn't she? OK, I think that's enough, Zoe.

Zoe hugs the mixing bowl, stuffing dough into her mouth. She looks like a wild animal protecting her young. Cara frowns.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A young UPS DRIVER (20s) rings the doorbell. Cara answers the door, holding a fresh plate of cookies, beaming.

CARA

Want a cookie? I have lots.

DRIVER

Oh. Uh. Sure, thanks.

He takes one, hands off a package, and returns to his truck. MRS. PRATCHETT (60s), an obese neighbor, bustles over. MR. PRATCHETT (60s) scowls in their front-porch rocker.

MRS. PRATCHETT

Well, those smell just dee-licious!

CARA

Take one, please. Take one for your husband, too.

MRS. PRATCHETT

Oh, he hates cookies.

MR. PRATCHETT

I do not!

She takes two and hurries back to her porch. She hands one to her husband, and takes a bite out of hers.

Mrs. Pratchett's eyes grow wide. She wolfs the cookie down in three quick bites. She hurries back to Cara's door.

MRS. PRATCHETT

Ooh. Oh. That was. Well, my word. Might I please have just one more?

CARA

They're that good, huh?

Cara hands her another. She watches with some alarm as Mrs. Pratchett gobbles the cookie like a dog snatching up a treat.

MRS. PATCHETT
Oh. Mmph. Good. Please. One more?

MR. PATCHETT
Now that's a cookie!

Mr. Pratchett is licking his fingers. He hops out of his rocker and hustles himself as fast as he can to Cara's porch.

MRS. PATCHETT
Wait your turn, Frank!

CARA
Uh, here. You can each take one.

They each grab fistfuls of cookies. Mr. Pratchett reaches for another, but his wife knocks him away, growling at him.

Up the street, the UPS truck suddenly SCREECHES to a halt. Cara retreats into her house as it backs up, alarmingly fast.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Cara locks the front door. The neighbors POUND on it.

EDGAR (O.S.)
Mom! Are these the cookies without nuts?

CARA
Edgar? Wait!

Cara runs toward the sound of her son's voice. He has come in the back door and found a plate of the cookies. He sinks his teeth into one. He eats another, and another, and another. Cara grabs the plate and backs away.

CARA (CONT'D)
(terrified, stalling)
You're going to ruin your dinner.

EDGAR
Gimme those cookies, Mom.

BANG. The UPS driver plasters himself against the window, drooling at the sight of the cookies. Then a cane SMASHES against his skull, and old man Pratchett takes his place.

MR. PRATCHETT
Cookies!

The front doorknob rattles and the door bursts open. Cara SCREAMS, and then nearly weeps with relief. It's Mike.

MIKE

Hi, honey!

CARA

Mike! Thank God you're...

She now sees behind Mike, silhouetted in the afternoon light, several OFFICE WORKERS in smart business suits.

MIKE

The guys at the office loved your cookies. We all wanted some more.

The office workers shuffle in with Mike, every one of them reaching for the plate of cookies. Cara tries to run, and nearly knocks over Mrs. Pratchett, who HISSES in fury.

Cara begins throwing cookies at the oncoming mob, who fight over them. Zoe grabs her mother's leg and sinks her teeth into it.

ZOE

Cookie!

The mob backs Cara into a corner. She throws them the last cookie and holds the plate out like a shield.

CARA

All done!

Everyone freezes. They stare balefully at her.

CARA (CONT'D)

No more! You ate every last one! So you can all go home now. Please?

A long silence. Then they advance again, reaching out for Cara. She SCREAMS.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Batter drops from a spoon onto a cookie sheet.

Cara weeps as she prepares another batch of cookies. She looks around her house. Mike, Edgar, the Pratchetts, and the office workers sit patiently, hungrily, watching her. Zoe perches on the countertop like a vulture.

A multitude of people peer in through the windows, a crowd of silent patrons waiting for their cookies.