

Part One

The Biscuit

Chapter 1

The First Bite

Today I ate a biscuit. It was, truthfully, not the most impressive of biscuits. The crust, while flaky, was somewhat bland and unimpressive. Arguably, there was a subtle hint of buttery flavor, though it was so minute as to barely be worth mentioning. Still, a biscuit that promises nothing is at least honest, and there is a kind of comfort in honesty, even when that honesty admits to mediocrity.

I examined it before that first bite, turning it slightly in my hand. The light from the kitchen window fell across its surface, revealing the faint irregularities in its shape—the small cracks where the dough had stretched and split, the uneven browning along the top where the oven’s heat had played favorites. At certain angles, it was matte and pale; at others, the faintest glint of golden crust appeared, as though the biscuit were trying, without much confidence, to pass itself off as something better. My thumb traced the higher ridges, their faint warmth giving the shadows shape. There was no artistry in it, but something about its unpolished simplicity held a quiet appeal.

I held it longer than was necessary, letting my thumb trace the edge where the top met the side. The surface was cool now, no trace of the oven’s warmth, but I could still feel the faint powdery residue of flour—stubborn, clinging, almost chalk-like. It reminded me this was not a biscuit from a package or a bakery display, smoothed to perfection. This was a biscuit with a history, brief and inelegant as it was, and here I stood at its culmination. Even the air seemed stiller, as though the moment before the first bite required a hush of its own—broken only by the quiet shift of my breath, a

reminder that time had not stopped, only slowed.

I turned the biscuit slowly in my hand, as if warmth itself might confess some hidden truth. The surface felt uneven—raised in places like cooling dunes, collapsed in others where the dough had surrendered early. The crust bore small fissures reminiscent of cracked desert clay, the kind that forms when heat and dryness conspire against the earth. One ridge curled upward defiantly; another sagged inward, as though unsure it ever wanted to rise at all.

The color was not uniform, and this, I thought, was a good thing. Perfection is sterile; flaws make a thing real. The edges wore a muted gold, deepening to amber in places where the heat had lingered just a heartbeat too long. The top, however, told a different story—pale in some patches, as though it had shied away from the browning process altogether, content to remain unambitious. At certain tilts, the surface absorbed the light into its matte stillness, the shadows settling into the cracks like ink in old paper. Tilted differently, the flakier ridges gave off a faint shimmer—not a bright catch of light, but something softer, like dust stirred in a sunbeam. It was only the suggestion of preciousness, a half-remembered glimmer the mind provides when reality refuses to.

I studied it the way one might study a photograph of a stranger's face—not for beauty, but for character. It had none of the uniformity of factory-born pastries, none of the glossy, symmetrical perfection that exists to lure you at a glance. No, this was honest in its appearance. It did not pretend to be more than it was, nor less. In its uneven crust, its asymmetrical shape, and its subdued palette, it offered only the truth.

The biscuit sat cool against my palm, the oven's warmth long since surrendered to the air. I no longer felt the powdery residue of flour, yet the memory of it lingered—an emblem of the biscuit's unpolished honesty. When I pressed lightly with my thumb, the crust yielded just enough, neither soft nor hard, like a handshake from someone still deciding their confidence. A faint creak from the chair beneath me reminded me that time had not paused with me.

It was heavier in the center than at the edges, the weight settling downward as though the biscuit's modest density had gravitated to its core. The outer rim felt lighter, almost fragile, as if the mere pressure of a fingernail might send a flake tumbling away. I let my thumb travel the perimeter slowly, following the uneven rise and fall of its shape, tracing each subtle contour as if committing them to memory.

We often hold things longer than we need to, not out of indecision, but to make the parting slower. Perhaps I lingered for that reason, though I could not say for certain. There is a small ceremony in the moments before an object changes from something you possess to something you consume.

The pause is not for the object's sake but for one's own, a way to mark the quiet threshold between wanting and surrender.

They say anticipation heightens the pleasure. I have found this to be true often enough that I take it on faith. A long-awaited letter, a long-nursed bottle of wine, a long-absent friend—the waiting sweetens the moment, making the first taste, the first sip, the first word all the more potent. And so, with my biscuit in hand, I let the moment linger. Not because I am uncertain, nor because I expect greatness, but because this—right here—might be the best this particular biscuit will ever be. Before the reality replaces the idea. Before the truth meets the tongue.

My thoughts wandered, as they tend to do in moments of pause. I remembered other biscuits—dense ones, dry ones, and a few warm enough that their buttery layers glowed in memory if not in fact. I thought about the difference between hunger and desire. Hunger asks only to be answered; desire wants to be courted. Hunger will forgive a poor meal, but desire... desire can be wounded.

For a fleeting instant, I considered not eating it at all—to leave it untouched, preserved as possibility rather than reduced to certainty. A draft stirred the edge of a napkin, reminding me that hesitation, too, must eventually move. After all, it is a rare thing for reality to surpass imagination, and rarer still when one's expectations are already modest.

The room felt quieter in those moments, as though it were waiting too. Light rested still on the table. The air seemed to hesitate. Even my own breath slowed, as though to avoid breaking the fragile balance of this suspended moment.

They say the moment before a thing happens holds more power than the thing itself. I wondered if this was truly that moment—or if I was simply delaying the inevitable out of habit rather than reverence.

I began to lift the biscuit, slowly, as though its movement through the air might disturb the quiet balance that had settled over the room. The angle of the morning light shifted across its surface as it rose, revealing in succession each familiar imperfection I had already studied. The deeper cracks caught shadows, becoming narrow canyons once more, while the flaky ridges caught thin lines of brightness, like the first light touching the peaks of distant hills.

My arm was steady, not with effort but with intent. There was no strain in the muscles, only the deliberate pace of someone determined to grant an object its full procession to the place where it would meet its fate. My other hand remained beneath, palm open, ready to catch whatever fragment might choose this moment to abandon the whole.

One such fragment did, in fact, make its bid for freedom—a small crumb, clinging stubbornly to the edge until gravity's quiet persistence convinced it

otherwise. I watched it fall, turning once in the air before it landed on the table with a sound so soft I nearly doubted I had heard it. For an instant, I considered retrieving it, not to eat, but simply to restore it to the biscuit from which it had come, as though reunification could matter to something so insignificant as a crumb off nothing more than a simple biscuit.

The biscuit neared my mouth, and with its nearness the scent grew more distinct. There was the faint, almost shy whisper of butter—not bold enough to announce itself, but there all the same. Underneath it, the warm neutrality of baked flour, and beneath that still, the faintest trace of something slightly overdone, as though a single moment too long in the oven had left its mark. My lips parted in quiet preparation, and my breath shifted—not deeper, not faster, but subtly aware that the distance between biscuit and bite had become very small indeed.

My teeth met the biscuit's crust with a sound that was both sharper and softer than I had expected—a brittle snap that surrendered almost instantly into a muted crumble. The resistance was brief, as though the crust had been holding itself together purely for ceremony, collapsing at the first sign of real contact.

A single fragment broke away before the rest, landing on my tongue like an early arrival to a gathering. It shifted lightly as my jaw moved, its dry weight a reminder that the suspended moment had passed; the bite was now underway.

Several crumbs escaped altogether, slipping free of the biscuit's form and scattering downward. They fell with the quiet urgency of captives making a run for the gate, each one taking its own path toward the table or my lap. I could not help but watch them go, noting how some clung to the edges of my shirt while others vanished into the folds of fabric. In that moment, I thought—not without a faint sense of guilt—that every act of consumption is also an act of destruction, and that the crumbs were the first casualties of this small inevitable conquest.

The first impression was not taste but texture. The biscuit was dry—not unpleasantly so, but insistent, breaking down in uneven rhythms: some fragments dissolving at once, others catching briefly before yielding. A few stubborn bits clung on longer than they had any right to, scratching faintly at the roof of my mouth before they, too, gave in.

Coarse particles of flour pressed against the upper palate of my mouth, their roughness distinct from the softer crumble that surrounded them. They caught in the ridges there, dragging faintly as my tongue moved against them, each pass an exercise in persistence. The warmth of saliva began its slow work, softening the stiffer pieces, drawing them gradually into compliance. What had moments before been brittle and unyielding now yielded, but reluctantly, as though giving in not from choice, but from

the steady insistence of time and moisture.

One small crumb, however, had managed to find its way to the back of my tongue, clinging there in quiet defiance. I considered swallowing it as it was, allowing it to go unchallenged into the next stage of its journey. But there was something about the idea that felt unsatisfactory, as though I were conceding a point in an argument I had not yet lost. I pressed my tongue against the roof of my mouth, attempting to coax it forward, but it held its ground with admirable stubbornness. In the end, I let it remain, deciding that some battles, even in matters as small as a biscuit, can be left unresolved without real consequence.

The flavor arrived slowly, as though reluctant to declare itself. The first note was a suggestion of butter—so faint that I wondered, briefly, if it might be nothing more than my own expectation filling in the gap. It was there, but not fully present, like a half-remembered face passing in a crowd.

Beyond that came a middle taste so neutral it defied description. Not unpleasant, certainly, but offering nothing to seize upon, nothing to fix in memory except its own absence of distinction. It was a pause rather than a statement, a stretch of silence between two unremarkable sounds.

Only at the end did a faint saltiness emerge, lingering at the edges of my tongue as though it had arrived late and unsure whether it was meant to be here at all. It did not sharpen the flavor so much as confirm that a flavor had, in fact, existed.

Some things are neither good nor bad, and it is their mediocrity that makes them strangely memorable. This biscuit seemed to understand that truth perfectly, offering nothing in excess and nothing in deficit—existing, simply, in the exact middle of the road.

I became aware, as I chewed the last of that first bite, of just how much thought I had devoted to it. More, I suspected, than most people grant to an entire meal. It seemed almost disproportionate, this level of scrutiny for something so ordinary, so unwilling to meet me halfway in the exchange of pleasure. And yet, here I was, dissecting each moment as though it might uncover some small insight tucked away in the folds of daily life.

The biscuit, for its part, did not pretend to be more than it was. It had offered what it could, modest as that might be, and I found myself accepting it on those terms. There was a kind of peace in that acceptance, a quiet acknowledgment that not all experiences strive toward greatness—some simply exist, and their value lies in having happened at all.

I exhaled slowly, the act feeling less like satisfaction and more like the conclusion of a thought that had gone as far as it could. The moment had passed, leaving nothing behind but a few scattered crumbs and the faint, lingering taste of something that would neither offend nor inspire. It was, in its own way, an ending.

Chapter 2

The Second Bite

The biscuit was no longer whole. A small corner was missing now, an absence that altered its symmetry in a way that felt faintly personal, as though I had changed it in a manner that could never be undone. The once unbroken curve of its edge now bore a jagged gap—the quiet, undeniable evidence of the first bite. It was not a dramatic change, but it was enough to shift the entire character of the biscuit. Where before it had seemed complete, now it seemed in progress—a work partially undertaken, its conclusion inevitable but not yet reached.

I found myself looking at it with the faint recognition one has for a place visited twice. The first bite had been an event, marked by ceremony, careful inspection, and anticipation drawn out to its furthest possible length. This second bite lacked that air of discovery. The mystery of the crust's resistance and the crumb's texture was no longer a mystery at all. And yet, familiarity does not erase significance. The first bite was the opening chapter; the second, a continuation—smaller in scope, perhaps, but no less connected to the whole.

No two bites are the same, yet they are part of the same whole. The first had been approached with a kind of reverence, its imperfections observed and cataloged before the teeth had even made contact. Now, I observed the changes those teeth had wrought. The crust around the missing section had fractured in uneven ways, leaving tiny, flaked ridges that caught the light differently than the smoother untouched areas. A few loose crumbs clung stubbornly to the exposed crumb face, as though resisting assimilation into the surrounding air.

I thought of the way I had held it during the first bite, the deliberate slowness with which it had traveled from plate to mouth. This second bite would follow much the same route, yet it already felt different. There was a thread connecting the two moments, but it was not the same thread as before. If the first bite had been a door opening onto unknown ground, the second was the step taken onto a path already seen—still worth walking, but without the surprise of what lay ahead.

The first bite had exposed something new—a part of the biscuit that had, until now, been hidden away, sealed beneath its modest crust. Where before I had studied only the surface, here was the unguarded interior, revealed in cross-section like the inner rings of a felled tree. It was pale, almost off-white, with a faint warmth of color that deepened toward the outer edge where crumb met crust.

The texture was a network of small, uneven air pockets, some wide enough to suggest moments of ambition during baking, others so slight they seemed reluctant to exist at all. I traced their arrangement with my eyes, noting how they clustered and stretched, creating a loose pattern that was both random and deliberate—like sedimentary rock layers shifted by unseen forces. If the crust had been the biscuit's public face, this crumb felt like a private truth: softer, more fragile, and wholly unprepared for the scrutiny it now received.

In some places, the crumb clung to the crust with quiet loyalty, a thin golden edge still holding them together. In others, the separation was more decisive—clean, abrupt, as if the two had never been truly committed to each other in the first place. Tiny flecks of crust had broken free entirely, leaving behind empty impressions like footprints in sand after the tide has withdrawn.

I thought about how much of the first bite had been concerned with the unknown. Now, there was a strange satisfaction in seeing what had been hidden, even if the sight itself was not remarkable. The crumb was not beautiful, nor was it ugly; it simply was—an honest declaration of the biscuit's innermost self. Perhaps this was the truest part of the whole, untouched by the oven's browning or the flour's dusting. And yet, I couldn't help but wonder if knowing the inside so soon might rob the later bites of some small, unspoken mystery.

It was lighter now, though not by much—just enough to be noticed if one paid attention. And I was paying attention. The absence of the first bite had altered more than the biscuit's appearance; it had changed the very way it rested in my hand. Before, its weight had been evenly distributed, a steady, balanced presence against my palm. Now, the center of gravity leaned slightly away from the missing corner, tilting the whole in a way that made it feel less certain of itself.

I adjusted my grip, shifting my fingers upward to support the heavier side. This required a small, almost imperceptible rotation of the wrist, as though I were rebalancing a scale that had been thrown off by a single grain. It was not uncomfortable, but it was different, and difference, however slight, demands accommodation.

The missing section's exposed crumb felt more vulnerable to touch than the smooth, intact crust. My fingertips, brushing against it by accident, left the faintest impression—so faint it was gone almost as soon as I noticed it, yet enough to remind me that what remained was softer, less defended. Holding the biscuit now felt less like grasping an object and more like cradling a thing in mid-transition, no longer whole but not yet gone.

I wondered how many other things in life changed so subtly that we never noticed until we had to adjust our hold on them. The shift here was minor—just a redistribution of weight—but it altered the entire dynamic between biscuit and hand. And as I sat there, making these small accommodations for something so simple, I realized that in this second bite's shadow, the biscuit was no longer quite the same companion it had been a moment before.

They say anticipation heightens the pleasure. I had believed it during the first bite—I'd let the moment stretch, drawn out every possible second before teeth met crust, because it seemed important, even noble, to grant the biscuit that kind of ceremony. Now, with the second bite before me, I found that same phrase drifting back into my mind, but with noticeably less conviction, like an actor returning for a second performance after the opening night has passed.

The first bite had been all possibility. It was a question waiting to be answered, and in answering it, the mystery was lost but the truth revealed. The second bite had no such question to pose; it had already been answered. I knew what the crust would feel like, how the crumb would yield, what faint traces of butter and salt would appear and then quietly retreat. This was not the heady anticipation of the unknown—this was the quieter anticipation of a familiar experience, and I was not sure if that was better or worse.

Some things improve upon repetition. A song you love can grow richer with each hearing, its familiar notes deepening into something almost personal. A well-worn book can reveal new meanings with each reading. But then there are the other things—the jokes that are never as funny the second time, the magic tricks whose secrets you now know, the desserts that taste somehow smaller when you return for a second slice.

I found myself piling metaphors onto the question, as though the right comparison might finally reveal the nature of the second bite.

I lingered there, biscuit in hand, wondering which of these categories the

second bite might belong to. Was it a familiar pleasure, mellowed and comfortable? Or was it a diminished echo of what had already been tasted and found wanting? I could not decide. And perhaps that indecision was the only true anticipation left.

I began to lift the biscuit again, though now it presented itself differently. The once smooth arc of its edge had been broken by the first bite, leaving a jagged profile that caught the light in unpredictable ways. The crust's golden ridges no longer formed a continuous line; instead, they rose and fell unevenly, like the peaks and valleys of a low mountain range viewed from a great distance—if such a range were made of flour, butter, and restraint.

As the biscuit rose, I noticed how the light pooled in the exposed crumb, soaking into its porous texture rather than glinting off it as it had with the crust. There was a kind of quiet humility in that—the crumb did not try to shine, only to exist. A small piece of it, clinging near the jagged edge, trembled with each incremental movement upward. For a moment I thought it might hold, but gravity, patient and inevitable, claimed it. The crumb drifted down in a slow, meandering fall, finally settling on the plate below.

I considered whether the uneven edge made this bite more or less dignified. There was an honesty in it—a refusal to pretend perfection after the first bite had left its mark. And yet, there was also something faintly disheveled about it, as if the biscuit were showing up to an important occasion with its collar askew. Perhaps dignity was not in the appearance but in the manner of approach, and so I held it with the same care as before, determined that the lack of symmetry would not diminish the ceremony of the moment.

My teeth met the biscuit's soft interior before they reached the crust—a reversal from the first bite, and one that immediately changed the experience. The crumb yielded at once, collapsing without even the token resistance the crust had offered before. It was like stepping onto sand after walking across stone—a transition so abrupt it felt momentarily disorienting.

The crust came later, a secondary note rather than the opening chord, and when it did arrive it offered only a brief, brittle snap before giving way. There was no drama in its surrender, only a quiet acknowledgment that its role in this bite was supporting rather than leading.

Midway through, a small fragment of crumb detached from the main body and began drifting toward my cheek. Without thinking, my tongue moved to intercept it—a swift, practiced motion born from a lifetime of preventing errant morsels from escaping. I trapped it before it could slip further, pressing it gently against the roof of my mouth until it rejoined the

rest of the bite. The whole event lasted perhaps a second, yet it carried with it the faint satisfaction of a narrowly averted loss, as though I had rescued something worth keeping.

The interior crumb absorbed moisture with far greater speed than the crust ever had. Almost instantly, it began to soften, its structure collapsing into something smoother, less distinct. This was a change without a clear verdict—on one hand, the quick surrender meant less dryness, a certain immediate comfort. On the other, it shortened the experience, robbing the bite of the slow, drawn-out transformation the crust had demanded. I found myself unable to decide whether this was an improvement or simply a shortcut, the kind that leaves you wondering if something essential was lost along the way.

As I considered this, my attention was drawn—with an urgency far greater than the situation deserved—to a new development. A small fragment of crumb had lodged itself between two of my teeth. It was not painful, nor even particularly uncomfortable, yet its presence was undeniable. I shifted my tongue to investigate, and in doing so, I was reminded of an older problem: the obstinate crumb from the first bite, still clinging to the back of my tongue as if it had taken up a long-term lease.

Now there were two of them—one an established tenant, the other a newly arrived intruder—and for a moment I pictured them as conspirators, whispering to one another in the dark recesses of my mouth. I debated taking action, perhaps dislodging them both in a single, decisive sweep. But the thought of interrupting the bite's progression felt wrong, as though it would break some unspoken contract between the biscuit and I. So I let them be, content—or at least resigned—to their quiet occupation.

The flavor arrived just as I remembered it—the faintest suggestion of butter, almost shy in its presentation, followed by the neutral, unremarkable middle, and finally the quiet afterthought of salt. There was no need to search for it this time; I knew where each note would appear, as if the biscuit were following a script it had already performed once before.

It was like rereading a sentence you only half-remember. The words are the same, and perhaps even more clearly understood the second time, but the surprise is gone. The small hesitations, the wonder of not knowing what might come next—all of it replaced by the certainty of recognition.

Predictability can be comfort, or it can be boredom. The difference often lies not in the thing itself but in the one experiencing it. And as I chewed the second bite, I found myself suspended between the two. There was a reassurance in knowing exactly what I would get, but also a faint disappointment in realizing that it could offer nothing more. It was the same biscuit, the same flavor, the same restrained performance—and perhaps that was the point.

The second bite had done nothing to change my opinion of the biscuit. It had not improved upon the first, nor had it diminished it. It simply was—another small step along a path whose destination I could already see. There was no great revelation in it, no sudden shift in perception. The biscuit had revealed itself in the first bite, and the second had merely confirmed the truth of what I already knew.

Still, I found myself pausing, biscuit in hand, considering whether to continue. It was not that I doubted my ability to finish it—the thing was hardly a feat of endurance—but rather that I questioned the necessity of doing so. The biscuit was unremarkable, and its remaining portions would likely be no different from what I had already experienced. And yet, there was a certain logic to pressing on.

I weighed my options briefly, imagining the biscuit abandoned halfway, sitting on the plate as a monument to my disinterest. That seemed almost worse than finishing it. Perhaps there was value in seeing something through, even if only for the satisfaction of completion. After all, a journey once begun feels incomplete if left unfinished, no matter how uninspiring the scenery along the way.

If the first bite was an introduction, the second was simply a confirmation. And having made it this far, I might as well finish.

Chapter 3

The Crumb Situation

The biscuit was still there, though in truth it was no longer the biscuit it had been. Two bites had reduced it not only in size but in integrity. Its edges were less certain, its shape compromised, its symmetry irrevocably altered. And yet, the change to the biscuit itself was only part of the story.

The rest of the story lay scattered about me. On the plate, small flecks of crust and crumb clung to the surface as if reluctant to be swept away. On my lap, a modest but noticeable sprinkling of fragments had gathered, forming an irregular constellation against the fabric of my trousers. My shirt, once pristine, now bore its own dusting—a light scattering of particles so fine they seemed almost woven into the cloth itself. And beyond these, there was the floor, where an errant handful of microscopic debris had already begun forming their own loose and disorganized colonies.

The biscuit, then, was no longer confined to the space it occupied. It had expanded, in its own way, to claim territory far beyond the plate. It was no longer a single, coherent object but a collection of scattered pieces—some recoverable, others already lost to the world. The scene before me was less a meal in progress and more the aftermath of an event, one that demanded not mere observation but careful, deliberate documentation.

My shirt had not begun the day with any particular significance. It was merely the shirt I happened to be wearing—clean, unassuming, and entirely unconnected to the matter of the biscuit. And yet now, it had become part of the story.

Across the fabric lay a fine scattering of golden flecks, each one small

enough to seem harmless, yet numerous enough to be unmistakable. Some rested loosely on the surface, ready to be brushed away with the lightest touch. Others, however, had found purchase, clinging as though the weave of the cloth itself had welcomed them in. I tried a casual swipe with my palm and found that these more determined intruders did not so much as shift, remaining fixed in place with a quiet stubbornness that felt disproportionate to their size.

It was difficult to say whether these crumbs were truly on the shirt, or whether, in settling there, they had already begun to become the shirt. The difference seemed academic at best, yet the thought lingered—that perhaps this garment, once simply an article of clothing, was now an artifact, altered in some small but permanent way by the biscuit's passing.

If the crumbs on my shirt were a light dusting, then the ones on my lap were a full encampment. Larger in size and fewer in number, they had gathered across my thighs as if convening for some unspoken purpose. Their positions were irregular but deliberate, scattered in such a way that I could not help but imagine them plotting—each crumb holding its ground while keeping a respectful distance from the others, like generals in council.

Some rested confidently in the open, their weight and position making them unlikely to move without deliberate interference. Others were less secure, balanced precariously on the folds of fabric where the slightest shift in posture could send them tumbling to the floor. I became acutely aware of my own stillness, as though any movement might disrupt the fragile stability of their current arrangement.

I considered my options. I could attempt to brush them into my hand and return them to the plate, though such an operation risked dislodging the less secure crumbs and losing them entirely. I could make a quick, decisive movement to shake them free all at once, allowing gravity to do its work and the floor to claim them. Or I could simply wait, letting time and chance dictate which crumbs would remain and which would fall. In the end, I chose inaction, holding my position as if observing the outcome of their silent conference might, in some way, be important.

Below me, the floor had begun to collect its share of the biscuit's remains. Not in neat clusters or uniform lines, but in an irregular scattering that brought to mind the haphazard spread of an untrained militia—an army of tiny crumbs, each occupying its own patch of territory, united only by their shared displacement.

They were smaller than their counterparts on my lap and shirt, so small in fact that I began to wonder if they might be beneath the notice of even a mouse. A mouse, having braved the journey into this room with expectations of some modest feast, would find instead a meager offering—specks of crust barely worth the trouble of gathering. I could almost picture

its tiny face, ears twitching in muted disappointment, before it turned away in search of better prospects.

Meanwhile, the crumbs on my shirt and trousers seemed to hover in a state of indecision. Some clung more tightly to the weave of the fabric, perhaps sensing that to fall would be to join the beleaguered ranks below, subject to the same uncertain fate as those already on the floor. Others appeared poised to let go at any moment, as if drawn by some unspoken call to swell the numbers of the growing army below. Whether this reluctance to join was born out of some misplaced loyalty to the biscuit or simply the will to remain intact a moment longer, I could not say.

The table was home to its own set of survivors. Here the crumbs were neither as numerous as those on the floor nor as tenacious as those clinging to my clothing, but they occupied a strategic position—close enough to be easily retrieved, yet spread far enough apart to make any effort at collection feel deliberate.

Some were large enough to tempt retrieval, intact enough to offer at least the suggestion of a final, miniature bite. Others were so minuscule that the thought of lifting them felt almost futile, as though their removal would yield nothing more than the satisfaction of tidiness. Together they formed an irregular front line, scattered across the grain of the wood like scouts who had ventured too far from the main force.

I considered the moral implications of eating crumbs directly from the table. On one hand, they were, undeniably, part of the biscuit, and leaving them behind seemed almost wasteful. On the other, they now bore the subtle imprint of the table's surface—a mingling of worlds that made their reclamation feel somehow improper.

If this was to become a battle, the table's contingent would be the most immediate threat, positioned within striking distance should I choose to act. Between them, the encamped crumbs on my lap, and the growing militia amassing on the floor, I was surrounded on multiple fronts. The eventual cleanup would not be a simple sweeping gesture but a campaign—one fought in stages, with the knowledge that victory could never be absolute.

Nothing lasts forever—not even the smallest piece of a whole. And yet, in these scattered remnants, the biscuit continued to assert its presence, stubbornly refusing to vanish without effort.

Far from the main field of crumbs, I spotted it—a lone fragment, exiled from the others by some unpredictable combination of momentum and gravity. It had rolled further than any of its companions, coming to rest just beyond the shadow cast by the table's edge, as though deliberately distancing itself from the scene of the larger disaster.

Its isolation made it conspicuous. There was no camouflage here, no surrounding debris to blend into, only the pale openness of the floor and

one small, stubborn piece of biscuit that seemed content to remain where it had landed. I leaned slightly to get a better look, and it was then that I realized how unremarkable it truly was—neither the largest nor the smallest crumb, lacking any distinctive shape or color, nothing to suggest that it warranted special attention. And yet there it sat, still undeniably part of the biscuit, a quiet reminder that even the most insignificant pieces have a way of demanding notice.

I debated leaving it where it was. Retrieving it would require movement, effort, a deliberate interruption to the stillness I had been maintaining. And really, what would be gained? It was, after all, a crumb—one of many—and not even a particularly notable one. But the longer I looked at it, the more it seemed to hold its ground with a kind of quiet defiance, as though the biscuit itself had planted it there to taunt me.

In the end, I reached for it. My fingers closed around it with the same care one might use to pick up something fragile, though it offered no resistance. I held it for a moment, studying it as if to confirm that this was, in fact, worth the trouble I had taken. It was not. And yet, there was a faint satisfaction in reclaiming it—not because it had value, but because the biscuit would not have the last word.

I began the process of brushing the crumbs from my shirt and lap, expecting it to be a quick, efficient operation. It was not. Some crumbs, perhaps sensing their imminent removal, gave way easily, tumbling down to join the floor's already disorganized ranks. Others resisted, lodging more firmly into the weave of the fabric, crumbling further under my touch so that each attempt to remove them became a self-defeating gesture, scattering the biscuit's remains into smaller, less manageable pieces.

In this way, the biscuit maintained its presence, refusing to be reduced to nothing. Even as I tried to reclaim my once-pristine clothing, it found new ways to cling to me, leaving behind traces that would likely remain until laundry day.

I reflected, in that moment, on the impermanence of form. A crumb, small and fragile, can break down further still, until it is little more than dust—and yet even dust persists. Perhaps nothing ever truly disappears; it only changes shape, becoming something else, somewhere else. The biscuit had been whole, and now it was many—too many, in fact, to be dealt with in a single effort.

In the end, I did what I could. A few of the larger crumbs were close enough, intact enough, to warrant retrieval. I placed them back on the plate and ate them as though they were legitimate bites, giving them a respect they had done nothing to earn. They tasted exactly as expected—dry, faintly salty, and otherwise indistinguishable from the rest of the biscuit. But in eating them, I felt as though I had reclaimed something, however small,

from the slow disassembly of the whole.

The others, I allowed to be discarded. Some were too small to bother with, no more than dust; others had fallen into places where retrieval would require more effort than I was prepared to give. These I ignored entirely, consigning them to the inevitable sweep of a cloth or broom at some later time.

And then there were the ones I knew would remain. They would linger unnoticed until the table was wiped or the floor swept—until some future moment when their presence would be revealed not as a memory of this biscuit, but as an inconvenience. In that way, even in absence, the biscuit would continue to exert its quiet influence, long after the last bite had been taken.

The biscuit sat on the plate, diminished but not gone. Its remaining portion was still recognizable as the same unremarkable creation I had begun with, yet its reach had extended well beyond itself. Its fragments were scattered across the table, embedded in my clothing, lying in quiet disarray on the floor. The biscuit's presence could no longer be measured by the space it occupied, but by the territory it had claimed.

In the end, the biscuit's story was not only in what remained, but in what had scattered. It had taken something simple and extended it into a small, sustained campaign—one fought in crumbs and flecks, each demanding more attention than the whole had ever deserved.

I looked at what was left of it and made my decision. I would finish the biscuit. Not out of curiosity—I already knew everything there was to know about it. Not out of hunger—there were other, better things I could eat. And certainly not out of pleasure—the biscuit had offered little of that from the start.

No, I would finish it out of principle. Out of a quiet, stubborn desire to have the last word. This biscuit had taken more of my time and energy than it had earned, and I would not leave it sitting there, smug in its half-eaten state, believing it had inconvenienced me into surrender.

If there was to be a victor in this small, absurd battle, I will not let it go to the biscuit.

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