

Weekly Challenge ~ 9/28/24 - 10/7/24

Fall is a season like no other, as it parades around beautifully warming colors that wrap around the soul. Such a time of year rightfully brings about its own set of treats and delights, only adding onto the touching atmosphere and fireplace-filled nights. On this particular fall afternoon, a certain Willow was merry in his shared cabin. While his partner, Bowser, was out to collect some goodies from town, Ruckus had his apron on, cheerfully putting together a little snack to share. On the menu, today? Pumpkin bread and steaming hot cider.

"Who couldn't love some sweet bread and a toasty drink on a day like this?" He said to himself, his grin as wide as could be. The pumpkin bread had nearly fully risen in the stone oven, and the cider was just about done warming up. He pulled out two clay mugs, which Bowser had so wonderfully made for the both of them on their anniversary. Ruckus took his ladle, and carefully transferred two spoonfuls to each one. He then returned to their little oven, slipping on his woolen mittens and carefully pulling out the tin of bread. He sliced out a few pieces on their ceramic plates, and set up the table with a respectable, pumpkin spice candle.

The smell was immaculate, as if you could taste the two flavors intertwining with one another. As such, there was only one thing left to do...

Ruckus always liked to make sure that the little treats he made were the right taste and temperature for Bowser. Too sweet, and you couldn't have more than a little bite of pumpkin bread. Too hot, and the cider wouldn't be drinkable. So, on a second little plate and a small tasting cup, Ruckus put together a test platter. It had to be the very best for his ray of sunshine...

First, the pumpkin bread. Ruckus delicately picked up a piece, nearly dropping it... but thankfully, catching it with his other hand. He managed to get the piece in without any sticking to his tusks this time, as the warmth of the pumpkin filled his taste buds. His smile returned, clapping his hands together, thoughtfully relishing in each taste that showed itself. He put his hand to his chin after swallowing, noting that the bread could use a little bit of frosting to balance out the spice. Lucky for Ruckus, he had prepped some for a previous fall treat! And so, he took it out of their little ice box, setting it aside to defrost.

Next was the hot cider. Ruckus had crushed up the apples himself and simmered them in a pot over a little fire, having learned the recipe from Gloria a few years back. He sipped the steaming cup, shaking his head. "Too hot!!" he laughed. "I'll have to balance the heat with some ice cubes... don't want Bowser burning his tongue! But the taste is still rich and

warming...”

Ruckus noted the little sundial clock on their window. “It should be home any minute... better get to it.” He set aside the tasting set-up for cleaning, then took a small wooden spoon, adorning the pumpkin bread slices in frosting, and plopping a smidge of ice into their ciders. Ruckus folded up the apron and hung it on a little hook, then sat down at his chair, waiting patiently for Bowser to return. It’d be any minute now knowing him... and right on cue, the door opened to its smiling face.