



Edmonda's Quest

ROBERT PRINS

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BY ROBERT PRINS

She cracked open the door. The sounds of shouting, carriage wheels and horse hooves clacking over the ancient cobble stones invaded the quietness of her late afternoon. The door creaked as she opened it wider and peered outside. Darkness was falling. A cold, damp drizzle hung in the air permeated by the heavy stench of smoke and coal ash. The road was busy with people, horses, all trying to get their business done before nightfall.

She gathered her skirts around her, pulled her scarf tightly around her neck, and stepped outside. The cold assaulted her cheeks. She shivered. If she didn't make haste, she would be too late.

Edmonda began to walk briskly up the road. Horses jostled; cabbies shouted. Noise and commotion seemed to come from every direction. The busyness terrified her. Heart pounding and all senses on high alert, she rushed on, almost running, to fulfill her quest.

A grey rat raced across the road directly toward her after swerving wildly to avoid getting trampled by horse hooves and crushed under the wheels of a wagon. She stopped, screamed and lifted up her skirts. The rat paused and scurried off. Scanning the road nervously, she picked up her pace.

The clamor of the busy street turned into white noise as Edmonda hurried on. Triple story houses built on the street edge made noise echo like the sound of a train in a tunnel. Suddenly one voice stood out from the rest. From above, a croaky female voice called, "Watch out below!" Edmonda looked up to see an old woman above her about to empty the previous night's bed pan onto the street. Head down, she ran, as the foul contents of the bedpan splashed down just behind her. The old woman's cackle rang in her ears.

Stopping to breathe, Edmonda regathered her decorum and continued to walk. She had reached the edge of the street market and had to cross the road. Horses and wagons came past in a steady stream. She waited for a break, just enough room to make a run for it. Avoiding the sludge and horse poo on the road as best she could, she raced to the other side.

She could see him at his stall starting to pack up for the day. She ran again. Puffed and agitated she handed over her money. He supplied her with the goods.

Walking home downhill would be quicker. A pack of dogs howled on a street not far away. She tensed and crossed the road, avoiding the horses and carts, carrying her precious purchase. Nerves finally got the better of her and she sprinted the rest of the way.

Slamming the door shut behind her, the noises of the outside world ceased.

Hurrying to her kitchen with her precious supply, she poured a spoonful of the milk into a pan and brought it to the boil. She added baking soda. The mixture frothed up. Eyes twinkled and a smile crept over her face. She had done it. Pouring the frothy liquid into the batter, she mixed it smooth, poured it into a dish and put it into the oven.

It seemed a shame to waste spotty old bananas when they were so expensive, but this creation would fix that problem. Twenty minutes later Edmonda's results were confirmed. The perilous journey to the market for milk had all been worth it. In years to come, her great, great granddaughter would write a recipe book, and in that Edmonds cookbook would be Edmonda's tried and true recipe for **Banana** cake.

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She cracked open the door,
pulled her skirts around her
and rushed up the
cobblestone road. Would
Esmonda be able to fulfil
her quest through the
perilous streets? Would she
make it home in time?

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