

Penny Sweets

Every morning, Elizabeth followed the same narrow path between her house and the school gates. The route was not particularly exciting; it meandered between rows of brick houses, past a small park with a crooked bench, and along a quiet street where a single shop stood stubbornly between two taller buildings. Yet for Elizabeth, that shop was the most fascinating place in the entire town.

The shop was called **Penny Sweets**.

Its window was always perfectly arranged. Glass jars filled with colourful treats stood in neat rows: bright sherbet lemons, twisted liquorice ropes, and soft pink marshmallows dusted with sugar. In the centre of the display sat a large jar of striped humbugs that seemed to glow in the morning light. Elizabeth often slowed her steps as she passed, her eyes lingering on the treasures inside.

Going to school was compulsory, of course, and Elizabeth never complained about it. Still, the sweet shop had a strange way of capturing her attention. Some mornings she would pause for just a moment longer than usual, imagining the taste of the sweets or wondering how long the shop had been there.

What puzzled Elizabeth most, however, was the shopkeeper.

He was a tall, thin man with silver hair and a neat waistcoat. His expression was calm, almost distant, and he carried himself in a way that made him appear rather aloof. Whenever Elizabeth walked past, he would glance up from behind the counter and offer a small, knowing smile, as if he recognised her but chose not to say anything.

Elizabeth had never actually stepped inside the shop.

Her parents were careful with money and rarely bought sweets. "Treats are for special occasions," her mother would remind her. Besides, Elizabeth was usually in a hurry to reach school before the bell rang. Yet the shop drew her attention day after day, as though it held some quiet secret.

One grey morning, rain drizzled softly against the pavement. Elizabeth hurried along the street, her coat pulled tightly around her shoulders. As she passed Penny Sweets, she noticed something unusual.

The door was slightly open.

Elizabeth hesitated. The warm glow of the shop spilled onto the pavement, and the scent of sugar drifted out into the cool air. She glanced up and down the street. No one else was around.

Curiosity tugged at her.

Slowly, she stepped inside.

The shop felt smaller than it looked from outside. Shelves lined the walls, each filled with jars of sweets that gleamed like tiny jewels. Behind the counter stood the shopkeeper, who looked up as Elizabeth entered.

"Good morning, Elizabeth," he said calmly.

Elizabeth blinked in surprise. "How do you know my name?"

The shopkeeper smiled faintly. "I've watched you pass every morning. You always slow down at the window." The shopkeeper smiled gleefully and gestured towards the name tag that dangled from her school bag.

Elizabeth felt her cheeks warm. "I just like looking."

“Looking can be the beginning of something important,” the man replied.

He lifted a jar from the shelf and placed it on the counter. Inside were bright, golden sweets wrapped in delicate paper.

“Take one,” he said.

Elizabeth hesitated. “I don’t have any money.”

“Today,” the shopkeeper said quietly, “that won’t be necessary.”

Elizabeth carefully unwrapped one of the sweets and tasted it. It was sweeter than anything she had ever eaten.

“Thank you,” she said.

The shopkeeper nodded, but his expression seemed thoughtful.

“Tell me, Elizabeth,” he said. “Why do you stop here every day?”

Elizabeth considered the question. “I suppose... it just makes the walk to school more interesting.”

The shopkeeper studied her for a moment. Then he smiled.

“That’s a good reason.”

Elizabeth thanked him again and hurried out of the shop. She ran the rest of the way to school, feeling oddly cheerful for the rest of the day.

The next morning, Elizabeth took the same route as always.

But when she reached the spot where Penny Sweets stood, she stopped abruptly.

The shop was gone.

In its place was a narrow brick wall, as though the building had never existed at all. Confused, Elizabeth looked up and down the street. The houses were the same. The park was still there. But the sweet shop had vanished.

Later that day, Elizabeth mentioned it to her teacher.

“A sweet shop called Penny Sweets?” the teacher said thoughtfully. “That shop closed many years ago.”

Elizabeth frowned. “But I went inside yesterday.”

The teacher shook her head. “I’m afraid that’s impossible.”

Elizabeth said nothing more, but as she reached into her pocket, her fingers brushed against something small.

It was a golden sweet, wrapped in delicate paper.

And when she unwrapped it, the sugar still tasted just as sweet as it had that morning.

Comprehension Questions

1. What route does Elizabeth take each day?

- A. A long road past several shops
- B. A narrow path between her house and school
- C. A busy street filled with markets
- D. A shortcut through the park

2. What does the word *meander* most nearly mean in the passage?

- A. To move slowly in a winding direction
- B. To climb steeply upwards
- C. To run quickly
- D. To stop suddenly

3. Why had Elizabeth never entered the shop before?

- A. The shop was always closed
- B. She was afraid of the shopkeeper
- C. Her parents rarely bought sweets and she was usually in a hurry
- D. The sweets were too expensive

4. What does the word *aloof* suggest about the shopkeeper?

- A. He is cheerful and loud
- B. He seems distant and reserved
- C. He is impatient with customers
- D. He is confused

5. Why does Elizabeth enter the shop one morning?

- A. She wants to buy sweets for her friends
- B. The door is slightly open and she becomes curious
- C. The shopkeeper calls her inside
- D. She is hiding from the rain

6. How does the shopkeeper know Elizabeth's name?

- A. Her teacher told him
- B. He read it on her school bag
- C. He had watched her pass the shop every day
- D. She told him earlier

7. What unusual event happens the next day?

- A. The sweets disappear from the jars
- B. The shopkeeper refuses to serve Elizabeth
- C. The shop is closed for repairs
- D. The shop itself has vanished

8. What does Elizabeth's teacher say about Penny Sweets?

- A. It is the most popular shop in town
- B. It closed many years ago
- C. It is moving to another street
- D. It is opening next week

9. What does the sweet in Elizabeth's pocket suggest?

- A. She bought it from another shop
- B. She imagined the entire event
- C. The experience may have been real despite the shop's disappearance
- D. The teacher gave it to her

10. What is the main twist in the story?

- A. Elizabeth discovers the sweets are expensive
- B. The shopkeeper becomes her teacher
- C. The shop mysteriously disappears even though she visited it
- D. Elizabeth decides she dislikes sweets

Answers

1. **B**

2. **A**

3. **C**

4. **B**

5. **B**

6. **C**

7. **D**

8. **B**

9. **C**

10. **C**