

RAGAMUFFINZ: 500 Cupcakes
by Sharron A. Scott

Foster Children

Kelly Banks (age 16)

Alex “Alexandra” Speight (age 14)

Eric (12)

Scruffy the dog (age 2)

Foster Parents: Michelle and Robert
Townsend



“Guys, I’ve got great news!” exclaimed Michelle, as she rushed up the stairs. “We just got an order for 500 cupcakes for a wedding!”

Michelle ran Ragamuffinz, a bakery specializing in muffins and cupcakes, along with her husband, Robert. Her foster children, Kelly, Alex, and Eric also helped run Ragamuffinz. In fact, the bakery, which had just opened its doors three months ago, was named after the three of them. When Kelly, Alex, and Eric were at the orphanage, they used to hang out together, and people called them the Ragamuffinz.

“How is that good news for us?” asked Kelly, as she sat up in her bottom bunk bed and wiped sleep from her eyes. “We’re going to have to make the 500 cupcakes.”

“Who’s making 500 cupcakes?” Eric appeared at Alex and Kelly’s doorway. Eric seemed to have a knack for popping up out of nowhere.

“Oh, it’ll actually be kind of fun,” said Alex. Her thick hair was still braided. She braided her up every night and unbraided it every morning, revealing a wild, wavy Afro. “We’ll have like a cupcake-making party.”

“Now, Alex has the right idea,” said Michelle cheerfully.

“Seriously,” said Alex. “I can’t take all of this cheeriness.”

Just at that moment, the alarm went off. It was 5:30 a.m.; it was time to get moving. It was Wednesday morning, the day before Fall Break. The kids always got up extra early to help make the muffins, bagels, and drinks for the morning crowd.

Scruffy, a black lab mix, followed the kids around as they got dressed. Scruffy was a stray dog that the kids had befriended at the orphanage. Eric, Kelly, and Alex were overjoyed when Michelle and Robert agreed to “adopt” Scruffy as well.

As Kelly, Alex, and Eric rushed to get dressed, the usual morning fight began.

“Kelly, why don’t you get out of the bathroom?” Eric said, banging on the door.

“I don’t know what you’re fussing about, Eric!” yelled Kelly. “You don’t even take showers!”

“She does have point,” said Alex, as she walked downstairs. Alex usually took her showers at night to avoid the whole Kelly- morning-bathroom drama. She then brushed her teeth and put on her makeup in the bakery restroom. The family lived above the bakery, in a cozy little apartment.

Alex was very low-maintenance: she only wore lip gloss and mascara. She was 5’7 with smooth brown skin. People were always telling her that she should be a model, but she ignored them. She was the artist type; she was much more likely to be a photographer than a model.

After Alex finished getting ready, she rushed to make the muffins. She loved making muffins. She carefully and lovingly poured the muffin mix into the muffin pans, as she hummed Christmas tunes, even though it was only October.

It was her job to bake the banana nut muffins. The secret was to put lots of real banana chunks in them and just a few cranberries.

Kelly and Eric later joined her downstairs. It was Kelly’s job to start the coffee and to make the freshly squeezed orange juice. She was also responsible for posting the daily special on the chalkboard.

It was Eric’s job to make the bagels. He always said making a bagel was “man’s work.”

While the kids were busy opening the bakery, Michelle and Robert were busy upstairs. In the mornings, Michelle and Robert would handle the business side of the bakery. They would pay bills, work on the budget, and research new recipes. Michelle and Robert would also use this time to work on homework or projects for school. They were both in college working on degrees in business.

After Michelle and Robert finished their work upstairs, they would come down to see the kids off to school.

Michelle gave each of them a hug and quick kiss. Robert, who wasn’t as mushy as Michelle, “bumped fists” with each of the kids.

“Don’t forget to clear your schedules for tomorrow,” said Robert.

Kelly gave him a confused deer-in-headlights look.

“Remember, we’ve got to make 500 cupcakes for the wedding,” said Michelle. “And you guys have really got to pitch in because Eric and I will be in Tacoma at a baker’s convention on Thursday and Friday. We need you to have the cupcakes done by the time that we get back.”

Kelly swallowed hard. She looked as if someone had socked her in her stomach.

“But that’s the day of Lilly’s Sweet Sixteen party,” said Kelly.

“Well, Honey, you’re just going to have to miss this one,” said Michelle.

“But... But...”

“Come on, the bus is here,” said Alex, as she pulled Kelly by her pink scarf.

“It’s not like you won’t have the opportunity to go to another party. I mean, you’re a junior in high school, and people in your class are turning 16 like every week—every day even.”

They all walked to the bus stop, with Eric tagging behind.

When the kids got home, Kelly and Alex said a quick hello to Michelle and Robert, who were busy working downstairs in the bakery. Kelly and Alex rushed upstairs to their rooms, while Eric stayed behind and talked to Michelle and Robert.

“I am so not going to miss that party,” said Kelly, as she tossed her book bag on her bedroom floor. “That’s all everyone at school was talking about.”

“That’s funny; I didn’t hear anybody talking about it,” said Alex sarcastically.

“It’s cause you’re just a freshman,” said Kelly. “All of the upperclassmen were talking about it.”

“Anyway,” said Alex. “How are you going to convince Michelle and Robert to let you go to the party?”

“I just won’t tell Michelle and Robert that I went,” said Kelly. “They’ll be at the baker’s convention in Tacoma all weekend anyway. They won’t even notice that I’m gone. I’ll get back way before they do.”

“You can cover for me,” said Kelly. “I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

“Ooooh, I’m going to tell,” sang Eric, who suddenly appeared in the girl’s doorway.

“And if you tell,” threatened Kelly. “You will never see your skateboard again.”

“Never?” asked Eric. “You can’t do that.”

“Try me,” said Kelly.

“I don’t think I’ll tell,” said Eric, as he went back downstairs.

“So you’ll cover for me, right, Alex?” asked Kelly.

“Kelly, you know how I walk in truth; lying is so...”

“Alex, you don’t have to lie,” said Kelly. “Just don’t say anything.”

“I promise, if you and Eric don’t finish making the cupcakes, I’ll finish them when I get back from the party. I’ll stay up all night if I have to. I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

“I’ll do it,” said Alex reluctantly. “Eric and I will make the 500 cupcakes.”

Friday was a very busy day for Alex and Eric. They made cupcakes all day long, while taking orders from customers. Eric was surprisingly very helpful.

By the time they finished at 9:00 p.m., they were exhausted. Alex and Eric had cake mix and icing in their hair and all over their clothes. They jumped in their beds without even bothering to take a shower or get dressed for bed.

Kelly came home around 11:00 p.m. She was disappointed; the party hadn’t even been that good. The guy that she liked, Cameron Black, had practically ignored her all night. “Hey, Alex, did you get all the cupcakes made?” asked Kelly, as she sat on the bed and removed her boots.

“Why do you even care?” asked Alex. Her voice was groggy from sleep.

“Cause if you hadn’t, I was going to go down and finish them.”

“You were not,” said Alex. “You only think about yourself.”

“Did you finish or not?” asked Kelly.

“I told you I was going to finish,” she said. “And unlike you, I keep my word.” With that, Alex rolled over and went back to sleep.

“Somebody’s grouchy,” mumbled Kelly.

Michelle and Robert returned to Seattle on Saturday morning. They got back just in time to deliver the cupcakes for the wedding.

After they closed the bakery for the night, they all gathered in the kitchen for a wonderful spaghetti dinner.

“You guys did such a great job!” said Michelle, as she reached for a slice of garlic bread. “I’m so proud of you.”

“Yeah,” said Robert. “You really pulled through.”

“Tomorrow, after church, we’re going to take you guys out to Antonio’s, and you can get anything you want,” said Robert.

“Wow! Thanks!” said Alex.

“Can we get dessert?” asked Eric.

“Absolutely,” said Robert.

Alex shifted uncomfortably in her seat. “Is something wrong?” asked Michelle.

Tears filled her blue-green eyes, as she nervously ran her hands through her dark chocolate brown hair.

“I didn’t help at all,” said Kelly. “I went to the party.”

“We know,” said Michelle and Robert.

“Well, how did you know...” One look at Eric, who was staring intently at the table, and she knew exactly how they had found out.

“So, what’s my punishment?” asked Kelly.

“There is no punishment for what you did,” said Robert.

“We’re very disappointed in you,” said Michelle. “What if they hadn’t been able to get the cupcakes done in time? Do you realize that we would have lost that account?”

“And do you realize that sneaking out to go to a party is dangerous?” added Robert.

Kelly went upstairs. She felt horrible.

Later that evening, Kelly and Alex were in their bedroom; Kelly tried to apologize. “Alex, I’m sorry, I feel horrible, I wasn’t thinking..... I... .” Her words were broken and jagged. “I think that Michelle and Robert are going to send me back to the orphanage. I don’t blame them really....”

“They’re not going to send you back to the orphanage,” she said. “They, uh, we love you. It’s just that you’ve got to learn to think about other people than yourself.” Scruffy, who was sitting over in the corner, seemed to nod in agreement.

“I wouldn’t blame them if they wanted to send me back,” said Kelly. “What I did was horrible.”

Kelly sighed and thought for a moment. Then she said, “I’m going to apologize to Eric; that’s the least I can do.”

On her way to Eric’s room, she overheard bits and pieces of Michelle’s phone conversation. Michelle and Robert were in their tiny office.

“Yeah, it’s not going to work out, “ said Michelle. “I’m afraid that she’s just not a good fit for us. You can come and pick her up in the morning.”

Then she heard Robert say, "Maybe we should give it another try."

"Robert, if we are having complications this early, the best thing to do is to just cut our losses now."

"I guess you're right.... We have no choice really," Robert finally agreed.

After Kelly apologized to Eric, she rushed back to her room and started to pack her belongings. She was too numb to cry.

Alex, who was doing her Algebra II homework, took off her headphones.

"Why are you packing up?" she asked. "Where are you going?"

"I overheard Robert and Michelle saying that they were going to send me back to the orphanage."

"Are you sure?" asked Alex.

"Yeah, I'm sure, I heard it as clear as day," said Kelly.

"Kel, you know how you get stuff mixed up sometimes," said Alex.

"Well, this time I'm sure of it, that's why they're not punishing me....," she said. "They're sending me back."

Alex climbed down off of the top bunk. She took Kelly by the hand and led her to Michelle and Robert's office.

"Michelle, Robert, are you sending Kelly back to the orphanage?"

"What gave you that idea?" asked Michelle.

"Yeah, how'd you come up with that one?" asked Robert as he looked up from his laptop. He was playing a video game.

"Please don't send her back; she won't do it again," pleaded Eric, who, as usual, just popped up out of nowhere.

"Kelly, we're not sending you back," said Michelle.

"But I heard you say, just a few minutes ago, that it wasn't working out and that they were going to come pick me up in the morning."

"We were talking about the oven," said Robert, as he walked over to Kelly and put his arm around her.

"Yeah, we were talking about the oven, Pumpkin," said Michelle. "We're a family. We're not going to send you back."

"There's nothing you can do to make us send you back," said Robert.

They all hugged. Kelly felt relieved, but terribly guilty. She had to find a way to make it up to them.

"Well, since you guys are not going to punish me, I'll come up with my own punishment," said Kelly.

"Can I help?" asked Eric.

Kelly just ignored Eric. "I'll come up with a plan, and we'll talk about it tomorrow," she said.

The next day, Kelly talked to Michelle and Robert about her punishment. Kelly said that she would work 10 extra hours a week in the bakery for the next month to pay Eric and Alex back for all the time that they had spent baking the 500 cupcakes. She would also give up her IPOD and volunteer at the nursing home on Sunday mornings before church.

"Wow! That's more of a punishment than I would have come up with, Kiddo," said Robert.

“Yeah, I think we need to start letting you come up with your own punishment from now on,” said Michelle.

“No, the next time I’ll leave the punishment up to you guys,” she said.
“Yeah, next time it’s on you guys.”

Do you agree with the following statement:

Alex is very mature for her age. Use specific examples from the text to support your answer.

Do you agree with the following statement:

Kelly is selfish. Use specific examples from the text to support your answer.

This story takes place in Seattle, Washington.

Research Seattle, Washington and find five interesting facts.



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