

# ***Cakes by Leila Z!***



Text: Greg Crowther

Art: Erik Brooks

*for Leila*

Leila Z\* was a tall girl with greenish blue eyes and brownish blonde hair that she sometimes wore in braids. She lived in Oklahoma, near Tulsa, with her parents and her three brothers.

One summer she decided to start a business so that she would have more money for buying Legos. But what could she do?

Her oldest brother, Murray, said, “You should teach math.”

---

\*pronounced “LEE-luh ZEE”

Leila did like math, and she liked helping her friends with their schoolwork. So she made posters that read:

***Math Tutoring by Leila Z!  
Addition, Subtraction, and More  
Call 829-1978***

and put them up all over town. But nobody called.

“I guess nobody wants to spend the summer doing math,” she thought.

Her middle brother, Paul, said, “You should play music.”

Leila did like playing the viola, so she took down the math posters and put up new ones that read:

***Viola by Leila Z!***  
***Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and More***  
***Call 829-1978***

But nobody called.

“I guess nobody needs a solo violist,” she thought.



Her youngest brother, David, was too small to know much about running a business, but he wanted to be helpful too. He said, “Why don't you bake things?”

Leila did like to bake, so she took down the viola posters and put up new ones that read:

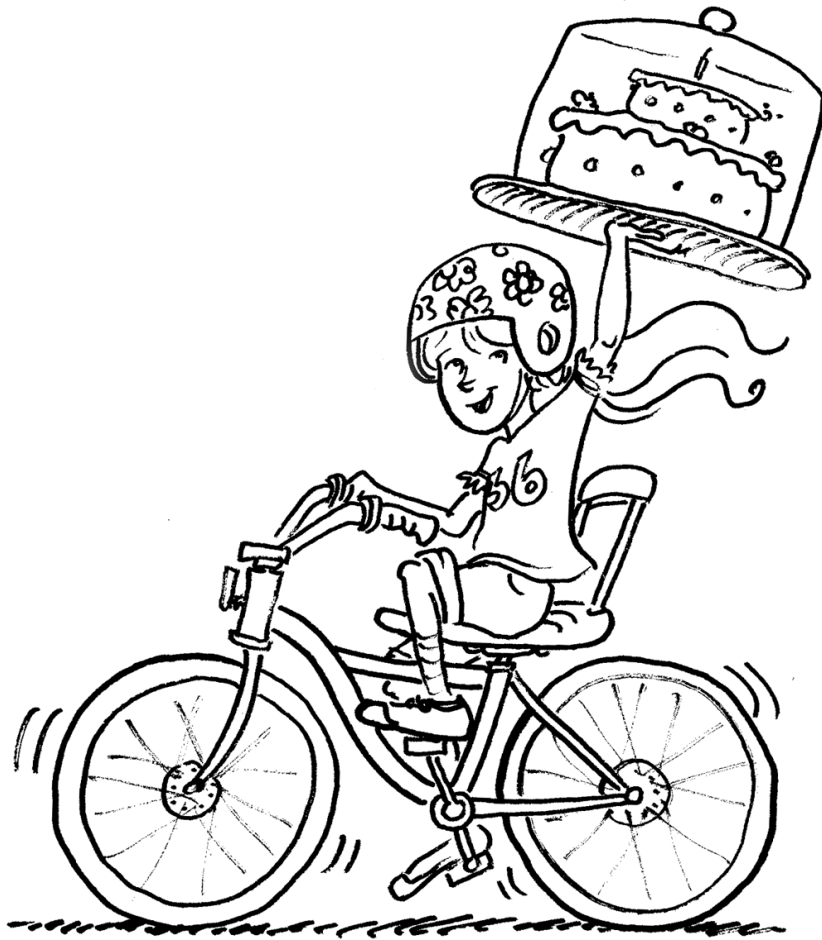
***Cakes by Leila Z!***  
***For Birthdays, Anniversaries, and More***  
***Call 829-1978***

Before long, she got her first order.

She biked to the grocery store to buy all the ingredients she needed: eggs, flour, salt, shortening, baking soda, chocolate, butter, evaporated milk, regular milk, powdered sugar, brown sugar, and regular sugar.

Once she had made the cake, she got back on her bicycle to deliver it.





She was almost to the customer's house when a car drove past her through a mud puddle, splashing part of the cake.

Mr. Tift, her customer, was not happy. "I can't pay you for this," he said. "I ordered a chocolate cake, not a mud pie!"

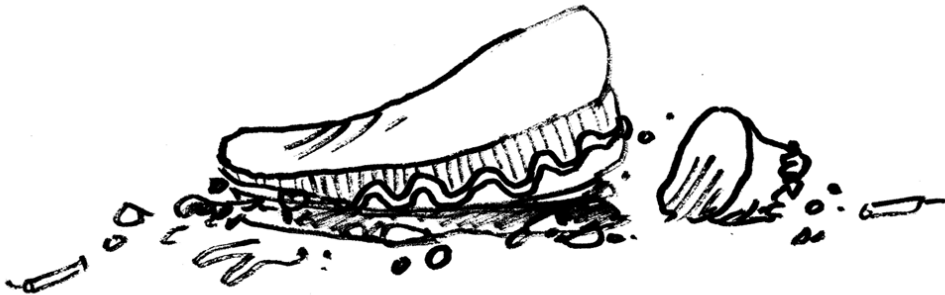
Leila came home and told her family what had happened.

"That's terrible!" said her mother. "I'm so sorry, sweetie."

"Next time you should take the bus," said Murray.

Before long she received another order, made another cake, and boarded the bus to deliver it.

Just before she reached her stop, the bus driver slammed on the brakes when a small boy ran across the street. The cake flipped over and got smooched.



Mrs. Chen, her customer, was upset. “This is unacceptable,” she said. “I did not order an upside-down cake!”

Leila came home and told her family what had happened.

“What horrible luck!” said her father. “I’m so sorry, dear.”

“Next time you should walk,” said Paul.

So Leila decided to deliver her next cake on foot. Everything went fine until she passed a lawnmower, which blew some extra decorations onto the cake.

“I ordered a lemon cake, not a lemon-grass cake!” protested Mr. Traube, her latest ex-customer.

Leila came home and told her family that she was going to close her business.

“What a shame,” said her mother, “that these customers couldn’t see how hard you’ve been working.”

That gave Leila an idea.

“Wait – what if they could see me working?” she said. “What if I made the cakes at their homes? Then I wouldn’t have to deliver them, and I wouldn’t have any cake-tastrophes on the way!”

Her parents and her brothers thought that was worth a try.

Leila’s next customer, Dr. Dominguez, agreed to let Leila come over to bake.

When Leila arrived, Dr. Dominguez said, “It turns out that we have some extra guests coming tonight. Could you make a large cake instead of a medium one?”

“Certainly!” said Leila. And she did, and Dr. Dominguez was happy.

The customer after that, Mr. Erdos, said, “I called you because I don’t have time to make a whole cake. But doing the frosting is fun! Could you let me help with the frosting?”

“Certainly!” said Leila. And she did, and Mr. Erdos was elated.





The customer after that, Mrs. McCartney, said, “I’ve always wanted to know how to make a cake. Could you teach me while you work?”

“Certainly!” said Leila. And she did, and Mrs. McCartney was jubilant. And Leila was jubilant too.

When Leila finished Mrs. McCartney’s cake, she went home and made one more cake for her family. On the top, she used icing to write:

***Thanks from Leila Z!***

She spent the rest of the summer making cakes and buying Legos.

